





## SHORT TAKES

## Bail denied to 2 accused of killing IB officer

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court has dismissed the bail pleas of two men accused of killing an Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer during the riots in the north east part of the national capital last year, saying they have been "playing hide and seek with the prosecution". Justice Suresh Kumar Kait said in the facts and circumstances of the case where life of a young intelligence officer has been lost, the court is not persuaded to take a lenient view towards the two accused. The court said that the trial was already in progress in the instant case and the accused will have an opportunity to make a case for bail at the appropriate stage during the course of trial. The order came on the pleas by Sameer Khan and Kasim challenging the denial of the bail by trial court in October last year and February this year, respectively. Both of them claimed before the high court that they were falsely implicated in the case and there was no evidence on record to connect them to the killing of the IB officer. The prosecution had vehemently opposed the bail pleas of the two accused, saying they were not only part of the large mob which caused destruction of public property but were part of the group which took the life of IB officer Ankit Sharma. — PTI

## DU suspends online classes till May 16

**New Delhi:** The Delhi University has suspended online classes till May 16 in view of the surge in coronavirus cases. Student organizations and teachers have been demanding the suspension of online classes. In a notification issued on Tuesday, the varsity said, "In view of sudden surge in COVID-19 cases, the online teaching shall remain suspended till May 16 in the Departments and Colleges of the University." The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) had written a letter to the varsity's acting vice-chancellor Professor PC Joshi on the issue. "The fact that students are battling illness of self and family members is evident from the fact that the attendance in classes has significantly dropped... Hence, the DUTA demands that classes be suspended as students and teachers are not mentally and physically in a state to continue with the teaching learning process," the body had said. — PTI

# Implement lockdown strictly, officials told

# L-G: Identify potential 'super-spreader' areas

**New Delhi, May 4:** In view of a rapid surge in coronavirus cases in Delhi, Lt Governor Anil Bajjal on Tuesday directed district magistrates and DCPs to conduct intensive survey in their areas and identify potential "super-spreader" sites.

In his letters to divisional commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar and police commissioner S.N. Srivastava, Bajjal directed them to take all-out measures for strict enforcement of the ongoing lockdown in the national capital.

The lieutenant governor also asked them to review Covid-19 situation on a daily basis and submit a consolidated report to him by 7 pm every day.

In view of over 300 inmates testing positive for Covid-19 so far in Delhi jails, a meeting of the high powered committee, under the chairmanship of a Delhi High Court judge, was held on Tuesday to discuss how prisons in the national capital can be decongested like last year, sources said.

According to the sources, the meeting was chaired by High Court judge Justice Vipin Sanghi and attended by the Principal Secretary Home, Delhi government and Director General (Prisons).

"The committee will look into the prospects of releasing certain categories of prisoners by granting interim bail and



Delhi Dy CM Manish Sisodia receives his second dose of Covid-19 vaccine in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

emergency parole like it was done last year to ease the congestion in Delhi Prisons in view of the spiralling coronavirus case here," sources told PTI.

The under-trial prisoners can be released on interim bail, while convicts can be released on emergency parole, officials said.

Till April 29, 303 inmates have tested positive for the coronavirus since March 2021. Of them, 33 recovered, four died while there are 266 active cases.

A total of 125 prison staff members have tested positive for the virus since March this year. Eight have recovered and 117 are still under treatment.

The first coronavirus infection among inmates was reported in Rohini

Jail on May 13, 2020.

The installation of medical oxygen plants at the AIIMS and the Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) hospital here has already started, according to the Union health ministry. With the piping connection and testing ensured through a dry run scheduled for Wednesday, the two plants will start functioning latest by Wednesday evening, it said.

In view of an unprecedented surge in the number of daily Covid-19 cases, the requirement of oxygen, oxygen-supported beds and ICU beds has increased manifold. The matter of ensuring adequate and uninterrupted supply of oxygen for an effective clinical management of the severe Covid-

19 patients receiving medical care in the central government hospitals in New Delhi was reviewed by Union health minister Harsh Vardhan at a high-level meeting on April 23.

The installation work has commenced at AIIMS and RML Hospital on a war footing. These medical oxygen plants are based on the indigenous Zeolite technology and designed for a flow rate of 1,000 litres per minute (LPM).

The system caters to 190 patients at a flow rate of 5 LPM or charge 195 cylinders per day. The medical oxygen plant (MOP) technology has been developed by the DRDO based on the on-board oxygen generation for LCA, Tejas. These plants will overcome the logistics issues of oxygen transportation and help the COVID-19 patients in an emergency.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has also ordered 120 medical oxygen plants through its industries, the statement said. India has been leading the fight against the coronavirus pandemic through a "whole of government" and "whole of society" approach, where several ministries, departments and organizations of the central government are collaborating with the states and Union territories to overcome the challenge. — PTI



Family members of Covid-19 patients wait to fill their empty cylinders with medical oxygen outside a filling centre in Gurugram on Tuesday. — PTI

## Delhi to receive 244 tonnes of oxygen today: Railways

**New Delhi, May 4:** Delhi will receive 244 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) on Wednesday and with this, the total amount delivered to the city in 24 hours will be nearly 450 tonnes, the railways said. On Tuesday morning, "Oxygen Express" trains from Hapa in Gujarat and Durgapur in West Bengal delivered 85 tonnes and 120 tonnes of LMO to the national capital.

The railways said two more trains, one from Mundra in Gujarat and another from Hapa, carry-

ing 140 tonnes and 103.6 tonnes of LMO, respectively, will reach Delhi in the early hours of Wednesday. "With this, 'Oxygen Express' trains would deliver nearly 450 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen to Delhi alone in 24 hours, counting from deliveries that took place in the early hours of today," it said.

The total daily quota of oxygen for the city is 590 tonnes. So far, the Indian Railways has delivered around 1,585 tonnes of LMO in 103 tankers to various states.

Twenty-seven "Oxygen Express" trains have already completed their journey and six more carrying around 463 tonnes of LMO in 33 tankers are on way to their destinations, the railways said.

"So far, till May 3, Railways has delivered approximately 1,125 tons of LMO in 76 tankers to Maharashtra (174 MT), Uttar Pradesh (430.51 MT), Madhya Pradesh (156.96 MT), Delhi (190 MT), Haryana (109.71 MT) and Telangana (63.6 MT)," the WR release informed. — PTI

## Delhi govt to provide free ration, financial aid to auto, taxi drivers

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 4

The Delhi government will provide free ration for two months to 72 lakh ration card holders and financial assistance of ₹5,000 to auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers in the city to help them tide over the Covid-19 crisis, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday.

However, the decision to provide free ration does not mean that the lockdown imposed in the city to break the chain of transmission will continue for two months, he said during an online briefing.

Mr Kejriwal said he is hopeful that the situation in Delhi will improve and

lockdown will not be needed. "The 72 lakh ration card holders in Delhi will be provided free ration for the next two months," the chief minister said.

"Our decision to provide free ration for two months does not mean that the lockdown will continue for two months. We imposed the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid and I am hopeful that we will end this as soon as possible," he added.

Further, Mr Kejriwal said, "The Delhi government provided financial assistance of ₹5,000 to each of the 1.56 lakh auto and taxi drivers during the last year's lockdown and will do so again this time to

**Our decision to provide free ration for two months does not mean that the lockdown will continue for two months**

— Arvind Kejriwal  
Delhi CM

help them."

The Delhi government imposed a lockdown in the national capital to check the spread of Covid-19. However, lockdown creates a financial crisis for people, especially for the poor and daily wage earners who find it difficult to run

their homes, he said. Last week, the Delhi government had announced financial assistance of ₹5,000 for construction workers, he said.

Describing the current situation in Delhi as a "very difficult time," the chief minister appealed to people to help each other in finding hospital beds, oxygen, and medicines and provide food wherever needed.

"We are undergoing a very difficult time and the second wave has been extremely dangerous. There is so much despair and sadness all around. This is the time to become good human beings and help each other," he said.

## Hoarding of Covid medicines: 91 arrested, 73 cases registered

**New Delhi, May 4:** The Delhi Police has registered over 70 cases in connection with hoarding and black-marketing of medicines and medical equipment amid Covid-19 outbreak and arrested 91 people, officials said on Tuesday.

According to the data tweeted by Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Shrivastava on Tuesday, 13 oximeters, 18 oxygen pumps, two Remdesivir empty injections, three ambulances, nine open pressure regulators, 213 pulse oximeters, seven gas pipes, seven double gauge regulators and 1,591 other things were seized by police during separate raids.

A total of 73 cases were registered in this regard. Of these, 49 cases were regis-

**THE POLICE** had on Monday urged the people to call on Covid-19 helpline number, 011-23469900, to report such incidents of overcharging by ambulance providers, harassment faced at cremation grounds, black-marketing of life-saving drugs, oxygen and medical articles, and cheating and fraud in the name of supplying coronavirus drugs

tered in connection with black-marketing and hoarding and 24 for cheating, he tweeted.

The top cop also said that 425 Remdesivir injections, 90 Favipiravir tablets, 213 oxygen cylinders, 225 oxygen concentrators and 82 oxygen

flow regulators were seized by the security personnel.

As the national capital witnesses a spike in coronavirus cases, the city police has arrested many for allegedly hoarding or selling oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir injections and other medical equipment, at exorbitant prices to Covid-19 patients.

The police had on Monday urged the people to call on Covid-19 helpline number, 011-23469900, to report such incidents of overcharging by ambulance providers, harassment faced at cremation grounds, black-marketing of life-saving drugs, oxygen and medical articles, and cheating and fraud in the name of supplying coronavirus drugs. — PTI

## DRDO to set up 5 O2 plants in Delhi by weekend

**New Delhi, May 4:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will set up five oxygen plants, out of the total 500 planned, in and around Delhi by this weekend, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday.

"These plants are to be installed at AIIMS Trauma Centre, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML), Safdarjung Hospital, Lady Hardinge Medical College and one at AIIMS, Jhajjar, Haryana," the ministry stated.

India is struggling with the second wave of the coronavirus infection as hospitals in several states

are reeling under a severe shortage of oxygen, drugs, equipment and beds.

The Defence Ministry said that as per its schedule, two of the aforementioned five plants reached Delhi on Tuesday and were being installed at AIIMS and RML Hospitals, respectively.

"These two plants have been supplied by Trident Pneumatics Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore, which is the technology partner of DRDO and has been given an order of 48 plants," it explained.

On April 28, the DRDO had announced that it will set up 500 medical oxygen plants within the next

three months from the allocation made by the PM Cares Fund.

The DRDO said it had transferred its medical oxygen plant (MOP) technology — developed for on-board oxygen generation in Tejas fighter jet — to Trident as well as Bengaluru-based Tata Advanced Systems Limited so that these two companies can set up a total 380 out of 500 plants.

Trident and Tata will install 48 and 332 plants, respectively, it had said. Remaining 120 plants will be set up by industries working with the Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun.

On Tuesday, the DRDO said, "Order of 332 plants have been placed with Tata Advanced Systems Limited and the delivery will start from mid May. The delivery schedule is being monitored very closely to deliver before the plants time. Sites are being prepared at each hospital in parallel.

In yet another hospital tragedy in the country in recent days, 24 patients, 23 of them COVID-infected, died in Karnataka's Chamarajanagar on Monday due to alleged oxygen shortage in the district hospital.

Earlier on Saturday, 12 COVID-19 patients, includ-

ing the HoD of the gastroenterology department of Batra Hospital in Delhi, died allegedly due to oxygen shortage.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases has crossed the 2-crore mark with over 50 lakh infections being added in just 15 days.

The total tally of coronavirus cases in the country mounted to 2,02,82,833 with 3,57,229 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 2,22,408 with 3,449 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday. — PTI

## Army's Base Hospital in Delhi facing O2 shortage

**New Delhi, May 4:** The Indian Army's Base hospital in Delhi is facing shortage of medical oxygen following a substantial cut in its supply by the Delhi government, military sources said.

The authorities in the hospital said that though there was no immediate shortage of oxygen, the cut in the daily quota may result in serious difficulties in treatment of COVID-19 patients at the facility.

The Base hospital, with a capacity of 450 beds, was recently designated as a COVID-19 facility.

The sources said the issue of shortage of oxy-

gen at the hospital has been taken up with authorities concerned in the defence ministry and steps are being taken to augment supplies.

One of the sources said that the cut in oxygen supply was around 50 per cent of what the hospital was getting earlier.

"There is no need to panic as the hospital was trying to bridge the gap in oxygen supply," said a source.

