

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 12 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 38.9°C
Min: 29.1°C
RH: 38%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Rain likely in evening. Max/Min temp. 38/28°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava; Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha
Padyami till 3.05 am (Thursday)
Star: Kritika till 2.39 am (Thursday)
Variyam: 1.05 pm to 2.53 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.47 am to 12.38 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HILARI CALENDAR

Ramzan 29,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.39 am

Zohar: 12.22 pm

Asar: 4.41 pm

Maghrib: 6.45 pm

Isha: 7.58 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.25 AM

MOONSET TODAY 6.23 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.45 PM (TODAY)

SEHRI: 4.16 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



People have learned to live with Corona... now, they need to learn to live without oxygen!

SHORT TAKES

Petrol, diesel price hiked for 6th time

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices on Tuesday were hiked for the sixth time this month, propelling prices to cross the ₹100-a-litre-mark in places from Nanded in Maharashtra to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. Petrol price was hiked by 27 paise a litre and diesel by 30 paise per litre.

Random aviation breath analyser

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed that air traffic controllers and five per cent of pilots and cabin crew on duty will undergo random breath analyser tests for next three months in view of the pandemic. Justice Prathiba M. Singh further directed the ATCS, pilots and cabin crew to give an undertaking that they have not consumed any alcohol or psychotropic substance within 12 hours prior to a flight.

Docs warn over cow dung therapy

Ahmedabad: Doctors in Gujarat have warned against a so-called 'cow-dung therapy', saying smearing of cow dung on the body does not give protection against coronavirus but may cause other infections including mucormycosis. Some people were visiting a cow shelter to take the therapy, believing it increases immunity against Covid-19.

ED files case on Anil Deshmukh

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a criminal case under the anti-money laundering law against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in an alleged 'bribery' case, official sources said on Tuesday. They said the case registered under sections of the PMLA was filed after studying a CBI FIR filed against Deshmukh in April.

WORLD | 5

Germany bans data sharing by Facebook

SPORTS | 8

Osaka raises doubts over Olympics

TABLOID

Golden Globes 2022 dropped over diversity

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10-day lockdown to fight Covid-19

Four-hour relaxation from 6 am to 10 am every day; KTR heads task force to buy medicines

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

The Telangana state government announced a lockdown in the state for 10 days from Wednesday, with a four-hour exemption for people to complete their essential work between 6 am and 10 am.

The Cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao here on Tuesday, decided to enforce the lockdown while exempting agriculture, health, construction, warehousing, e-commerce, door delivery of food and a few other sectors. The Cabinet will meet again on May 20 to review the situation and decide on continuation of lockdown.

During this 10-day period testing for Covid and vaccination will continue. Banks and ATMs will operate as usual, government offices will function with one-third staff, LPG cylinder supply will be normal and supply of water and sanitation works both in urban and rural areas have been exempted. Procurement of paddy will continue and so will employment guarantee works. All establishments were directed to pay the full salary to their employees during the lockdown.

The Cabinet decided to close down cinema halls, swimming pools, clubs, gyms, amusement parks and sports stadia. City transport and metro services will be restricted between 6 am and 10 am and public distribution system shops will be open only during the four-hour window.

Medical shops and hospitals will run round-the-clock. The lockdown does not cover goods vehicles carrying commodities on highways, while passenger vehicles will be stopped.



An ambulance carrying Covid patient drives by as hundreds of people through a liquor store in Hyderabad after the government announced lockdown on Tuesday. Social distancing norms were totally ignored. — S.SURENDER REDDY

● **THE GOVERNMENT** felt such pressure that it had to approve the lockdown and inform the High Court of the decision, besides leaking it to media while the Cabinet meeting was in progress.

● **NEWS OF lockdown** was out in 20 minutes of the Cabinet meeting

Filling stations on highways will stay open. Interstate bus services will be suspended.

After recovering from Covid, IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao was given the crucial responsibility of heading a task force that should ensure regular procurement and supply of medicines and injections. The Chief Minister also called manufacturers of remdesivir from the Cabinet

meet and asked them to supply adequate quantities to the state.

The government which vehemently opposed the lockdown, as was evident from the statements of the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar two days ago, had a rethink with the Telangana High Court taking a serious view against the government's handling of the second wave of Covid-19.

The government felt such pressure that it had to approve the lockdown and inform the High Court of the decision, besides leaking it to media while the Cabinet meeting was in progress.