Hospitals across the national capital are facing acute shortage of medical oxygen due to a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases. — PTI



Delhi- Gurugram Expressway near Kherki Daula Toll Plaza wears a deserted look during the lockdown on Tuesday. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## JEE-Mains' May edition postponed

**New Delhi:** Engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains scheduled from May 24 to 28 has been postponed in view of the Covid-19 situation, according to the ministry of education's national testing agency. Earlier, the April edition of the exam was postponed following an exponential rise in coronavirus cases. "The JEE-Mains scheduled from May 24 to 28 is being postponed in view of the current pandemic situation," the NTA said in an order. The rescheduling of the April and May sessions will be done subsequently and "the registration for the May session will also be announced at a later stage", it said. — *PTI*

## Stalin to be sworn in as TN CM May 7

**Chennai:** DMK president M.K. Stalin was on Tuesday unanimously elected as legislature party leader and he is to be sworn in as chief minister on May 7. "Party president @mkstalin was elected leader of the DMK legislative party," DMK said on its official twitter handle. The party said a resolution was adopted unanimously electing Stalin as the legislature party leader. The meet to elect him was held at headquarters "Anna Arivalayam" and it witnessed participation of 133 DMK MLAs, which includes eight from alliance parties like the MDMK. The government meanwhile said in a release that the swearing-in ceremony would be held on May 7. Mr Stalin had already said that the ceremony shall be held in a simple manner in the Raj Bhavan premises here. — *PTI*

## Odisha boy ends life over online gaming

**Bhubaneswar:** A 12-year-old boy studying in Class 8 allegedly hanged himself to death in Kharvel Nagar area of the state capital on Sunday night, police said on Tuesday. It is suspected that the minor boy had fallen into the trap of online gaming or betting that encouraged him to take the extreme step. Jashobant Routray, the student, was studying in a private English medium school in Cuttack staying in his uncle's house. He had come to his house here recently. Sources said the minor boy used to indulge in online mobile phone gaming most of the time. On Sunday night, he and one of his friends were busy playing online games. On Monday morning, he was found hanging from the ceiling of a room in the house. He was rushed to Capital Hospital but doctors declared him brought dead. Though family members of the deceased did not provide any exact reason behind the suicide, they claimed that the child used to remain quiet most of the time. — *PTI*

## HYDERABAD: ZOO LIONS TEST COVID-19 +VE

**Hyderabad:** In perhaps the first such reported incident, eight Asiatic lions in the zoo here have tested positive for Covid-19 after their saliva samples were thoroughly examined by CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Rakesh Mishra, advisor of the premier research institute said on Tuesday. The Union environment ministry said the infection was not caused by any variant of concern, adding all the eight lions, since isolated, have responded well to the treatment and were recovering. Further, there was no factual evidence that animals can transmit the disease to humans any further, it said. "The saliva samples of the Asiatic lions were thoroughly tested and they turned out to be positive. As they were living closely it must have been spread among them," Mr Mishra told PTI. "Now we are developing a method to test the samples of their faeces. This method would be useful in future as every time it is not possible to collect saliva samples from wild animals," he added. He further said the virus which is present in the lions at the Nehru Zoological Park here is not any new variant. "They have mild symptoms and they are eating well and they are fine," he said. Replying to a query, he said there is every possibility of animals contracting the virus as they are also mammals like human beings. — *PTI*

## SC strikes down Bengal real estate law

'Repugnant to Centre's Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act that already occupies the field'

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, MAY 4

The Supreme Court on Tuesday struck down West Bengal's Housing Industry Regulation Act, 2017 (HIRA) for regulating the real estate sector in the state as "unconstitutional", holding it is repugnant to Centre's Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act that already occupies the field regulating the real estate sector in the country.

A bench of justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah said the West Bengal Housing Industry Regulation Act (WB-HIRA), 2017 is more or less

identical to the Centre's RERA and in the teeth of constitutional scheme hence repugnant to Parliament's law.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Chandrachud said that two fundamental features that emerge from the analysis of the provisions of RERA and WB-HIRA is that "a significant and even overwhelmingly large part of WB-HIRA overlaps with the provisions of RERA. These provisions of the RERA have been lifted bodily, word for word and enacted into the State enactment."

Second, Justice Chandrachud said that in doing so, "WB-HIRA does

not complement the RERA by enacting provisions which may be regarded as in addition to or fortifying the rights, obligations and remedies created by the Central enactment."

Having noted the identical provisions of HIRA, lifting the provisions of

RERA and the constitutional scheme, Justice Chandrachud said, "we have come to the conclusion that WB-HIRA is repugnant to the RERA, and is hence unconstitutional. We also hold and declare that as a consequence of the declaration by this Court of the invalidity of the provisions of WB-HIRA, there shall be no revival of the provisions of the WB 1993 Act, since it would stand impliedly repealed upon the enactment of the RERA."

The 1993 West Bengal law for regulating the real estate stood repealed upon the enactment of 2017

Housing Industry Regulation Act.

Noting that since its enforcement, HIRA would have been applied to building projects and implemented by the authorities constituted under the law, the court took recourse to its plenary powers under Article 142 of the constitution in order to avoid "uncertainty and disruption" in respect of actions that has already been taken in the past.

Taking recourse to its powers under Article 142 of the constitution, court directed "The striking down of WB-HIRA will not affect the registrations, sanctions and permissions

previously granted under the legislation prior to the date of this judgment."

The court ruling came in a petition by a homebuyers association, Forum for People's Collective Efforts, challenging the constitutional validity of the state's 2017 Act, which is more or less identical to the Centre's RERA enacted a year earlier in 2016.

The petitioner — Forum for People's Collective Efforts — had contended that the HIRA has certain provisions which are either directly inconsistent with the corresponding provisions of the Central enactment; or a virtual replica of the RERA.

## ■ 'Random selection of celebrity candidates ruined party' After poll rout, WB BJP faces 'revolt'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, MAY 4

A massive internal revolt led by prominent leaders including two parliamentarians has engulfed the BJP in West Bengal for its failure to win the Assembly election and to protect its cadres from "getting slaughtered" en masse by the ruling Trinamul Congress workers in post-poll violence across the state.

On Tuesday party veteran Tathagata Roy questioned the random selection of a large number of celebrities as candidates and wastage of party funds after them in an explosive outburst that spared neither central leaders like Kailash Vijayvargiya nor state functionaries like Dilip Ghosh.

On a Facebook post, the former governor of Tripura and Meghalaya alleged, "Film and TV actors who never had anything to do with politics, let alone BJP, were handed tickets by BJP's election management team."

He then named three such candidates — Tanushree Chakraborty at Shyampur, Srabonti Chatterjee at Behala West and Payel Sarkar at Behala East — who were seen celebrating Holi during the polls on a vessel in the river Hooghly at the party of former minister and TMC candidate Madan Mitra, who however won at Kamarhati.

In a scathing attack, Mr Roy said, "These women were so politically stupid that they had gone on a steamer trip with TMC's playboy-politician Madan Mitra less than a month before elections and shot selfies with him. All were roundly defeated. What great qualities were these women possessed of? Kailash Vijayvargiya, Dilip Ghosh & Co must answer. It must not be forgotten that a BJP electoral ticket carries with it substantial money for running the election. Or for other purposes!"

Stunning many in the BJP however, it's Rajya Sabha MP Roopa Ganguly demanded recounting of votes in the polls, like TMC chief Mamata Banerjee wants in Nandigram, and the imposition of the President's Rule and deployment of the Army and the central paramilitary forces in the state.

She posted on Facebook, "#recountingForBengal Am #ashamed of the 1 behaviour by #tmc in my state of #WestBengal #We need #ARMY/ #CRPF to protect our



BJP national president J.P. Nadda accompanied by party leaders meets post-poll violence victims at Sitala Tala Lane, Beliaghata Assembly, Kolkata, on Tuesday. — *PTI*

► A MASSIVE internal revolt led by prominent leaders including two parliamentarians has engulfed the BJP in West Bengal for its failure to win the Assembly election

► ON A FACEBOOK post, former governor of Tripura and Meghalaya Tathagata Roy alleged, "Film and TV actors who never had anything to do with politics, let alone BJP, were handed tickets by BJP's election management team."

#people here. Such political crime & killings can't go on Commoners saying #PresidentsRulein Bengal." But the most shocking admission came from the strongman of Barrackpore and it's BJP MP Arjun Singh. In a candid confession he said, "We have 18 MPs in our party in the state. There are also 77 MLAs with us. Still we can not stand by our party workers. In my personal opinion, we should resign as public representatives if we can not protect our party workers."

Hitting back at Mr Roy, Mr Ghosh, the state BJP chief and Midnapore MP, said, "I do not play the politics of an escapist. Someone can live in the world of imagination. But we fought the polls in reality and won a record number of seats which no one had imagined. We are still fighting to protect our party workers who fought for us."

Srabonti also slammed Mr Roy, saying, "He is such an experienced and veteran party leader. How could he then make a distasteful comment against three of us, being women? Does he have any proof of us enjoying the party funds instead of contesting the polls? If he has, he should prove it."

## MP BYELECTION

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, MAY 4

The ongoing "tussle" between two veteran saffron leaders, Uma Bharti and Prahlad Singh Patel, for the leadership of Lodhi community and growing influence of Lodhi community leaders in BJP are being seen as the major causes of BJP's defeat in the Damoh Assembly bypoll in Madhya Pradesh, sources said on Tuesday. Besides, the brewing resentment among the

## Cashing on crack in saffron party, Cong wrests Damoh seat

## Lodhi leadership: 'Uma, Patel rivalry costs BJP bypoll'

► Besides, the brewing resentment among the local leaders over 'electoral accommodation' of 'party hoppers' by the leadership at the cost of interest of core cadres of BJP are also key factors of setback to the saffron party, said sources.

leader Uma Bharti.

Sources said that the camp of Ms Bharti, who has hitherto enjoyed support among her community, Lodhi, in Madhya Pradesh saw Mr Patel as

her emerging rival following the latter's induction in the Union Cabinet and subsequent growth in his BJP stature.

According to sources, Ms Bharti, who stayed away from 2019 Lok Sabha polls seeking a "brief sabbatical" from electoral politics, was trying a comeback to the centrist of MP politics by consolidating her base among the Lodhi community.

Her camp was of the view that Mr Patel may create a roadblock for her by emerging as the leader

of Lodhi community.

Lodhis constitute around six percent of total population of Madhya Pradesh and are in a position to influence elections in nearly 30 Assembly segments.

The BJP candidate's victory in Damoh would have established Mr Patel as "undisputed" leader of Lodhis in MP since the community constituted around 35% of the population of the constituency, a senior BJP leader who belongs to Lodhi community told this newspaper.

## Nadda: Post-poll violence reminds of Partition days

**Kolkata, May 4:** BJP president J.P. Nadda on Tuesday said the widespread post-poll violence in West Bengal is reminiscent of the atrocities people had to face during the country's Partition, and exhorted party workers in the state to democratically fight the "savagery".

Mr Nadda, who arrived on a two-day visit to Bengal, said BJP workers across India have expressed solidarity with their activists in the state, who are "facing violent attacks". "We are committed to democratically fight this ideological battle and the activities of the TMC, which is full of intolerance," he told reporters at the NSC Bose International Airport here.

"I had heard of the immense atrocities committed during the Partition, but I have never seen such post-poll violence that is occurring in West Bengal after the declaration of election results (on May 2)," the senior BJP leader said.

Mr Nadda said he will visit the residences of BJP workers "killed" in attacks in South 24 Parganas district and speak to their kin. "We want to give this message that crores of BJP workers across the country are with them," he said.

## PIL: Rush Central forces to keep peace in Bengal

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 4

The Supreme Court was moved on Tuesday seeking direction to the centre to deploy central forces to restore law and order in West Bengal hit by post poll violence. Two petitions moved on Tuesday — one by Delhi based lawyer and BJP spokesman Gaurav Bhatia and other by a Chennai based NGO Indic Collective Trust. Petition by Bhatia seeks direction to the Central Bureau of Investigation to conduct an inquiry into "rampant violence, murders and rapes being carried out by the TMC workers across the state."

He has also sought a detailed status report on the FIRs registered, arrests made and steps taken

against the perpetrators of the crimes." The petition by NGO Indic Collective Trust, has sought "urgent reliefs in relation to West Bengal in view of widespread violence and disruption of law and order that has erupted in the aftermath of the assembly elections, and the failure of the state machinery in protecting the life and liberty of its citizens."

It seeks "deployment of the central protection forces, including Armed Forces, to restore law and order in the state of West Bengal, set up a Special Investigation Team headed by a retired Apex Court judge to look into "the politically-motivated targeted PROGROM in West Bengal and an immediate arrest and prosecution of all involved in the heinous offences."

## New Kerala govt only after May 17

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
MAY 4

The new Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala under chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan will be sworn in after a fortnight, after May 17.

CPM acting state secretary and LDF convenor A. Vijayaraghavan told mediapersons that meetings of CPM state committee, state secretariat, meetings of LDF constituents and bilateral meetings between front partners will take place over the next two weeks to finalise the ministerial berths for the allies besides the nominees for ministries and allocated portfolios.

Vijayaraghavan said that the LDF leadership meeting would be held on May 17, which will take a final decision on government formation. After the meeting, Pinarayi Vijayan

and front leaders are likely to call on governor to stake claim for government formation.