While the Cabinet met began at 2 pm, news of lockdown was out within 20 minutes.

■ **Page 2: Sudden lockdown surprises HC**

WHAT'S PROHIBITED

1. Cinema halls, amusement parks, clubs, swimming pools, gyms, religious places

WHAT'S PERMITTED

- * Medical services including vaccination
- * E-commerce (delivery) of goods including food, pharmaceutical, and medical equipment
- * Supply chain of essentials including milk, vegetables, groceries
- * Movement of LPG cylinders
- * Construction activities if workers are available at site
- * Agricultural operations
- * Cold storage and warehouses
- * Banks/ATMs, insurance, related services
- * Marriage related gatherings with maximum of 40 persons
- * Funerals with not more than 20 people
- * Sanitation, water supply and power services

26 Covid patients die in Goa hosp., min seeks probe

Panaji, May 11: Goa health minister Vishwajit Rane on Tuesday said 26 Covid-19 patients died at the state-run Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours and sought an investigation by the High Court to find out the exact cause.

He said these fatalities occurred between 2 am and 6 am "which is a fact", but remained evasive about the cause.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who visited GMCH, said the gap between the "availability of medical oxygen and its supply to Covid-19 wards in the GMCH might have caused some issues for the patients" even as he stressed that there is no

● **GOA HEALTH minister** Vishwajit Rane said these fatalities occurred between 2 am and 6 am "which is a fact", but remained evasive about the cause.

scarcity of oxygen supply in the state.

Speaking to reporters, Rane admitted the shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen at the GMCH as of Monday.

"The High Court should investigate the reasons behind these deaths. The HC should also intervene and prepare a white paper on oxygen supply to the GMCH, which would help to set the things right," the health minister said after

CM's visit to the GMCH. Rane said the medical oxygen requirement of the facility as of Monday was 1,200 jumbo cylinders of which only 400 were supplied.

"If there's a shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen, the discussion should be held about how to bridge that gap," he said.

Rane said a three-member team of nodal officers set up by the state government to oversee Covid-19 treatment at GMCH should give its inputs about the issues to the CM.

Earlier in the day, the CM donning a PPE kit visited Covid-19 wards in the GMCH where he met patients and their relatives. — PTI

HC slams TS way of fighting Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

Once again, the High Court on Tuesday came down heavily on the Telangana government for showing complacency in dealing with the second wave of Covid-19.

The division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B Vijaysen Reddy observed that the government itself had been causing damage to Telangana and its people.

It rapped Chief Secretary

Somesh Kumar for his infamous "situation under control" remarks at a recent press conference which it described as a tame campaign.

The Bench took notice of the highest executive authority in the State dismissing the need for lockdown immediately after the High Court suggested additional restrictions like weekend lockdowns to contain the spread.

■ **Page 2: CJ 'slams' state on review of situation**

States rushing for global vax tender

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

State governments seem to be queuing up to float global tenders for procurement of the Covid-19 vaccine.

A day after Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to float global tenders for the vaccine, the Telangana state Cabinet which met here on Tuesday also took a similar decision. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao asked officials to procure the vaccine from abroad as domestic supplies are inadequate.

"The move is more political. Ignoring the fact that the production of vaccine

is very less, the Opposition parties are blaming the state governments for the short supply. So we have come up with the idea of global tenders," sources in the AP government told this correspondent.

The officials took the cue from the Uttar Pradesh government, ruled by the BJP, which was first among the states to moot global tenders. Odisha, too, announced global procurement. With the news of states attempting to procure vaccines with global tenders, several agencies were said to have approached the officials with proposals.

■ **Page 2: No clarity on direct import from makers**

BJP asks Cong. to cut Covid criticism

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

A day after the Congress Working Committee blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for mishandling the Covid-19 crisis, BJP president J.P. Nadda, in a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday, said he was "saddened but not surprised by the conduct of the Congress during these challenging times" as it "did not do the right thing, instead only did wrong politics" over the global pandemic.

In a four-page letter, Mr Nadda said under Mr Modi, "India's fight against Covid is driven by unwavering belief in the

principles of science, support to innovation, trust in our Covid warriors and cooperative federalism", while pointing out that the conduct of top Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, "will be remembered for duplicity and pettiness".

He also added, though, that there are "certainly a few members of your (Congress) party who (like several other selfless citizens) are doing commendable work in helping people, (but) their hard work gets eclipsed by the consistent negativity spread by the more senior members of the party".

■ **Page 4: Nadda defends huge poll rallies**

OLD | CITY Shoppers suspect lockdown might be even extended

Id buyers in shopping frenzy

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

Sudden announcement of 10-day lockdown led to a frenzy among Id shoppers who jostled with one another to make purchases not only for Ramzan but the impending 10-day lockdown. Madness was all the more among purchasers as they suspected lockdown could even be extended further.

Traffic turned chock-a-block in Old City when people already making purchases for Id-ul-Fitr on Friday were joined in by

● **TRAFFIC TURNED** chock-a-block in Old City when people making purchases for Id-ul-Fitr were joined in by an outpouring of people to buy essential commodities.

● **OBSERVERS FEAR** this rush itself could rocket up rising cases of Coronavirus.

an outpouring of people to buy essential commodities following announcement of lockdown from Wednesday 10 a.m. Observers fear this rush

itself could rocket up rising cases of Coronavirus.

Even before evening could set in, there were long traffic jams in Old City. Most push cart and table vendors ran out of stock before the evening itself, as they were not prepared for the rush that followed announcement of the lockdown.

Physical distancing went for a toss. Although there will be a relaxation of four hours for purchasing essential items like groceries and vegetables, people feared that like last year, they will not be

allowed to venture out.

Long queues of vehicles could be seen on main roads. It took citizens hours to reach their destinations. Logjam persisted in Dar-ul-Shifa, Shah Ali Banda, Hussaini Alam, Chaderghat, Khilwat, Mallepally, Asif Nagar, Mehdiapatnam and Tolichowki areas. Even Golconda, Jahanuma, Dabeerpura and Kalapathar were not spared.

Traffic police deployed additional personnel to regulate traffic, which eased only in the night.

ALL SSC STUDENTS 'PASS'; MARKS ON INT. ASSESSMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

The school education department on Tuesday declared all SSC, Class 10/OSSC/ vocational students as "pass", as a one-time measure in view of the grim Covid-19 situation. In order to award grades, "the performance of students for internal assessments as regards the 20 per cent marks is scaled to 100 per cent marks assessment."

■ **Page 2: All schools told to announce SSC results**

IN BRIEF

ALL SCHOOLS TOLD TO ANNOUNCE SSC RESULTS

FROM PAGE 1

All schools have been directed to announce the SSC results.

The decision comes after the government decided to cancel SSC exams that were previously scheduled from May 17, and postponed exams for students of Intermediate.

CJ 'SLAMS' STATE ON REVIEW OF SITUATION

FROM PAGE 1

The High Court Bench also hinted at initiating contempt against the "higher authorities" of the government for constantly ignoring the court directives on Covid testing and sharing the crucial data in public fora.

The Court held the government's underplaying of cases solely responsible for the short allocation of oxygen and other life-saving medicines by the Centre.

In a sarcastic way, the Chief Justice asked Advocate General B.S. Prasad where was the need to review the situation when everything was under control. "You cleverly bring down the infection rate by just lowering the testing."

"Now what made you to review the situation and opt for lockdown," she said.

Maintaining that the government was not heeding to its suggestions, the court observed that the higher echelons of power were patting their back by presenting a hunky-dory situation with some cosmetic exercises.

The state government has been attempting to portray a rosy picture in contrast to the ground realities, it said.

The Chief Justice told the Advocate General that the court felt sorry about the government's attitude and not acting strictly to contain the spread of the virus till the court insisted.

"We are sailing in the same boat but discard every direction given by us," the court said.

When senior counsel L. Ravichander drew Bench's attention to overcrowding at food joints and shops giving a go by to social distancing, the Chief Justice said the court was flooded with mails and reports with photographic evidence to establish non serious implementation of the night curfew.

"You impose curfew and make the shop close by 7 pm but allow them to carry out their business through the backdoor till midnight," Justice Kohli pointed out.

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SATTUPALLI SEGMENT TO LIFT 1.58 LAKH QUINTAL PADDY

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, MAY 11

Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah said that the government set up centres to lift the paddy from the farmers in Sattupalli constituency.

He said that various agencies including self-help groups, marketing departments and primary agricultural cooperative societies.

He said that the rice millers from Nalgonda and Karimnagar agreed to take 1.58 lakh quintals of paddy from five mandals including Sattupalli, Vemsoor, Penuballi, Kallur and Tallada.