Meanwhile, the CPM state secretariat on Tuesday decided to celebrate May 7 as Victory Day marking the stupendous win of the LDF in the Assembly elections. Due to the prevailing Covid situation, the celebrations would be low key and confined to the homes of LDF workers and supporters. They will light lamps and diyas to mark the occasion. There will be no public celebration or meetings.

After the elections, all political parties had set an example by not celebrating the victory in public places in view of the spike in Covid cases.

Preliminary discussions have begun in CPM, CPI and other allies, regarding the government formation and the nominees for ministerial berths.

## Bihar CM declares lockdown till May 15

NAYEAR AZAD  
PATNA, MAY 4

Bihar has been placed under a complete lockdown till May 15 to stop the surge in Covid-19 cases. The announcement was made by chief minister Nitish Kumar after he held a meeting with ministers and officials.

Announcing his decision on social media, Mr Kumar said, "Lockdown has been enforced in the state till May 15 after consulting ministers and officials. The Bihar crisis management group has been directed to release a guideline in this regard".

The decision comes a day after Patna high court stepped in and ordered the government to impose a complete lockdown in the state. The court in its observation had said that "it seems that the state government is heading towards total failure. There is no action plan in this regard. Whatever plan you have submitted is not up to the mark and no steps have been taken. Everything is an eyewash".

Earlier the Indian Medical Association had also urged the Bihar government to enforce a complete lockdown.

## Assam fears beds crisis in hospitals amid Covid spike

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, MAY 4

Amid the Covid positivity rate hovering between 8 to 10 percent, Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday feared that if current trend continues, the state may have to face the shortage of beds in hospitals soon.

Asserting that the state government was keeping a close watch on the situation, Mr Sarma told reporters that they have asked the district administration to identify the localities and wards where the rate of positivity is high. "We intend to start declaring such wards as a containment zone in the first phase," said the minister, clarifying that they are not facing shortage of beds so far but the situation may turn worse if necessary steps are not taken.

The minister also announced that they are going to start vaccination for above 18 youths from Wednesday but it will pick up only after May 7.

He reiterated that there is no other way to check the surge other than controlling the movement of people and following Covid-appropriate behaviour. Meanwhile the state government on Tuesday

## O2 crisis deepens in K'taka as 7 more die

**Bengaluru, May 4:** Oxygen crisis deepened in certain parts of Karnataka on Tuesday, with the deaths of seven Covid patients in Kalaburagi and Belagavi allegedly due to oxygen shortage.

According to sources, four people died in the morning in Kalaburagi government hospital and three in Belagavi government hospital allegedly due to shortage of the life saving gas. However, mining and geology minister Muruges Niranjan, who is in-charge of Kalaburagi district, dismissed the allegation saying that those who died had Covid infection at an advanced stage.

These incidents came close on the heels of deaths of 24 Covid patients in the last two days in Chamarajanagar district hospital allegedly due to oxygen shortage. However, leader of opposition and former chief minister S. D. Ramakrishna, who visited Chamarajanagar district hospital on Tuesday, claimed that 28 and not 23 people had died in the hospital from Sunday morning to Monday morning.

He alleged the incident reflected badly on the governance and demanded the resignation of health minister Dr K. Sudhakar for the poor handling of the Covid-19 situation.

Meanwhile, in Bengaluru a few hospitals raised an alarm against the oxygen shortage to treat the critically ill Covid patients. — *PTI*

► THE STATE government on Tuesday revised the night curfew timing which will come into effect from 6 pm to 5 am daily from Wednesday (May 5)

revised the night curfew timing which will come into effect from 6 pm to 5 am daily from Wednesday (May 5). In the revised SOP issued by the state government, it also said that the shops and other business establishments will be closed from 2 pm which was closing down from 6 pm.

No people or individuals could move out of their home after 6 pm. However, emergency services will be exempted from the order. The government has also imposed new rules for marriage. The new order said that only 20 persons will be allowed to attend the marriage party.

No meetings, public gatherings will be allowed in open space.

The health officials said that the detection of 4,489 Covid positive cases out of 55,939 tests done on Monday, a rise from 2,385 cases the previous day, may be an indication that the second wave is reaching its peak in the state.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



SHARDA  
DEVI

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing lady please inform the undersigned.

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-Mail ID : [cib@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cib@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax: 011-24368639  
DP/642/SW/2021

SHO  
PS. Sagarpur, New Delhi  
Ph.: 011-28522653, 28522652 & 7065036228



## SHORT TAKES

## Odia girl consumes spurious 'lassi', dies

**Bhubaneswar:** A minor girl, who fell ill on May 1 after consuming spurious 'lassi,' died at her home at Kurti village in Odisha's Malkangiri district. The local police on Tuesday arrested a person in this connection for interrogation. On May 1, around 100 people including some children fell ill after drinking the lassi from a shop at Kurti market to beat the scorching heat. Hours after consuming the cold beverage, many of them complained of severe stomach ache, vomiting and nausea. They were admitted to a nearby hospital. Most of them have recovered, reports said. Though the police said the exact reason of the death of the minor girl was yet to be ascertained, the family members of the deceased girl complained that spurious or contaminated lassi claimed the life.

## 2 militants killed in gunfight in J&amp;K

**Srinagar:** Two militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district on Tuesday, police said. The security forces had launched a cordon-and-search operation at Nathipora in the Bomai area of Baramulla after receiving information about the presence of some militants there, a police official said. As the forces were conducting the searches, the militants fired upon them. The forces retaliated, and in the ensuing encounter, two militants were killed, the official said. He added that searches were going on in the area. The identity and group affiliation of the slain militants are yet to be ascertained, a senior police officer said, adding that a foreign terrorist involved in the killing of two councillors and a policeman in Sopore on March 29 was among those trapped at the site. — PTI

## Deshmukh seeks quashing of FIR

**Mumbai:** Former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh has approached the Bombay High Court seeking to quash FIR registered against him by the CBI on charges of corruption. He has also sought protection from any coercive action pending his petition. A division bench of Justice S.S. Shinde and Justice Manish Pitale is expected to hear this petition this week. Apart from quashing of FIR Mr Deshmukh has also sought from court interim relief that pending hearing of his petition no coercive action should be taken against him. Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh, had written a letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray leveling allegations of corruption, misuse of his official position and malpractices against Mr Deshmukh.

## IPL tests Covid positive, halted

■ Continued from Page 1

had led to postponement of two IPL games earlier. The league organisers also issued a formal statement and said the safety of its players and staff was paramount. "The Indian Premier League Governing Council (IPL GC) and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in an emergency meeting has unanimously decided to postpone IPL 2021 season, with immediate effect," the statement read.

The IPL said BCCI will do all it can to ensure that players in the event get back to their homes safely. IPL features stars from England, Australia, and New Zealand, among other countries. "We will take stock if we can find a suitable window later during the year. It could be September, but this all speculation. As of now, we are not conducting it any further," BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla said.

The tournament began on April 9 and ran smoothly before KKR's Covid-19 cases caused initial jitters Monday. The tournament final was planned for May 30. There was cause of concern in Delhi too as groundsmen at the Ferozeshah Kotla Stadium tested positive even though DDCA chief Rohan Jaitley asserted "none of the groundsmen on duty" were among the infected.

Just a few days ago, three Australian players had pulled out of the league, citing Covid-19 concerns amid a devastating second wave of the global pandemic that has overwhelmed the medical infrastructure of the country.

## PM Modi-Boris virtual meet brings deals worth £1bn

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MAY 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold summits this week in virtual format with Britain on Tuesday and the European Union (EU) on Saturday amid huge Covid assistance extended by both. Britain had earlier quit the EU.

PM Modi also spoke, on Monday, to the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in which they discussed the prevailing Covid situation in India including India's ongoing efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic that is battering the country. PM Modi expressed his "appreciation of the EU and its member states for mobilising quick support for India's fight against the second wave of Covid," the MEA said.

On Tuesday, PM Modi will hold a virtual summit with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, during which a "comprehensive Roadmap 2030" will be launched which will pave the way for further expansion and deepening of India-UK cooperation over the next decade across five key areas, namely people-to-people relationship; trade and prosperity; defence and security; climate action; and health-care." Cooperation in battling the pandemic will also be discussed.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar is already in London from May 3-6 to participate in the G7 foreign ministers meeting where India has been invited as a guest country. He will thereafter begin a bilateral visit to the UK.

Ahead of the summit-level meeting with the EU later this week on



External affairs minister S. Jaishankar with US secretary of State Antony Blinken in London. — PTI

Saturday, PM Modi and Ms von der Leyen, on Monday, agreed that the forthcoming India-EU leaders' meeting on May 8 in virtual format was an "important opportunity to provide renewed momentum to the already multi-faceted India-EU relationship."

The trade and investment package unveiled by the British government contains over GBP 533 million of new Indian investment into the UK, covering areas such as health-care and technology.

This includes a GBP 240 million investment by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in the UK into its vaccine business and a new sales office in the country, expected to generate new business worth over \$1 billion.

Serum Institute's invest-

ment will support clinical trials, research and development and "possibly" manufacturing of vaccines, to help the UK and the world defeat the coronavirus pandemic and other deadly diseases, Downing Street said.

British businesses have also secured new export deals with India worth more than GBP 446 million, which is expected to create more than 400 British jobs.

This includes CMR Surgical exporting its next-generation "Versius" surgical robotic system, which helps surgeons perform minimal access surgery being rolled out to hospitals in India.

This export deal is worth GBP 200 million and will result in the creation of 100 new jobs in the UK.

## Jaishankar holds talks with his US counterpart

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 4

With massive American assistance to India pouring in, the United States is monitoring the Covid situation in India closely and will respond positively to any Indian requests, US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken has assured external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar—in their first in-person meeting in London early on Tuesday—sources said, with supply of oxygen and related equipment including anti-Covid drugs like Remdesivir being a key priority.

While there was an in-depth discussion on the coronavir challenge and the immediate requirements of India, the two foreign ministers also discussed how "greater Indian vaccine production can address both India's own needs and the requirement of global public health" and agreed that "India and US will collaborate bilaterally, in Quad format and through multilateral initiatives," sources added.

The US state department, meanwhile, said: "Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met with Indian external affairs minister Dr S. Jaishankar in London to discuss the Covid-19 challenge and addressed the deepening of the US-India comprehensive global strategic partnership."

## ■ During his tenure, separatist militancy in state was at its peak

## Ex-J&amp;K gov Jagmohan passes away

**New Delhi, May 4:** Former Jammu and Kashmir governor Jagmohan passed away after a brief spell of illness. He was 93.

Jagmohan, who died on Monday, had started his career as a bureaucrat and was seen by many as a tough and efficient administrator. He had also served as the lieutenant governor of Delhi and Union minister.

Several dignitaries, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind, paid tributes to him on Tuesday.

"Jagmohan ji's demise is a monumental loss for our nation. He was an exemplary administrator and a renowned scholar. He

## Panchayat polls: BJP takes a hit in Ayodhya

BJP wins just 8 out of 40 zila panchayat seats in Ayodhya

**Ayodhya, May 4:** The BJP has won just eight out of the 40 zila panchayat seats in Ayodhya, a disappointment for the ruling party in the district on which the Centre and the state government have lavished much attention.

The opposition Samajwadi Party claimed to have made major gains in the panchayat elections held last month, saying candidates it backed won 22 district level seats here.

The Bahujan Samaj Party claimed its candidates won four zila panchayat seats in Ayodhya. Lakhs of candidates contested the panchayat elections across Uttar Pradesh -- for seats at four levels including the village and the district -- on free symbols allotted by the State Election Commission (SEC).

The parties had, however, extended support to those in the fray and are now claiming that the results have gone in their favour. Counting of the ballot papers began Sunday at over 800 centres across the state.

Contrary to the BJP's claim of overall success in the state, its Ayodhya unit has conceded that it did not do as well as expected.

## SP too claims victory in UP panchayat polls, Akhilesh calls BJP 'sinking ship'

**Lucknow, May 4:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday said the ruling BJP was a sinking ship, claiming that his own party has scored big in the panchayat polls and was set to win the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

The SP becomes the latest party to claim victory in the state-wide panchayat elections, for which ballot papers were being counted since Sunday.

On Monday, the BJP and the AAP claimed they had won a major chunk of the

seats in the four-phase elections. Mr Yadav said by voting for the SP, the people of the state had done a tremendous job of saving democracy, and also referred to assembly poll results in West Bengal, where the Trinamul Congress defeated the BJP.

The four-phase panchayat polls were fought on free symbols allotted by the State Election Commission (SEC). Political parties, however, supported candidates for lakhs of posts from village to the district panchayat level. — PTI

Masjid land dispute. The Samajwadi Party claimed to have won three of the four zila panchayat seats there, leaving one for an independent candidate.

Commenting on the result, SP leader Awadhesh Prasad said people in rural areas are facing a lot of problems under the BJP government.

Among them is the issue of stray cattle destroying crops, which he claimed has driven some farmers to suicide. — PTI

## Cong declares prize to trace 'missing' MP mantri

**Bhopal, May 4:** The Madhya Pradesh Congress on Tuesday claimed state health minister Dr Prabhuram Choudhary is "missing" at a time when people are facing various problems due to the spike in Covid cases, and offered a reward of ₹11,000 to trace him.

Addressing a press conference via video-confer-

ence, MP Congress working president Jitu Patwari said nobody knows where is the state's health minister.

"If someone can trace him, the Congress will give a reward of ₹11,000. What is his contribution to the state's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic? Zero," the MLA claimed. However, BJP state secretary Rajneesh Agrawal

termed it as a "political gimmick" of the Congress. The minister and the entire health department are working in this time of crisis. If Patwari want to meet the minister, he can directly call him, Agrawal said.

Mr Choudhary was recently seen campaigning for the Damoh Assembly bypoll in MP. — PTI



Jagmohan

always worked towards the betterment of India. His ministerial tenure was marked by innovative policy making. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," PM Modi tweeted.

Jagmohan was appointed Jammu and Kashmir governor in 1984 and completed his five-year tenure.

As militancy erupted in Jammu and Kashmir, he was made the governor again in 1990 but was removed within a few months as differences between him and the then V.P. Singh-led government at the Centre grew over tackling militancy in the region.

Jagmohan then joined the BJP and represented the party in the Lok Sabha a number of times from New Delhi. His tenure as a Union minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government earned him praise from many quarters.

In his condolence message, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu said, "His (Jagmohan) exceptional

contribution to the nation as governor of Jammu and Kashmir will always be remembered. The country has lost an excellent administrator in his death. President Kovind tweeted, "In the demise of Jagmohanji, the nation has lost a unique town planner, able administrator and man of letters."

His administrative and political career was marked by unparalleled brilliance. His death leaves a void that will be felt forever, he said.

Taking to Twitter, Union home minister Amit Shah said, "Shri Jagmohan Ji will always be remembered for his remarkable tenure as the governor of J&K." — PTI

## 100m-yr-old bones of sauropod dinosaurs found in Meghalaya

**New Delhi, May 4:** Researchers have identified fossil bone fragments of sauropod dinosaurs dating back to about 100 million years from an area around West Khasi Hills District in Meghalaya.

The yet-to-be-published findings were made during a recent field trip by researchers from the Geological Survey of India's Palaeontology division in North-East.

The GSI researchers noted that this is the first record of sauropods of probable Titanosaurian origin discovered in the region.

Sauropods had very long necks, long tails, small heads relative to the rest of their body, and four thick,

pillar-like legs. They are notable for the enormous sizes attained by some species, and the group includes the largest animals to have ever lived on land. The finding makes Meghalaya the fifth state in India after Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu and the only state in the North-East to report Sauropod bones having titanosaurian affinity, they said. Titanosaurs were a diverse group of sauropod dinosaurs, including genera from Africa, Asia, South America, North America, Europe, Australia and Antarctica.

"Dinosaur bones from Meghalaya were reported by GSI in 2001 but they

were too fragmentary and ill-preserved to understand its taxonomic identification," said Arindam Roy, Senior Geologist, Palaeontology Division, GSI.

"The present find of bones is during fieldwork in 2019-2020 and 2020-21. The last visit of the team was in February 2021. The fossils are presumably of Late Cretaceous, about 100 million years ago," Mr Roy told PTI.

He noted that the best-preserved fossils are limb bones, adding the type of curvature, development of lateral and proximal margins of the partially preserved bone are indicative of it being a humerus bone. — PTI

## Eyeing 2024, Opp. parties thinking of 'Federal Front'

■ Continued from Page 1

Party led by the Gandhis which seemed to be somewhat reluctant.

A senior Congress leader, who is part of the pressure group (G-23), went to the extent of saying that the Congress could even "split" on the issue of a regional satrap-led Federal Front. He argued that even though the Congress had been "neutralised and lost its clout in the Opposition space, the family would still try to control the narrative". He said that the only way for Congressmen to support such a federal front was to "bypass the family." He then added: "At the end, Congress could split."

Talking about Opposition unity, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy too expressed his reservations about the Congress. "We don't trust the Congress," he said. "On one hand the Congress projects a secular image and on the other they join hands with fundamentalist outfits like Abbas Siddiqui's Indian Secular Front in

West Bengal and the Muslim League in Kerala for political gains," he pointed out. Mr Roy said that the Congress has to go in for a "course correction" if it wanted to play any significant role in Opposition unity.

On forming an Opposition front, Mr Roy felt that it has to be done on the lines of Opposition unity in 1977. He maintained that all the Opposition parties need to come under one umbrella. Besides major regional and Opposition outfits, which include the RJD, Samajwadi Party, BSP, TMC, BJD, NCP, DMK, TRS, YSR Congress, Shiv Sena and CPI(ML), there are a few hundred smaller regional outfits. "There are over 2,000 big and small regional parties. All these outfits need to come on one platform to challenge the tyrannical rule of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah," he said. Saying that the Congress continued to remain an "important player" at the national level, Mr Roy hoped that the party would get off its high horse and play a "sup-

porting role".

Mr Roy insisted that there has to be a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) focusing mainly on the economy and how to contain the divisive politics of the BJP. The slogan of "Modi hatao" would not work, he said. It can be mentioned that in 1972, the then Opposition raised the slogan of "Indira hatao", which Indira Gandhi successfully countered with her slogan of "Garibi hatao". People voted to removed poverty, not Indira. Mr Roy said that the catchphrase needed to be something like "desh bachao" (save the nation).

On the issue of Ms Banerjee emerging as the face of the Opposition, Mr Roy argued that the West Bengal poll results had a "national impact". Even though DMK leader M.K. Stalin "won a great victory", his electoral triumph was a "foregone conclusion", he said. In contrast, Ms Banerjee was up against the entire might of the Centre and its machinery. "It was a direct fight between Modi and Mamata," he said.

## 448 Covid deaths in Delhi

■ Continued from Page 1

433 new Covid positive cases, 2 deaths and 111 recoveries in the last 24 hours. Total cases stand at 32,956 and active cases at 2,391.

UP reported 25,858 new cases and 352 fatalities in the last 24 hours, as per the state health department. Meanwhile, the ICMR has issued an advisory for Covid testing, saying that laboratories are facing challenges in meeting the expected target due to the extraordinary caseload and staff contracting the infection. According to the advisory, RT PCR test must not be repeated in any individual who has tested positive once either by RAT or RT PCR. According to the Union health ministry's discharge policy, no testing is required for Covid recovered individuals at the time of discharge, the document states.

"The need of RT PCR test in healthy individuals undertaking interstate domestic travel may be completely removed to reduce load on laboratories," the guidelines state.

## PM calls Bengal gov after post-poll clashes escalate

■ Continued from Page 1

Monday. The 14 deceased also include five from Burdwan East. Of them, four were from the ruling TMC. While two of them - Shahjahan Shah and Bibhas Bag - were killed in Nabagram in Jamalpur, another, Ganesh Mullick, was beaten to death at Samaspur in Raina with an aged TMC panchayat member Srinibas Ghosh at Ketugram in three separate attacks by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

At Nabagram in Jamalpur, a female CPI(M) worker, Kakali Khetrapal, was hacked to death by a group of TMC workers during an attack on her home. Apart from the killings, several BJP

offices and many party workers' houses were vandalised across the state.

On Mr Modi's worries, Mr Dhankhar tweeted, "Prime Minister called and expressed serious anguish and concern at the alarmingly worrisome law and order situation @MamataOfficial. I share grave concerns @PMOIndia given that violence, vandalism, arson, loot and killings continue unabated. Concerned. Must act in overdrive to restore order."

Lashing out at Mr Modi immediately, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien tweeted, "PM makes a call to West Bengal governor on 'political violence'.

(Exaggerated 214%). Stop the stunts, Mr Prime Minister. Work the phones on #COVID19India."

In a series of tweets earlier Mr Dhankhar said, "Police @WBPolice @CPKolkata must end senseless political violence, vandalism, arson, killings and intimidation that shames democracy. Bengali diaspora world over has expressed concern over alarming lawlessness. Why post poll violence only WB? Why this assault on democracy? Reports indicate horrendous state of affairs. Horrified people are fleeing to save themselves. Flooded with SOS appeals. Harmads are on a killing and destruction spree.

## HC sends Centre contempt notice

■ Continued from Page 1

observed. The bench, which heard for nearly five hours the matter relating to the oxygen crisis and other Covid-19 related issues that Delhi is grappling with, said: "We see the grim reality every day of people not able to secure oxygen or ICU beds in hospitals which have reduced

Dawra (senior Central government officers) on Wednesday," it said.

The bench also said just because the Delhi government earlier demanded less oxygen, therefore the people of this city should suffer and the Centre will ignore the revised requirement and will let people die. — PTI



## THE ASIAN AGE

5 MAY 2021

### Rank and file let down, BJP keeps stony silence

What's going on inside the BJP after the stinging electoral rebuke the party received in the just held Assembly polls in West Bengal and Kerala, and the less than enthusiastic response in other poll-bound states, may only be guessed at. Unlike other political parties, the BJP bars it doors to the world unless it has something to say. Dissent is monitored and tamped down hard. The party's mentor, the RSS, is an even more of a bamboo curtain sort of outfit.

Therefore, the evaluation of the recent state elections by the leadership — if the propaganda component, of which enough can already be heard on television through worshipful anchors, is to be discounted — is likely to remain something of a state secret for now. At lower levels, however, disappointment — even bitterness toward the top leadership in Delhi — is writ large.

On Tuesday, this newspaper reported voices from below of the party faithful in West Bengal. The fingers are pointing at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, and the loutish state BJP president, Dilip

**The just ended polls are not just a common story of a poll reverse. They constitute a testament framed within well-documented policy collapse**

with AIADMK, it won four seats. But these will be viewed as chimeric — here today, gone tomorrow. The party has no base to speak of in the state and commonly attracts hostility. In the UT of Puducherry it brought down the Congress government through defections, and then tied up with a regional party to form government. Like in TN, this too cannot be a moment to savour. In Assam, the BJP has indeed done well by resorting to its usual game of religious polarisation, and returned to power. But polling percentages of rivals suggest there is not that much to choose between the winning side and the Congress-led Opposition front.

For the past five years, the BJP rank-and-file took policy disasters such as demonetisation and botched GST in its stride, as indeed did the voter. The overarching communal motif of punishing “the other” has won the day for the most part. For the rest, the BJP was busy overturning electoral verdicts in states and forming governments anyway, as constitutional bodies and state institutions became accomplices or mute witnesses to political crime.

But all this was before the Chinese intrusion and continued occupation of traditionally Indian territory, and before the Covid crisis. Now, it is hard to do so much false propaganda, a speciality of the ruling party and its infamous IT cell, as to efface from the public mind images of flames leaping out of crematoriums in every part of India.

The just ended polls are not just a common story of a poll reverse. They constitute a testament framed within well-documented policy collapse — negatively affecting employment and growth, besides the monumental Covid failure — which has made this country an object of international pity and derision.

The leadership is uncharacteristically quiet. This is because much is at stake.

### The Kerala lesson

Kerala's election results giving a consecutive second term for a government in the last 43 years gives out the signal that there is no alternative to good governance which can make people think beyond their basic identities while exercising their franchise. It has proved to the Opposition that there is no alternative to hard work in politics; it has also left a message for the media that it would lose credibility if it does not follow principles of fair journalism and starts following its own agenda.

The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic government swept to power on the back of the support it has received from people across sections, especially the most vulnerable ones. The Pinarayi Vijayan government ensured that the entire state machinery was on its feet when life was thrown out of gear by an epidemic, a pandemic and two back-to-back floods in four of the five years when it was in power. It discovered innovative routes to fund infrastructure; political will alone helped complete projects worth tens of thousands of crores of rupees. They all paid rich electoral dividends, too.

The LDF, however, will have to fight a tougher battle this term against the communal forces that are waiting in the corner. The LDF has ensured that the BJP closed the account it had opened in the last elections but the reach of the communal forces across followers of all religions is on the rise. The LDF will have to ensure that it gives no room for these forces to manipulate the minds of the people and make a gain. The outgoing government drew flak for its running of the home department, thanks to a spree of encounter killings and the reckless use of UAPA; it will have to realign its policy in tune with that of the left parties. Holding the Kerala society together while moving on the path of development is the task waiting for the new government.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUBHAKAR

The Asian Age office is located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



### After Bengal, Opp. must devise national strategy



Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

What beyond the cathartic moment? This is a question that every victor and loser in the just-completed round of elections to the Assemblies of four states and one Union territory must ask themselves. If the newly elected or re-elected satraps mostly post haste take charge and face challenges on the twin fronts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the personal economic crises faced by millions of people, they will simultaneously attempt to reposition themselves in the evolving national political narrative. And make no mistake, there is a distinct possibility that historians of the future will find in these days as either the tipping point for this government, or the time when it steered its ship out of the choppy waters.