He said that the farmers need not worry on selling their paddy and the millers were given targets mandal-wise to lift the paddy.

He said that about 40,000 quintals of paddy will be lifted from Tallada followed by 35,000 from Kallur, 30,000 from Sattupalli, 28,000 from Penuballi and 25,000 quintals from Vemsoor mandal.

● **HE SAID** that various agencies including self-help groups, marketing departments and primary agricultural cooperative societies.

HC: Lockdown is knee-jerk move

Says TS ought to have been given further breathing time like other states

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

The Telangana High Court observed that the sudden decision to impose lockdown in the state was a knee-jerk reaction of the government. "Till yesterday you had no idea of imposing a lockdown. By announcing lockdown from Wednesday all of a sudden, how will the general public and migrant workers manage?" the court said.

Chief Justice Kohli said the people of the state ought to have been given further breathing time to get ready to face the lockdown as the other states which have already imposed lockdown, had given sufficient time to their citizens to pool up various household provisions or to travel to their places.

The court directed the government to ensure that all migrant labour who are working in the state and who eke out their living on a daily basis, be given priority by ensuring that requisite transport is arranged for them, if they intend to leave the state and sufficient time should be given to them to reach out to bus and railway stations to head towards their native places. It also directed the state to furnish all details pertaining to the migrant labour in its next status report.

The court directed the Centre to ensure zero deficit of oxygen supply to Telangana by the next hearing on May 17. The state government said there was a 450 MT deficit of oxygen supply from the Centre as on May 9. However, the court refused the request of the Telangana government to direct the Union government to enhance the oxygen allocation of 600 MT per day. The court said that it would not interfere into the issue of allocations.



A doctor brings her grandmother who was in an unconscious state in an autorickshaw for admission to the King Koti hospital on Tuesday. Pix by S.Surender Reddy.

Enforce rules during Id, film it: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD MAY 11

The Telangana High Court has directed the police commissioners of Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda to ensure that there is 'Covid19 appropriate behaviour' on the part of the people during the curfew relaxation periods, mainly on the day of the festival of Id-ul-Fitr.

The court has advised the commissioners to have the Id celebrations video-graphed during the curfew-relaxation phase on May 14 at prominent places and reach this to the court by

May 17.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy gave the directions on Tuesday during an urgent hearing on the Covid-19 situation in the state.

The court noted from media reports that there were several violations of Covid-19 guidelines vis-a-vis wearing of masks, social distancing etc., in the Old City. It took up the issue based on media reports and photos published about such violations during the shopping for Id-ul-Fitr.

"We came across reports that the congregations in the Old City continued till midnight right under the nose of the police and there was no monitoring of the C-protocol observance. Hotels were closed from the front and kept open via the backdoors, serving the people with food. And, food is delivered at home. Is this what a night curfew is," questioned the CJ.

"The whole press, the whole media is showing photographs, videos, writing to us, sending e-mails showing how Covid-19 norms are being flouted. There is nothing like mask-

ing, there is no social distancing as if the people of the Old City are immune to Coronavirus. What is the local police doing, what are the authorities doing," the Bench asked.

Faulting the police for its "Nelson's eye" attitude, the court advised them to act in a strong manner to enforce the Covid-19 regulations. "Is religion more important than the humanity, is humanity not a religion itself? No religion teaches us to violate the rules or infect others with deadly viruses. Rule of Law should be followed by all," the CJ said.

No clarity on direct imports

FROM PAGE 1

A representative of a Paris-based vaccine manufacturer assured that it could immediately make available 38 million doses.

There is no clarity among the officials of both the Telugu states on whether they can import vaccines directly from the manufacturers in other countries or wait for approval from the relevant Central agencies. Officials are clueless on whether these vaccines should be put to some basic trials to verify their effectiveness in Indian environments. "In the first place, we

are not sure if the Centre will allow vaccines other than Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V," a health official in the Telangana state government admitted. The officials, however, were planning to complete the paper work relating to the global tenders with the assistance of trained staff working in World Bank projects and expect some clarity from the Centre in the next few days.

In the meantime, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to allow manufacture of Covaxin by all those companies capable of producing vaccines, along with Bharat Biotech. At present, the Centre has allowed only Bharat Biotech to produce the vaccine though it was developed with the assistance of the Indian Council for Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

"You please direct Bharat Biotech to transfer technology and ICMR-NIV to provide the viral strain to whoever comes forward to produce vaccine," Reddy said adding that the move would accelerate the vaccination programme at the earliest.