Only diehard supporters of the present government will give greater weightage to the positives beyond the failure to win West Bengal. Yes, there are signs of optimism for the BJP: Returning to power in Assam, victory of the combined NDA coalition in Puducherry, the absence of a landslide against the alliance in Tamil Nadu and even a surprise victory of the BJP candidate against actor Kamal Hasan from Coimbatore. In a party where sycophancy crosses levels recorded in Indira Gandhi's Congress(I) party, congratulations are likely to be heaped on the power duo in the party; after all, the BJP started as a party of the Hindi heartland in 2014, and thereafter steadily made inroads in the southern and northeastern parts of India.

But let there be no denying that victory in West Bengal was what

mattered most. For eight years since the charge of the saffron brigade started, the state was considered as the final frontier. This explains the extent of time and energy invested in the campaign by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. West Bengal was the sought after trophy. Consolation prizes shall not suffice for this requires the Central government to negotiate on several issues from a position that is undeniably weaker than what they would have been the case if West Bengal was wrested.

The verdict makes it imperative for the Centre to stop playing the game of one-upmanship with the states, specially in tackling Covid-19. Apportioning responsibility now after having taken complete charge last year must stop. The adversarial style of engaging with state governments while coping with the ferocious second wave has to be replaced with cooperative federalism, which was once one of Narendra Modi's oft-repeated phrases. Several steps need to be taken to meet the immediate crisis as well as the mid-term and long-term requirements to overcome the situation arising out of rampant spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

To get its political mojo back, Prime Minister Narendra Modi must consider the unimaginable — taking a step backwards to ensure that the farmers who are now agitating on the borders of Delhi return home amicably. The BJP will have to plan on ways to meet the electoral challenge in three states where it is in power and which are due to hold elections next year — Goa, Uttarakhand and, most crucially, Uttar Pradesh. Increased net-

working among the Opposition parties, so evident during the West Bengal elections when several leaders appeared on the Trinamul Congress' platforms, will be an added headache for the BJP.

Mamata Banerjee was congratulated by almost every Opposition leader in the country but it would be premature to assume the emergence of an all-encompassing anti-BJP Opposition front any time immediately. There were previous occasions, most famously in 2015 after the BJP's defeat in Bihar, where similar hopes were eventually belied. The chief minister of West Bengal visualises a role for herself, indicative in her promise that uprooting “communal forces” from Delhi will be her next task. For this ambition to come remotely close to fruition, the Opposition parties will be required to sink their differences and put local aspirations in various states on hold.

What is crucial to the formation of any anti-BJP conglomerate is the posture of the Congress Party. Will it cede its claim to be the leader of an Opposition bandwagon in favour of a regional leader with whom it has locked horns in the past? After all, the Congress had formed an alliance with the Left Front in West Bengal even though the two parties were locked in a direct contest in Kerala. Left with a barely three per cent voteshare in West Bengal, it is time for the Congress to scale down its ambitions and see itself as a slightly bigger regional party. Something like what the Janata Dal used to be in the last 1980s and early 1990s before its split into smaller factions.

**What is crucial to the formation of any anti-BJP conglomerate is the posture of the Congress Party. Will it cede its claim to be the leader of an Opp. bandwagon?**

Besides Mamata Banerjee, two other anti-BJP regional leaders emerged victorious. DMK president M.K. Stalin's chances of being a claimant for a national role on the Opposition front was dented by fact that the Edappadi K. Palaniswami-led AIA-DMK was not completely rejected by the electorate. Pinarayi Vijayan, despite his image of being a competent administrator, has the handicap of having a CPI(M) label. It's true that there was a time when a United Front government under Jyoti Basu was a distinct possibility, back in the 1990s, but the Left had a much bigger national footprint at that time and the then West Bengal chief minister's personal stature was far higher.

It is too early for the Opposition parties to begin discussing alliances. But they must begin with breaking bread and discussing the biggest challenges the nation faces now, and forge common ground on tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. Rahul Gandhi consistently flags issues that require prioritisation and discussions could begin centring on the suggestions made. Opposition parties have to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each party and leader and allocate responsibility accordingly. Care of course must be taken to prevent Trojan horses from crashing this effort. Ms Banerjee, after this landslide victory, will expect the leadership as her rightful claim. But she, like many other Opposition leaders, have to stop being “Chhota Modis” and be more accommodative. There are no shortcuts to successfully upstaging the present ruling setup, and playing the game patiently shall be crucial.

*The writer is an author and journalist based in the Delhi-NCR region. His books include The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right and Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times. He tweets at @NilanjanUdwin.*

#### LETTERS

##### IDEA OF INDIA

The historic verdict of West Bengal has materialised just because of a uniting of sane voices from around the state with moral support arriving from the rest of India as well. It is a decisive mandate against negativity. The message is clear — enough is enough. By keeping at bay the merchants of hate, the state has indeed retained its inherent humanity. This also marks the grand victory of federalism and diversity as manifested in the idea of India.

Kajal Chatterjee  
Kolkata

##### BSY TO BLAME

KARNATAKA'S FIGHT against Covid-19 has faced many pitfalls right from the start with chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa failing to rein in his warring ministers during the initial days. His inability along with that of concerned ministers to evolve a strategy to counter the second wave explains the lack of strong political leadership in this hour of health crisis. Authorities insists that the deaths in Chamarajanagar were not linked to non-availability of oxygen and that the deceased had comorbidities. But the fact remains that all the dead were on oxygen support and it is unlikely that they would all succumb together to their comorbidities in a span of 24 hours. In October, six PSA oxygen plants were sanctioned to Karnataka under PM-Cares, but not one of them is operational as yet.

N. Sadhasiva Reddy  
Bengaluru

##### KANGANA 'RUN-OUT'

ACTOR KANGANA RANAUT is upset at new oxygen plants getting built to meet the rising demand for oxygen amid the coronavirus crisis. On Monday, she tweeted that “we learnt nothing” in “forcefully” taking oxygen from the environment. I find it funny that this news was published in the entertainment section of a daily. That is what her rants have now become. Fittingly, her account was suspended on Tuesday for spreading hate post the declaration of the Assembly poll results in four states and one UT.

Priyanka Mathur  
New Delhi

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

Anita Katyal  
Political Gupshup



### Cong intra-party democracy is first casualty of poor show in state polls

Inner-party democracy in the Congress could well prove to be the first casualty of the outcome of the state Assembly elections declared last Sunday. The Congress was originally scheduled to elect its new president in May but the election was deferred till June on the pretext of the Assembly polls. Rahul Gandhi's camp followers had hoped that a credible performance in these polls would make it easier for the Nehru-Gandhi scion to return as Congress chief. However, Rahul Gandhi's failure to make any impact in these polls has silenced his supporters and led to speculation that the internal election for the party president's post could be further delayed. Congress insiders do not rule out the possibility that Rahul Gandhi himself may decline to take over the party's reins. Then there is a section in the party that wants a non-Gandhi to head the Congress. But it is said Sonia Gandhi is not keen on this option and would prefer to continue as interim president till her son is ready to return as Congress chief.

It now transpires that BJP leaders in West Bengal had informed the Central leadership about its failure to defeat the Trinamul Congress days before the prolonged poll campaign drew to its close. A few state leaders even admitted as much in private conversations to media-persons in Kolkata. Nevertheless, an optimistic BJP had lined up its senior ministers for media sound bites and interviews on the day of the results. As seen on earlier occasions, it would not have been surprising if Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah had come forth to exult over the result. As it happened, there was radio silence from the ministers while word was put out that Mr Modi and his ministers were busy handling the coronavirus pandemic. It was eventually left to the tried and tested BJP spokespersons like Amit Malviya and Sambit Patra to put a gloss on the party's performance. They did try to put down Mamata Banerjee over her defeat in Nandigram but were constrained from getting too jubilant as Mamata Banerjee's failure to win her

own seat was totally eclipsed by her party's emphatic victory in the Assembly polls. The BJP drew solace from the fact that it now occupies the Opposition space in West Bengal and that the Congress and the Left parties have been vanquished.

The BJP may be bemoaning the Assembly election results but the party's failure to dethrone Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal has come as a huge relief for Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Had the party succeeded, his chief rivals in the state — Kailash Vijayvargiya and Narottam Mishra — would have actively campaigned for Mr Chouhan's ouster. Mr Vijayvargiya was handpicked by home minister Amit Shah to supervise the West Bengal election while Mishra was also given key responsibilities in the eastern state. A victory in West Bengal would have automatically given a boost to their ratings in the party and emboldened them to resume their campaign against Mr Chouhan. Both Mr Vijayvargiya and Mr Mishra are eyeing the chief min-

ister's post in Madhya Pradesh.

The Capital's political grapevine is rife with speculation that Delhi lieutenant general Anil Bajjal is on his way out. Though Mr Bajjal is an old Delhi hand and a favourite with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the Centre is said to be of the view that Mr Bajjal's tenure has run its course. According to the buzz in Delhi, the Modi government was also dissatisfied as it felt Mr Bajjal had been unsuccessful in checkmating the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Admi Party. Several names are doing the rounds regarding Mr Bajjal's successor. Former Puducherry lieutenant general Kiran Bedi is among those who figures in this list. If this proves to be true, it would be interesting to see how Ms Bedi and Delhi chief minister will work together. The two were among the leading faces of the 2011 anti-corruption movement but Ms Bedi subsequently left and joined the BJP following differences with Mr Kejriwal and others.

Former Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje and her nephew Jyotiraditya Scindia figured in the list of star campaigners in the recent Assembly elections. While Vasundhara Raje was expected to campaign for the bye-elections in the desert state, newly minted BJP member Mr Scindia was put down for the crucial West Bengal polls. However, Vasundhara Raje failed to turn up for the campaign. It is an acknowledged fact that she is sulking because a concerted effort has been made by the BJP's Delhi leaders to marginalise her ever since she lost the last Assembly election. The party wants to promote a fresh leadership in Rajasthan and end its dependence on Vasundhara. With his aunt backing out, the BJP deputed Mr Scindia to take her place on the campaign trail in Rajasthan. Despite his estranged aunt's absence, the election results showed that Mr Scindia did help the BJP win one of the three bye-elections.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist



## SHORT TAKES

## 15 KILLED, 35 INJURED IN PAK BUS ACCIDENT

**Islamabad:** At least 15 people were killed and more than 35 others injured when a speeding passenger bus fell into a ravine in Pakistan's Punjab province, the police said on Tuesday.

The accident occurred on a motorway in Hasan Abdal area of Attock district. The bus was traveling from Lahore to Mardan in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the police, the bus driver lost control while trying to avoid an accident with another car. The rescue teams shifted the dead and injured to a nearby hospital.

At least 15 people have lost their lives while over 35 others have injured in the incident, the police said. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari expressed grief over the incident.

## EGYPT BUYS 30 RAFALE FIGHTER JETS

**Cairo:** Egypt's military has confirmed it ordered 30 Rafale jets from French defence firm Dassault Aviation to shore up "national security".

The order, which follows the 2015 purchase of 24 Rafale jets, will be financed through a 10-year loan, the military said in a statement late Monday.

Investigative site Disclose had reported earlier on Monday that the order was part of a secret mega-defence deal worth almost four billion euros (\$4.8 billion).

Egypt is the world's third biggest arms importer after Saudi Arabia and India, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Its arms purchases grew by 136 percent over the last decade and it has diversified its sourcing beyond the United States.

## UBER JOINS UK TECH FIRM FOR ELECTRIC CAR

**London:** Uber has teamed up with UK technology startup Arrival to create an electric car for the app-based US ride-hailing firm that will help to cut emissions, the pair said on Tuesday.

The vehicle is expected to enter production in the third quarter of 2023 and the two companies will "explore a strategic relationship in key markets, including the UK and EU", according to a statement.

It comes after six-year-old Arrival, which is creating also electric vans and buses, listed on Wall Street's Nasdaq in March.

"Arrival, the global technology company creating electric vehicles using its game-changing technologies, is partnering with Uber to develop an affordable, purpose-built electric vehicle for ride-hailing drivers," the statement said.

The Arrival car "will address the global need to shift ride-hailing and car sharing services... to electric to reduce emissions and improve air quality in cities", it added.

## MARINE CORPS INSPECTOR GEN. GETS SUSPENDED

**San Diego:** The Marine Corps inspector general, Major General Robert Castellvi, has been suspended amid the ongoing probes into last summer's fatal sinking of a seafaring tank off the Southern California coast, a newspaper reported on Monday.

Nine men died in the accident involving an amphibious assault vehicle July 30 near San Clemente Island. Castellvi becomes the highest-ranking officer to face discipline in the multiple investigations into the disaster, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported. His suspension was announced by the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps commander in a hearing before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness on Monday.

Gen. David Berger, the commandant of the Marine Corps, ordered the suspension last week pending the outcome of the probe, the newspaper said. Castellvi was the commanding general of the Camp Pendleton-based 1st Marine Division until September.