Impact of the second wave of Covid-19 and unseasonal rains created troubles to farmers in selling their produce. Paddy bags were piled up either at primary agricultural societies or on rice mills premises as no authorities came forward to complete the procurement process. Allegedly, a few revenue and civil supplies officials ignored the plight of farmers and supported errant transport operators, rice millers and societies chairmen.

To ensure minimum support price (MSP) to paddy, the state government has set up 432 paddy purchasing centres (PPC) in Nizamabad district and 33 centres in Kamareddy district. Of the total 432 PPCs in

Shady traders loot paddy farmers

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, MAY 11

Taking advantage of Covid-19 pandemic, big traders and middlemen are looting farmers in paddy procurement in connivance with a few primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS), rice millers and transport operators.

Impact of the second wave of Covid-19 and unseasonal rains created troubles to farmers in selling their produce. Paddy bags were piled up either at primary agricultural societies or on rice mills premises as no authorities came forward to complete the procurement process. Allegedly, a few revenue and civil supplies officials ignored the plight of farmers and supported errant transport operators, rice millers and societies chairmen.

To ensure minimum support price (MSP) to paddy, the state government has set up 432 paddy purchasing centres (PPC) in Nizamabad district and 33 centres in Kamareddy district. Of the total 432 PPCs in

Nizamabad, officials allotted 375 centres to PACS and restricted 43 PPCs run by women self-help groups.

Usually, women groups smoothly conduct the procurement at village level and it also benefits them for income generation.

A few PACS leaders neglected paddy procurement due to political reasons. They also allegedly indulged in irregularities.

Meantime, shortage of labourers and lorries are also adversely affecting the paddy procurement process in both the districts. Reportedly, a few transport operators demand extra money to shift paddy from villages to rice mills. Lack of coordination between officials and rice millers also worsened the situation. Farmers are urging the state government to rescue them from clutches of PACS and rice millers.

Speaking to this newspaper, Nizamabad additional collector Chandrasekhar said they were keenly monitoring paddy procurement in the district. "We slapped a penalty on transport con-

Surprise: Etala meets CLP leader

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

In an interesting turn of events, estranged TRS MLA and former health minister Etala Rajendar paid a quick visit to Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka at the latter's residence in Banjara Hills in Hyderabad on Tuesday afternoon.

The senior TRS leader, accompanied by former MLA Yenu Ravinder Reddy, received a warm welcome at Bhatti Vikramarka's residence. The leaders discussed the current political situation in the state and their future course of action for more than 35 minutes, it is learnt.

Speaking to this correspondent, Bhatti said Rajendar's visit was a courtesy call and there was nothing political about it. "He came to our residence for the first time and we welcomed him with respect," Bhatti said, adding that Rajendar might reveal his political action plan in their next meeting. He said if Rajendar wanted to travel with the Congress, the

party high command would take a decision.

But close associates of Huzurabad MLA said Rajendar was unhappy with the way the government was functioning. They said Rajendar might seek the support of the Congress in case the TRS forced him to resign from the post of MLA. In a dramatic move, immediately after Rajendar left Bhatti's house, his rival in the last Assembly elections in Huzurabad, Padi Koushik Reddy reached Bhatti's residence, ostensibly upset with Rajendar's visit to Bhatti. Koushik Reddy is understood to have reacted in an aggressive manner and asked Bhatti why he spoke to Rajendar. Asked about this, Bhatti said Koushik Reddy visited his home regularly and it was accidental not incidental.

Sources said Koushik Reddy was not keen on Rajendar being allowed into the Congress if the TRS sacked him from the party. However, speculations are flying thick and fast among political circles on the next move of Rajendar.

NO SIGNALLING KCR, SAYS ETALA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

Former minister and TRS senior leader Etala Rajendar denied the report published on Tuesday that he was trying for a meeting with Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. He said the news about his "surrender" and trying to meet the CM were "far from the truth."

Rajendar said he was fighting for self-respect and "to report such unconfirmed news is nothing but degrading

my self-esteem. There is no truth to it."

He said, "Despite giving clarifications many times in the last few days, writing a story that I surrendered was uncalled." He felt that the rumours could "damage his reputation and personality."

He said that the report had hurt him, and that he was registering his protest. He informed his followers and associates not to believe rumours about his "surrender."