He was named in a previous investigation as someone who has some responsibility in the accident. However, the Marines did not punish him.

## Bibi gets deadline until midnight to form coalition

**Jerusalem, May 4:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced a midnight deadline on Tuesday to put together a new coalition government — or be looking at the possibility of leading his Likud party into the opposition for the first time in 12 years.

Netanyahu has struggled to secure a parliamentary majority since March 23 — when elections ended in deadlock for the fourth consecutive time in the past two years. Despite repeated meetings with many of his rivals and unprecedented outreach to the leader of a small Islamist Arab party, Netanyahu has not been able to close a deal during a four-week window. That window was to expire at midnight, at which point the matter returns to President Reuven Rivlin in the absence of an agreement.

A failure to reach a deal would not immediately push Netanyahu out of office. Rivlin could give him an additional two weeks to form a coalition.

He could give one of Netanyahu's opponents an opportunity to form a government, or in a final move of desperation, send the matter straight to parliament. That would give lawmakers a chance to choose one of their own as a prime minister.

If all options fail, the country would face another election this fall, meaning months of continued political paralysis.

In the March 23 election, Netanyahu's Likud emerged as the largest single party, with 30 seats in the 120-member parliament. But to form a government, he needs to have the support of a 61-seat majority. That task has been complicated in large part by members of his own religious and nationalist base.

The New Hope party, led by a former Netanyahu aide, refuses to serve under the prime minister because of deep personal differences. Religious Zionism, a far-right party that espouses an openly racist platform, supports Netanyahu but has ruled out serving in a government with the Arab partners he has courted. Yamina, another right-wing party led by a former Netanyahu aide, has refused to commit to either him or his opponents.

— AP



Benjamin Netanyahu

er election this fall, meaning months of continued political paralysis.

In the March 23 election, Netanyahu's Likud emerged as the largest single party, with 30 seats in the 120-member parliament. But to form a government, he needs to have the support of a 61-seat majority. That task has been complicated in large part by members of his own religious and nationalist base.

The New Hope party, led by a former Netanyahu aide, refuses to serve under the prime minister because of deep personal differences. Religious Zionism, a far-right party that espouses an openly racist platform, supports Netanyahu but has ruled out serving in a government with the Arab partners he has courted. Yamina, another right-wing party led by a former Netanyahu aide, has refused to commit to either him or his opponents.

— AP



Members of the Lebanese Communist Party burn a make-shift Israeli flag at a sit-in near the town of Naqoura on Tuesday, protesting against resumption of indirect talks on the demarcation of the maritime border. — AFP

## Lebanon, Israel resume talks on maritime border

**Naqoura (Lebanon), May 4:** After a nearly six-month pause, Lebanon and Israel on Tuesday resumed indirect talks with US mediation over their disputed maritime border.

The resumption comes after a new US administration took over. Lebanon has sunk deeper into it economic and financial crisis that started in late 2019 — a culmination of decades of corruption and mismanagement by the political class. The small Mediterranean country is eager to resolve the border dispute with Israel, paving the way for potential lucrative oil and gas deals.

Local media said the talks resumed at a UN post along the border known as Ras Naqoura, on the edge of the Lebanese border town of Naqoura. The Lebanese delegation will speak through UN

and US officials to the Israelis. American Ambassador John Desrocher, who serves as the US mediator, arrived in Beirut on Monday night to take part in the talks.

The US has been mediating the issue for about a decade, but only late last year was a breakthrough reached on an agreement for a framework for US-mediated talks.

The talks began in October but stopped few weeks later. Israel and Lebanon have no diplomatic relations and are technically in a state of war. They each claim about 860 square kilometers (330 square miles) of the Mediterranean Sea as being within their own exclusive economic zones. In the second round of talks, the Lebanese delegation offered a new map that pushes for an additional 1,430 square kilometers for Lebanon. — AP

## GLOBAL | WARMING

## Over 190 countries participated in Paris accord 6 yrs ago Climate vows see world nearing Paris goal

**Berlin, May 4:** Recent pledges by the United States and other nations could help cap global warming at 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, but only if goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to "net zero" by 2050 succeed, scientists said on Tuesday.

More than 190 countries agreed in Paris six years ago to keep average temperature increases below that level — ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 F) — by 2100 compared to pre-

industrial times. The Climate Action Tracker, compiled by a group of researchers who translate emission pledges into temperature estimates, projects that the world is currently set to overshoot the Paris accord's target by 0.9 degrees. But if 131 countries that make up almost three-quarters of global emissions meet their pledged or discussed "net zero" goal, then the 2-degree target could be met, said Niklas Hoehne of the New Climate Institute. That's

0.1 C cooler than the previous optimistic forecast the group made in December. Hoehne said US President Joe Biden's recent ambitious new climate goals had contributed significantly to the revised estimate, along with the European Union, China, Japan and Britain. But the pledges still fall short and have to be further revised going forward, he said. "We have to halve global emissions in the next 10 years," he said. — AP

## Dr Fauci advises India to gather all resources

Country needs to build makeshift field hospitals, says expert

**Washington, May 4:** Terming the situation in India "very desperate", America's top public health expert Dr Anthony Fauci has suggested the government marshal all its resources, including the armed forces, to immediately build makeshift field hospitals, and urged other countries to help with not only materials but also personnel.

In an exclusive interview, Fauci, who is the Chief Medical Adviser to US President Joe Biden, also called for a nationwide lockdown, not necessarily for six months but "for a few weeks" to break the "continuity and transmission of infection."

Dr Fauci's suggestions and dire assessment of India came as the number of new Covid infections in India officially passed 2 crore, almost double the number three months ago. Of these more than 2,20,000 people have died, according to official figures.

In contrast, the United States has recorded 3.2 crore cases and 5,77,000 deaths in a population that's one-fourth of India's 120 crore since the pandemic began. Still, because of India's inadequate healthcare infrastructure, weaker economy and lower standard of living, the suffering has been magnified, especially in the second wave that has led to a huge shortage of oxygen and hospital ICU beds.

The government says the infection rates have consistently dropped since April 30, when it recorded more than 400,000 cases. It reported over 355,000 cases on Tuesday. "Given the fact that India is under such terrible stress right now with the extent of the outbreak, the rest of the world should pitch in to help, similar to what the US is doing," he said.

"The world can help by supplying India with materials, and perhaps even personnel, but certainly materials that they need to adequately address it (the pandemic)," he said. The 80-year-old physician and immunologist, who serves as the director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, on Monday also recommend mass vaccination to arrest the current spread of the deadly disease across India. "Right now, they should start getting as many people vaccinated as they possibly can," Fauci said. — PTI

Washington, May 4: The travel ban imposed by US President Joe Biden for people coming from India, which is exacerbating one of the worst waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, came into effect on Tuesday.

Biden issued a proclamation on Friday restricting travel from India starting from May 4. Certain categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the ban, according to the US State Department. — PTI

## EU reviews China's Sinovac virus vax

**The Hague, May 4:** The European Union's drug regulator says it has started a rolling review of China's Sinovac Coronavirus vaccine to assess its effectiveness and safety, a first step toward possible approval for use in the 27-nation bloc.

The European Medicines Agency said on Tuesday that its decision to start the review is



People walk through an alley near Houhai lake in Beijing during the Labour Day holidays, which take place from May 1 to May 5, on Tuesday. — AFP

## Chinese tourists move with ease as Covid fears recede

**Beijing, May 4:** Sipping bubble tea and dressed in their holiday finest, millions of Chinese travellers flocked to domestic tourist attractions over the May 1 long holiday with Covid-19 fears already a distant memory.

Beijing's historic alleys were packed with camera-wielding visitors on Tuesday while a bride dressed in red tulle took wedding photos with her groom outside the Forbidden City.

## UNITED STATES

## BAN ON INDIA RETURNEES BEGINS TODAY

Washington, May 4: The travel ban imposed by US President Joe Biden for people coming from India, which is exacerbating one of the worst waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, came into effect on Tuesday.

Biden issued a proclamation on Friday restricting travel from India starting from May 4.

Certain categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the ban, according to the US State Department. — PTI

## EU reviews China's Sinovac virus vax

**The Hague, May 4:** The European Union's drug regulator says it has started a rolling review of China's Sinovac Coronavirus vaccine to assess its effectiveness and safety, a first step toward possible approval for use in the 27-nation bloc.

The European Medicines Agency said on Tuesday that its decision to start the review is

based on preliminary results from laboratory studies and clinical studies.

"These studies suggest that the vaccine triggers the production of antibodies" that fight the Covid "and may help protect against the disease," the agency said in a statement. The EMA added that no application has yet been submitted for marketing authorisation. — AP

**Paris, May 4:** The French parliament is set to vote through a new climate change law on Tuesday intended by President Emmanuel Macron to reinforce his green credentials one year ahead of national polls.

The draft legislation is almost certain to be approved in a first reading by the lower house of parliament,

where Macron has a working majority, but it has been heavily criticised by environmental groups.

Campaigners see it as too timid given the pace of climate change globally and accuse the French leader of half-hearted commitment to a cause he has admitted to embracing belatedly. — AFP

## CHINA

Out-of-towners also mobbed popular sites in Shanghai over the weekend, many dragging roller bags and snapping selfies against the city skyline.

In Wuhan, where Covid-19 was first reported in late 2019, thousands of maskless revellers cheered and danced shoulder to shoulder at the outdoor Strawberry Music Festival.

China has largely brought the virus under

control with strict lockdowns and border controls since mid-2020, with only 17 cases among quarantined travellers reported in the country on Tuesday.

The Chinese economy recorded an explosive 18.3 per cent increase in GDP in the first quarter, and life in China has largely returned to normal aside from occasional small outbreaks, even as a devastating new wave of infections overwhelms neighbouring India. — AFP

## Lanka gets 1st batch of Sputnik V shots

**Colombo, May 4:** Sri Lanka has received its first batch of the Russia's Sputnik V vaccine.

The 15,000 doses were flown in early hours of Tuesday to the Indian ocean island nation which is struggling to obtain Covid-19 vaccines because of the delay in getting them from the neighbouring India.

Sri Lanka has ordered 13 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine from

the Russia's Gamaleya Institute. State Minister of Pharmaceutical Production, Supply and Regulation Channa

Jayasuma, and officials from the Russian

embassy were present at the country's main airport to receive the vaccines. Jayasumana said he was hopeful that Sri Lanka would receive the total of 13 million doses of the Sputnik V from Russia in the future. — AP

## UN extends help to Indian authorities

**United Nations, May 4:** The UN team in India is supporting authorities to address the Covid-19 pandemic, including combating misinformation, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said.

Stphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, told reporters at the daily press briefing on Monday that the UN team in India is working to promote the Secretary-General's Verified campaign, which was launched last year to deliver trusted

information and life-saving advice amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Launched in May last year, the Verified initiative is aimed at promoting and sharing verified and science-based content and fact-based advice.

Dujarric said that the United Nations Children's Fund in India continues to help with the national vaccination strategy. The agency is translating messages in many languages and stepping up its work with communities across 16 states, he said. — PTI

## G7 to hold discussion over global threats

**London, May 4:** G7 foreign ministers meet in London for their first face-to-face talks in more than two years on Tuesday, with calls for urgent joined-up action to tackle the most pressing global threats.

China, Myanmar, Libya, Syria and Russia are all on the formal agenda as the ministers from the club of wealthy democracies prepare for a leaders' meeting in Cornwall, southwest England, next month.

They will also discuss violence in Ethiopia, Iran

## USAID ADMIN REVIEWS CORONAVIRUS AID TO INDIA

**Washington, May 4:** USAID Administrator Samantha Power, soon after being sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris, reviewed the ongoing Covid-19 assistance to India and held a virtual meeting with the country's Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, reaffirming that America will work tirelessly to support the people of India in its fight against the deadly contagion.

Power engaged directly with teams facing down the global Covid-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on the current devastating outbreak in India, according to a statement by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), an independent agency of the US federal government primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

Power, the former US ambassador to the United Nations, met USAID's Covid-19 Task Force to discuss America's global relief efforts.

Task Force Executive Director Jeremy Konyndyk and staff briefed her on the status of the US government's deployment of supplies to India, including six planes filled with oxygen supplies, N95 masks, rapid diagnostic tests and medicine.

During the meeting, she reaffirmed that the US will continue to work around the clock to provide support and assistance to its partners in India, and highlighted newly-released guidance, which will make it easier for teams in the field to secure lifesaving Personal Protective Equipment. — PTI

## NORTH KOREA

## PEOPLE WARNED AGAINST COVID STRUGGLE

**Seoul, May 4:** Isolated North Korea is warning its people to brace for a prolonged struggle against the Coronavirus, claiming that broadening outbreaks and muddled immunisation programmes in other countries show vaccines aren't the ultimate solution.

The column published on Pyongyang's official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper came amid questions on when and how vaccines would arrive in North Korea. The UN-backed programme to ship Covid-19 vaccines worldwide said in February that North Korea could receive 1.9 million vaccine doses.