DON'T STOP AMBULANCES AT BORDERS, RULES HC

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

The Telangana High Court reprimanded the state government and the police for stopping ambulances ferrying patients across the inter-state borders. A Division Bench of the High Court headed by Chief Justice Hima Kohli observed that it was utter violations of fundamental rights of citizens ensured by Indian Constitution.

Justice Hima Kohli asked the Director General of Police who had given him the authority to stop ambulances while allowing the general public.

When it was submitted that there was no circular or advisory issued by the government and it was only oral instructions to prevent havoc at hospitals, Chief Justice wondered if the Telangana state government ran on oral instructions, instead of GOs and advisories.

On Tuesday, the Division Bench held an emergency hearing on Covid cases, related to the issue of stopping of ambulances at inter-state borders and utter violations Covid protocols at Ramzan shopping and congregations in the old city area. These two issues were taken suo motu by the court, following reports published in various newspapers.

In the afternoon, the AG submitted that RMPs practicing in other States like Karnataka and Chhattisgarh were recommending patients to private hospitals in Telangana, and with the influx of patients, the people of Telangana state were not getting beds in Hyderabad hospitals.

The court directed the Telangana state police not to prevent ambulances carrying Covid-19 patients from neighbouring states into Telangana state, unless the government issued any advisory.

STORIES | OF HOPE

Radhika Reddy gives away food packets, remdesivir to needy

Wedding planner turns Good Samaritan

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL HYDERABAD, MAY 10

Even as the Covid-19 continues to destroy lives and livelihoods across the whole spectrum of the society, festivities take a backseat, when families struggle to find a meal. And during the current month of Ramzan, the most important for Muslims, help came for a thousand families in the community from Radhika Reddy Tanguturu, who took the lead and distributed dry rations in four *bastis* in Hyderabad. Each packet of groceries is sufficient for a month for a family of four.

A wedding planner by profession, Radhika Reddy also says she managed to help around 70 people in procuring remdesivir

injections, beating black marketeers.

"We did not charge anyone for the injections and ensured that they got these without having to spend a single rupee," she goes on to explain.

This was possible, she said, thanks to her friends and others who responded to her tweets seeking help for procuring the injections. Next on her agenda is to reach out to patients' attendants at Covid-19 government hospitals and provide food packets to them. "I do not seek funds from anyone and every penny I spend, comes from my own pocket," she said.

Radhika Reddy, who has a postgraduate degree from Symbiosis Institute, Pune, said she always wanted to help those around her. But little did she think that she

will be doing so as people battle for their lives and try to stay alive.

"I started the Radhika Charitable Trust in 2010 and over the years, took up many charitable works in my native village of Vaddiparru in Rajahmundry district, including a full-fledged medical camp in which more than a thousand villagers were checked their health, and provided treatment for any conditions they suffered from," she said.

Realising the children of underprivileged parents were badly affected due to the lockdown last year, and as most of them were not connected to online classes, she also distributed stationery kits to many such children so that they could continue learning at home.



Radhika Reddy Tanguturu distributed dry rations in four bastis in Hyderabad. Each packet of groceries is sufficient for a month for a family of four.

WILL TAKE UP CONTEMPT PROCEEDING CASES, HINTS HC

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday hinted at issuing contempt proceedings against the higher authorities of Telangana for not implementing the court orders in conducting Covid tests.

The court had, on several occasions, directed the government to conduct around one lakh tests per day, but the tests were limited to 55,000 on May 9 as against one lakh tests conducted on April 23.

"With less number of tests, less active cases were found.

OTHER STORIES

TS RECORDS 4,801
NEW COVID-19
CASES, 32 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

As many as 4,801 new Covid-19 cases were reported in Telangana on Tuesday along with 32 more deaths due to the disease. This takes total cases to 5,06,988 so far and deaths from Covid-19 to 2,803, according to the state health department.

It said that 7,430 people were deemed to have recovered from the disease on Tuesday taking their total to 4,44,049 so far, and that 75,289 Covid-19 determination tests were conducted across the state. However, results from 2,878 tests, it said, were pending.

Tuesday's cases were just 21 fewer than on Sunday, for which the department said, it recorded 4,826 cases.

Hyderabad and the rest of the GHMC area on Tuesday reported 756 cases, a slight increase from 723 on Monday. Similar was the case with Ranga Reddy district with 325 and 302 cases respectively for the two days. Medchal-Malkajigiri district recorded 307 cases, followed by 254 in Nalgonda, and 215 in Warangal Urban district.