However, Covax has since warned of global shortages because the Serum Institute of India, which is licensed to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine, is putting its supplies into domestic demand. — AP

Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab met his US counterpart Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday with both pushing a firm line on the need for a more unified approach. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,253.51	-0.95
Nifty 50	14,496.50	-0.94
S&P 500*	4,135.43	-1.37
Dollar (₹)	73.86	0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.51	-0.09
Euro (₹)	88.68	0.46
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,758▼97	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.82	1.87
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.015	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.578	-0.028

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Telcos get okay for 5G trials, no Chinese tech

The DoT approved applications of telecom companies—Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and MTNL—for conducting 5G trials but none of them will be using technologies of Chinese entities. The list of telecom gear makers approved for trials include Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung, C-DOT and Reliance Jio's indigenously developed technologies. This means that Chinese gear makers will not be part of the 5G trials.

Steel makers hike prices of HRC, CRC by ₹4,500/t



Steel makers have hiked the prices of hot rolled coil (HRC) and cold rolled coil (CRC) by Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,500 per tonne, respectively, sources said. After the price revision, the cost of a tonne of HRC will be Rs 67,000 and CRC, Rs 80,000. The price revisions have been made in the last three days, the sources said. They said the prices of HRC and CRC could again be increased by Rs 2,000-4,000 per tonne.

RBL Bank Q4 net dives 34% as provisions rise

Small-sized lender RBL Bank reported a 34 per cent decline in its March quarter profit to Rs 75 crore compared to Rs 114 crore in the year-ago period due to provisioning for possible loan losses in the retail unsecured segments. The Mumbai-based lender's net profit for FY21 increased marginally to Rs 508 crore from Rs 506 crore. The bank's core net interest income was down 11 per cent during the quarter at Rs 906 crore.

CIL work slowed as employees catch Covid-19

Coal India Ltd said its operations slowed down with more than 5,400 of its employees and their wards across subsidiaries testing positive for the coronavirus. But offtake rose to 54.1 million tonne last month. "Offtake could have been even higher but the pandemic spread afflicted over 5,400 company's employees and their wards across subsidiaries, including contractual workers, slowing down the operations.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Sales, production halve in busy season

Cold summer for durables

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 4

After a total washout last summer, consumer durables, especially cooling products, are facing yet another difficult summer. While sales are almost half of 2019 summer, production is down by 60 to 70 per cent. "Due to the nation-wide lockdown last year, summer sales were completely lost. This time, the second wave and the lockdowns in some of the states and an overall fear about the pandemic has affected the sales. If we compare with a good summer of 2019, this year's sales are 45 to 50 per cent," said Kamal Nandi, head executive VP, business at Godrej Group. The onset of the summer season was strong, as the distribution channels were stocking up in March. Expected price hikes in April on account of rising commodity prices also led to the demand across the channel. However, the second



Covid wave has been a dampener for secondary sales across key geographies in the country, with the south faring marginally better than other regions, says Motilal Oswal Financial Services. For cooling products like air-conditioners, air-coolers and fans, almost 50 per cent of the yearly sales happens during the March to May season. Further, production also is down to 30-40 per cent of the 2019 summer, as the oxygen needed at production units has been diverted for Covid patients. Most of the units are either shut or working at a

fraction of their capacities, said Nandi. Though manufacturing is down, there is no let up in the uptrend in commodity prices, with prices of metals such as copper, aluminium and steel going up by 16 per cent, 7 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, in a quarter. Prices have zoomed 30 to 60 per cent in a year. The trouble is that despite the higher input costs, consumer durable companies were not able to hike prices in April due to subdued demand and aggressive marketing by deep-pocketed players like Samsung.

DELL AMONG 19 FIRMS APPLIED FOR HARDWARE PLI SCHEME

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 4

The government has received applications from 19 companies for the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for IT hardware.

category IT hardware companies are Dell, ICT (Wistron), Flextronics, Rising Stars Hi-Tech (Foxconn) and Lava. Fourteen companies have filed applications under the 'domestic companies' category, which include Dixon, Infopower (JV of Sahasra and MITAC), Bhagwati (Micromax),

Syrma, Orbic, Neolync, Optimus, Netweb, VVDN, Smile Electronics, Panache Digilife, HLBS, RDP Workstations and Cocomics. The target IT hardware segments under the proposed scheme include laptops, tablets, all-in-one personal computers and servers.

Bajaj pledges ₹200 crore, Tata to fly in O2 tankers

MICHAEL GONSALVES with agency inputs PUNE, MAY 4

Bajaj Group on Tuesday committed Rs 200 crore to India's fight against the deadly second wave of Covid-19, which has paralysed Asia's third biggest economy, even as India's biggest conglomerate, Tata Group, assembled its resources to save precious lives lost from a severe shortage of oxygen.

The Baja Group's pledge of Rs 200 is in addition to the Rs 100 crore that the group had donated last year to fight the pandemic. The Pune-based auto major said the financial support will be utilised to alleviate the on-ground challenges and to build capability and stock resources to tackle a possible third wave.

Bajaj Group facilitated in the procurements of 12 oxygen plants to provide more than 5,000 LPM (litres per minute) supply to rural and urban hospitals along with medical life-saving equipment like oxygen concentrators, ventilators and BiPaps (Bi-level positive airway pressure) to help in treating patients suffering from Covid-19.

"We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all healthcare, sanitation & emergency support staff and local administrations for their dedicated and

tireless effort to contain the spread, amidst adversity.

"As the nation grapples with this second wave of the pandemic, we as a group, continue to remain steadfast in our commitment towards extending all our support and care in helping the affected communities at large to tide through these unprecedented times," Rahul Bajaj, chairman-emeritus of Bajaj Auto, said.

Tata Group will airlift 60 cryogenic oxygen tankers from abroad and build around 400 oxygen generating units that can be used by hospitals in smaller towns.

Besides, the group makes around 5,000 beds available for Covid-care, with various group firms coming together in the fight against Covid-19.

The group is also reskilling some of its staff, especially within Indian Hotels, which has converted many of its hotels into Covid-care facilities.

"As we speak, we are making available around 900 MT of oxygen per day, that is Tata Steel alone," said Banmali Agrawala, president-infrastructure, defence & aerospace and global corporate affairs, Tata Sons.

Agrawala also lauded the government for providing planes from the Air Force to bring some of the containers.

VOLVO CAR INDIA HIKES PRICES

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MAY 4

Swedish luxury car maker Volvo Car India has increased the prices of its luxury sedan S90 and premium SUVs, XC40, XC60 and XC90 ranging from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh effective from May 3. It also hinted that the price of the Volvo models will see another price hike later this year. After the price revision, the Volvo S90 D4 Inscription will be available at Rs 60.90 lakh, while the Volvo S60 T4 Inscription will be available at Rs 45.90 lakh.

Serum leads cross-sector investments into UK

ADITI KHANNA LONDON, MAY 4

Serum Institute of India will invest 240 million pounds in the UK to expand its vaccine business and set up a new sales office, creating a large number of jobs, Downing Street announced as part of plans for a 1-billion pound India-UK Enhanced Trade Partnership creating around 6,500 jobs in Britain.

The announcement came ahead of a virtual summit between Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

The Pune-based vaccine-maker headed by CEO Adar Poonawalla is among a list of nearly 20 Indian companies across sectors such as health-care, biotech and software services to announce significant investment plans in the UK this week. It was also revealed that Serum Institute has started phase-I trials in the UK of a nasal vaccine against the coronavirus.

"The sales office is expected to generate new business worth over \$1 billion, 200 million pounds of which will be invested into the UK," Downing Street said.

"Serum's investment will support clinical trials, research & development and possibly manufacturing of vaccines. This will help the UK and the world to defeat the coronavirus," it said.

—PTI

Bill and Melinda Gates to divorce with \$146 bn at stake

DINA BASS, SOPHIE ALEXANDER & DEVON PENDLETON MAY 4



Bill Gates



Melinda Gates

Bill and Melinda Gates, who for decades have overseen one of history's greatest fortunes and philanthropic operations, said they plan to divorce.

The announcement on Monday that the couple is splitting after 27 years of marriage has the power to ripple through the technology industry, a vast portfolio of business and real estate holdings and into the realms of global health, climate change policy and social issues, including equality for women.

The pair, who command an estimated \$146 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, made no public hint of their financial plans, though they emphasised that they will cooperate on continuing their philanthropy.

"After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage," the two said in a brief statement posted on Twitter: "We have raised three incredible children and built a foundation that works all over the world to enable all people to lead healthy, productive lives."

Bill Gates, the 65-year-old co-founder of Microsoft Corp, ranks as the world's fourth-richest person. Melinda Gates, 56, is a former Microsoft manager who's gained international prominence co-running the Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation. It's already given away more than \$50 billion.

They will remain co-chairs and trustees of the foundation, a spokesperson for the organisation wrote in an emailed statement.

"No changes to their roles or the organisation are planned," according to the statement. "They will continue to work together to shape and approve foundation strategies, advocate for the foundation's issues, and set the organisation's overall direction."

The couple filed for divorce in King County on Monday, an online search of court dockets shows. They have a separation agreement, according to a copy of a divorce petition posted by the website TMZ, which doesn't elaborate on the terms. It calls their marriage "irretrievably broken."

It's the second bombshell divorce among the uppermost ranks of the world's richest people in recent years, following the 2019 separation announcement of Jeff Bezos and MacKenzie Scott.

That split, which divided the couple's stake in Amazon.com Inc, immediately made MacKenzie

one of the world's richest people. In the months that followed, she became one of the most influential philanthropists in the world, giving away billions of dollars to often overlooked causes among billionaire donors.

But for Bill and Melinda Gates, separating assets potentially poses a bigger challenge than dividing the Bezos fortune, which was largely concentrated in Amazon stock.

Bill Gates's net worth originated with Microsoft but shares of the software-maker now probably make up less than 20 per cent of his assets. He's shifted much of his stake into the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation over the years and his exact stake hasn't been disclosed since he left Microsoft's board last year.

Gates's biggest asset is Cascade Investment, a holding company he created with the proceeds of Microsoft stock sales and dividends that's run by Michael Larson. Through Cascade, Gates has interests in real estate, energy and hospitality as well as stakes in dozens of public companies, including Canadian National Railway and Deere & Co.

—Bloomberg

Top jewellery maker to shun mined diamonds

CHRISTIAN WIENBERG MAY 4

Pandora A/S, which makes more pieces of jewellery than any other company in the world, will stop using mined diamonds as part of a broader strategy to drop raw materials associated with unethical production methods.

Despite decades of reform, the global jewellery market remains tainted by reports of human rights abuses at mines and factories. To address such concerns, Tiffany & Co. last year started providing customers with details of newly sourced, individually registered diamonds that trace a stone's path all the way back to the mine.

Pandora, which is based in Copenhagen, said on Tuesday it will now only use diamonds manufactured in laboratories. The company is set to release its first collection using lab-made stones in the UK, and will turn to other



markets in 2022.

The decision to shun mined diamonds comes less than a year after Pandora pledged to stop relying on newly mined gold and silver in its jewellery. By 2025, its entire production will use only recycled precious metals as part of a plan to ensure its operations are carbon neutral within four years.

Pandora's lab-made diamonds are grown from carbon with more than 60 per cent renewable energy on average, a ratio that's set to rise to 100 per cent next year.

The company is taking a

stand on its raw materials as investors increasingly focus on sustainability. Nordea's asset management unit recently said it plans only to hold securities that live up to environmental, social and governance standards across all its portfolios.

To be sure, Pandora uses relatively few diamonds in its production. The company, which has branded itself a maker of affordable trinkets, used mined diamonds in about 50,000 pieces last year out of a total of roughly 85 million pieces of jewellery.

Pandora also highlight-

ed price as a consideration behind its decision. Lab-made stones cost about a third of mined ones and the switch will make diamond jewellery accessible to more consumers, it said.

Global diamond sales fell 15 per cent in 2020 due to lockdowns, travel restrictions and economic uncertainty, according to a research report by the Antwerp World Diamond Centre and Bain & Co. Production of rough diamonds fell 20 per cent in 2020 and prices declined by 11 per cent.

The market for lab-created stones currently enjoys double-digit growth, with younger customers in particular keen to identify sustainable producers, according to the Bain report. The lab-made diamonds will have the same physical characteristics as mined stones, Pandora said. The new collection will include rings, bangles, necklaces and earrings, it said.

—Bloomberg

Chip stocking strategy helps Hyundai: COO

GABRIELLE COPPOLA MAY 4

Hyundai Motor Co. and Toyota Motor Co. kept ordering semiconductors last year even after the pandemic crushed auto sales. Both were rewarded with record April deliveries.

South Korea's Hyundai sold 77,523 units last month, up 128 per cent from a year ago. The Japanese auto giant's US sales grew 183 per cent to 239,311 vehicles, including the Toyota and Lexus brands.

Automakers around the

world idled plants a year ago as part of the broader shutdown to curb Covid-19.

Many carmakers slashed orders for semiconductors to keep a lid on costs. Now, with auto demand roaring back and consumer-electronics companies gobbling up all

the excess chip-making capacity, they've been caught flat-footed.

"Most of our competitors decided to cut the orders," Jose Munoz, Hyundai's global chief operating officer, said in an interview. "We saw the market differently." —Bloomberg

SUSTAINABLE | SOLUTION

Company will feed food waste to crickets and mealworms

Insects eat food waste to become fish feed

JASMINE NG MAY 4

A Singaporean company will feed airport food waste to crickets and mealworms before turning them into fish feed, aiming to cut the country's use of imported feed and offer a sustainable alternative.

Blue Aqua International will partner dnata, an air and travel services provider, to convert organic waste from its catering and ground handling operations at Singapore's Changi Airport into insect protein for aquacultural use, according to a statement on Tuesday.



The project looks to replace traditional fish and soybean meal as the main sources of protein for aquafeed. The insects will eat the

food waste and convert it into body biomass containing about 60 per cent protein. The dried larvae will then be made into feed.

Insects are emerging as a sustainable solution to several problems. Using a fraction of land and emitting less carbon, they turn food waste into feed and offer an alternative source of protein. Insect SAS, a French startup that breeds mealworms to feed fish and pets, attracted money from investors, including "Iron Man" movie actor Robert Downey Jr. in a round of fundraising last year.

The deal will give Singapore's

farmers access to domestically produced animal feed, which is traditionally purchased from overseas. The Southeast Asian nation imports more than 90 per cent of its food and has set a goal to produce a third of its food locally by 2030. It also aims to achieve an overall recycling rate of 70 per cent by then. Currently, less than 20 per cent of Singapore's food waste is recycled.

As part of the partnership, Dubai-based dnata will add Blue Aqua to its list of suppliers to purchase locally farmed seafood for its catering operations.

—Bloomberg

To encourage this, the oil companies floated an expression of interest (EOI) seeking biodiesel made from Uco, offering a fixed price for five years and a guaranteed offtake for 10 years.

As many as 30 LOIs have been issued at the industry level (by IOC, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd) which will give 26.62 crore litre of biodiesel in years to come, it was informed at the function.

India consumed 72.7 million tonnes (about 8,000 crore litres) of diesel in the fiscal year 2021.

The first lot of used cooking oil-based biodiesel blended diesel was flagged off by oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

—PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Padukone tests +ve, hospitalised

**New Delhi:** Legendary Indian badminton player Prakash Padukone has tested positive for COVID-19 and is recovering from the infection at a hospital in Bengaluru. The 65-year-old, who is the first Indian to win the prestigious All England Championships title in 1980, is likely to be discharged later this week. "Around 10 days back, Prakash, his wife (Ujjala) and second daughter (Anisha), they developed symptoms and got themselves tested and the results came out to be positive," Vimal Kumar, a close friend of the legendary shuttler and director at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) said. "They got themselves isolated but after a week Prakash's fever didn't come down, so last Saturday, he was admitted to a hospital here in Bengaluru. He is okay now." — PTI

## BFI official Sacheti dies of Covid-19

**New Delhi:** The Boxing Federation of India's Executive Director RK Sacheti died on Tuesday after battling COVID-19. He was 56. The long-serving administrator was fighting the dreaded infection at a hospital here for the past few days and was on ventilator support. "With a deep sense of sorrow & grief, we inform you that Mr. RK Sacheti, ED (BFI) left for heavenly abode today morning, creating a huge void in the sports world," the BFI said in a statement. BFI President Ajay Singh said Sacheti was the "life and soul" of the national federation. "Indian boxing reaching such heights in the last few years was largely his contribution. We will miss him dearly. Boxing will miss him. Indian sport will miss him. Rest in peace my dear friend. We will always be proud of you," Singh said. — PTI

## FIH Pro League matches put off

**Lausanne:** India's upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League away fixtures against Spain and Germany later this month have been postponed due to the international travel restrictions imposed in the wake of surging COVID-19 cases in the Asian country, the world body (FIH) informed on Tuesday. The Indian men's hockey team was scheduled to play against Spain on May 15 and 16, followed by the two-leg tie in Germany on May 23 and 24. "Since the matches initially planned in London on 8-9 May were also postponed we are currently looking at all potential options to rearrange these matches at a later date," the International Hockey Federation said. — PTI

## Irregularities found in Maradona death

**Buenos Aires:** A medical report on the death of Diego Maradona given to prosecutors said the Argentine legend agonised for more than 12 hours, did not receive adequate treatment and could still be alive if he had been properly hospitalised. The medical panel worked for two months on the report which was written by more than 20 doctors. The document further complicates the defense of seven people under investigation in the case, including brain surgeon Leopoldo Luque and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, both of whom worked for Maradona. — AP

## 4 Indian women to play in Hundred

**New Delhi:** The BCCI has granted No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to four Indian women cricketers, including T20 captain Harmanpreet Kaur, to play in the inaugural 'Hundred' tournament in the UK starting on July 21. Opener Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma are among the four bound for the 100-ball tournament. The name of the fourth player is not yet known. — PTI

## Live on TV

**FOOTBALL**  
Champions League (SF, second leg): Chelsea vs Real Madrid from 12.30am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301.  
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy,  
RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep.Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## INDIA MAY LOSE THE CUP

## T20 World Cup set for UAE shift with 3rd wave expected in Nov

**New Delhi, May 4:** This year's T20 World Cup is set to be moved from India to the UAE with the BCCI acknowledging that none of the participating teams would be "comfortable" coming here because "a third wave" of COVID-19 cases is expected at the time of the event.

While a final decision will be taken in a month's time but it is understood that even the Indian cricket board is jittery about holding the 16-team tournament in October-November after the ongoing IPL had to be suspended because of multiple COVID-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

It's learnt BCCI officials have had very recent discussions with some of the top decision-makers in the central government and a shift to the UAE has been more or less agreed upon. The dates of the marquee competition, which was planned across nine venues, have not yet been finalised.

"The suspension of IPL within four weeks is an indicator that it's not really safe to host a global event of that magnitude at a time when the country is fighting its worst health crisis in last 70 years," a senior BCCI source privy to development said on conditions of anonymity. "There is a chance of a third wave hitting the Indian shores in November. So while BCCI will remain the hosts, the tournament will probably shift to the UAE," he added.

Health experts have warned of a third wave in India in September, a view that has been shared by Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope.

The dire situation in India, where a daily addition of over 3 lakh new



A groundsman fumigates the Arun Jaitley stadium in Delhi.

— IPL

cases has continued for the past many days, has shaken most of the member boards and the ICC is unlikely to take a risk with safety of international cricket teams.

"You can be rest assured that most of the top nations wouldn't like to tour India within next six months unless the situation comes to normalcy. The players and their families would be very wary to travel if they are in the middle of another surge. "So expect BCCI to agree with shift of tournament to UAE," another source also chipped in.

He said IPL's suspension after a string of positive cases has made the officialdom very jittery of taking any more risks.

"The IPL in India was a platform to prove to the world as well as partici-

pating nations that it is safe to host a tournament even when the second wave is hitting its peak.

"It was going well but the bio bubble has now become porous. What's the guarantee it won't happen again in October-November. Nations like Australia, England and New Zealand are almost certain to have travel advisories in place," he argued.

One of the biggest reasons for conducting the tournament in the UAE is that it can be kept to three grounds — Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi — and there is no air travel.

"Look six venues for IPL was always a dangerous proposition when they successfully managed with three during the last edition," the source said.

— PTI

## HOSTING IPL IN INDIA WAS RIGHT CALL, SAYS PUNJAB KINGS OWNER

**New Delhi, May 4:** Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia on Tuesday backed the BCCI's decision to host IPL-14 in India amid the COVID-19 threat, saying that was the "right call" before the situation deteriorated quickly.

Wadia welcomed the decision to suspend the league for the time being. "Best decision has been taken given the circumstances. Lot of people are suffering in India," Wadia said.

As far as hosting the event was concerned at the first place, he said, "Due diligence was done before the IPL but no one is perfect. The right call

was taken to hold it in India ahead of the World Cup it is just unfortunate that situation deteriorated so quickly."

Wadia added, "If the ground staff wasn't part of the whole bubble then that needs to be fixed. Also cutting down the venues also need to be considered forward to reduce the risk."

He said holding the league in UAE, which hosted it last year due to the pandemic back home, would not made any difference.

"Everyone tried their best sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't."

— PTI

## BCCI assures safe return for foreigners

**New Delhi, May 4:** IPL chairman Brijesh Patel on Tuesday said the BCCI will "find a way" to send the league's foreign recruits back to their respective countries after the event was suspended indefinitely due to a COVID-19 outbreak in its bio-bubble.

"We need to send them home and we will find a way to do that," Brijesh said when asked how will the foreigners return home but did not elaborate beyond that.

The foreigners involved in the lucrative league are

concerned about returning to their respective countries due to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of a deadly resurgence of the pandemic in India.

The BCCI had assured foreign players of a safe return earlier as well. The IPL had 14 Australian players left, after three pullouts a few days ago, along with 10 from New Zealand and 11 Englishmen. South Africa had 11 players in the league, which also featured nine West Indians, three Afghans and two

● **The foreigners involved in the IPL are concerned about returning to their respective countries due to travel restrictions imposed.**

from Bangladesh.

In a joint statement, Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association said they respect their government's decision to suspend flights operating out

of India due to the COVID surge here and will not seek exemptions for its players stuck in the country ravaged by a deadly second wave of the pandemic.

"CA is in direct contact with the BCCI as they work through plans to ensure the safe accommodation and repatriation of Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators back home to Australia. CA and the ACA respect the decision of the Australian Government to pause travel from India until at

least May 15 and will not seek exemptions." They further stated,

Reacting to the move, Cricket South Africa (CSA) said it is in contact with its players who will need to home quarantine on arrival from India as per the World Health Organization recommendations.

"Those travelling back to South Africa will undergo home quarantine in line with the current World Health Organization recommendations," it said in a release. — PTI

## Chelsea up for Real challenge BCCI got lulled into a false sense of security



Real Madrid players arrive in London for their Champions League second leg match against Chelsea.

— Real Madrid

form.

Havertz and Ziyech started the first leg on the bench, but Tuchel has remained loyal to Werner since taking charge in January despite his lack of goals.

The need for a prolific goalscorer to back up the significant defensive improvement since Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard has even sparked rumors Abramovich could be forced to spend big again.

Chelsea are among a number of clubs interested in Borussia Dortmund's Erling Haaland.

But Tuchel remains confident that Werner can prove to be the consistent finisher the club need.

"You will not find one manager who will not add a 20-goal striker to his squad. I cannot have enough of them, if you can guarantee

that," said Tuchel when asked about interest in Haaland.

"But this is what Chelsea bought, they bought Timo Werner and he is a 20, 30-goal striker a year. Now he is struggling a little bit, for the first time in his career."

"In any transfer, there are risks of adaptations, change of country, change of mentality. It needs time. It's not a puzzle where you identify one piece and you go out and find the exact piece, it's more than that and that's why there is no rush and no panic."

"I'm very happy with this group in the semi-final," he said.

"We feel ready for a big fight and I'm pretty sure that we need a big performance because Real Madrid will give us a hard time," he added.

Meanwhile, Real Madrid could see the return of captain Sergio Ramos for the second leg against Chelsea. The central defender has returned to training after a muscle injury and might make it back to the squad for Wednesday's match.

Ramos has been key for Madrid in the Champions League. He missed Madrid's last round of 16 matches in each of the last two seasons because of suspensions.

Left back Ferland Mendy may also return to the squad after not playing in the first leg because of injury, and Eden Hazard could start against his former club after playing a few minutes last week in Madrid. — Agencies



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

**The choice of venues in India seemed dictated by political exigency rather than with acute understanding of the pandemic. Why Ahmedabad was chosen for the play-offs and final without the city having a franchise in the league is well-known.**

talked off as may have been a key factor in causing the crisis.

The BCCI should have been plugged in to the Covid (mis)management in the country, and could have shifted the tournament elsewhere, maybe the UAE, in March itself.

Sources within the Board aver that this proposal was mooted by some and even agreed upon by some franchisees and players, but never moved forward as the powers that be wanted the league to be played in India at any cost.

It's not hard to believe that this decision was stoked by political motive. The choice of venues in India too seemed dictated by the political exigency rather than with acute

understanding of the pandemic.

Mumbai, Delhi were hotspots and could have been avoided. Why Ahmedabad (numbers for this city were massively fudged) was chosen for the play-offs and final without the city having a franchise in the league is well-known. Matches could have been schedule instead in Hyderabad and Mohali, which also have teams.

In such a fragile environment, everybody involved in the league had to be on utmost guard. Beyond that, luck also plays a part. But there is little doubt that the BCCI got lulled into a false sense of security, much like the central government in the national context, and took its eyes off the ball.