CONG OPPOSES
LOCKDOWN AT
SHORT NOTICEDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

Former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir has strongly condemned Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's announcement imposing total lockdown within a short span of time.

"K. Chandrashekar Rao should have been a little realistic. People would have prepared themselves mentally had they got some time," he observed.

Shabbir Ali recounted that Telangana High Court had made serious remarks against the state government for not taking adequate measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in Telangana state. While the High Court was in favour of taking strict measures right from the beginning of second wave, the Chief Minister, then health minister Etala Rajendar, chief secretary Somesh Kumar and others kept misleading people saying there would be no lockdown or night curfew.

However, citing High Court orders, first the night curfew was imposed. Now, the 10-day lockdown has been announced, the Congress leader regretted. He demanded that TRS government provide financial assistance to all BPL and middle-class families during the lockdown period. Further, he said government should improve infrastructure and fill gaps in the system to provide better healthcare to Covid patients.

Shabbir Ali said the Chief Minister had the habit of keeping people in the dark. "K. Chandrashekar Rao speaks lies with such impact that innocent people take them for truth. When the first case of Covid was reported, he took it in a lighter vein and even claimed it could be cured with a paracetamol tablet. He kept on changing his statements, but never told truth to the people. Consequently, crores of people have been suffering due to his lies and wrong decisions," he pointed out.

● **HOWEVER, CITING** High Court orders, first the night curfew was imposed. Now, the 10-day lockdown has been announced, the Congress leader regretted.

Need of the hour is hike in
Covid-19 tests, say experts

Increase in tests would help control the virus spread

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 11

The need of the hour is an increase in the number of Covid tests even as official records hint at a reduction in Covid spread in the old Adilabad district in the last few days.

It is learnt that the state government has decided to conduct fewer Covid tests. Earlier, the medical and health department used to conduct nearly 2,500 tests a day but the number has come down even after a house-to-house survey in the district hinted at a larger spread.

The number of NTPCR tests has come down drastically as compared to tests with the rapid kits. Medical experts say an increase in the number of tests would help control the pandemic spread.

Asymptomatic Covid cases are spreading the virus faster among the people.

With lesser tests and the negligence of the people in wearing masks and not maintaining a physical distance, the scenario would only worsen.

Medical experts say more of the tests will give a clear picture of the level of spread of the pandemic in various areas. However, officials are not

Docs, staff recruited illegally
at health care centre: BJPDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 11

BJP Dalit Morcha district president Somidi Venu Prasad on Tuesday objected to appointment of retired Dr Mohammad Aleemuddin at the Mother and Child Health Care Hospital in Karimnagar.

Speaking to media here, he said the doctor was already drawing a pension of Rs. 51,780 when he was re-appointed as gynaecologist at Mother and Child Health Care Hospital with a salary of ₹1,15,765.

He went on to allege that the doctor has not attended duty even once but was continuing to draw both the salary and pension.

The BJP Dalit Morcha district president charged that the appoint-



Somidi Venu Prasad

ment was due to an understanding between TRS and AIMIM, with Dr Aleemuddin being the brother of an MIM leader.

He said they had taken issue to notice of then health minister Etala Rajendar but nothing happened. This is because of the influence wielded by MIM leader Sami Bhai and BC wel-

fare minister Gangula Kamalakara, he stated. Venu Prasad demanded that state government and district collector K. Shashanka take action against the appointment of Dr Aleemuddin.

He also demanded a probe to know how many such illegal appointments have been made at the Mother and Child Health Care Centre in Karimnagar.

increasing the Covid tests in small towns to get a clear picture, they said, adding that it is suspected that there is a shortage of Covid vaccine stocks.

Ex-MLA Ravinder rallying
TRS cadre to back EtalaFocus on Covid, not
Etala: TRS leaderDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 11

TRS founder member and former MLA Enugu Ravinder Reddy geared up party cadre in Yellareddy Assembly constituency to decide his political future course of action. He is closely moving with former minister Etala Rajendar and also playing a vital role in Etala's camp. Reportedly, TRS party leaders and activists in Yellareddy Assembly constituency are ready to follow in the footsteps of their mentor, who has close rapport with them for the last two decades.

Interestingly, Ravinder Reddy, former employee of the Cantonment Board, jumped into the political arena with the TRS in 2001. He won as MLA from Yellareddy four times and was a close aide of finance minister T. Harish Rao. He is the senior TRS legislator in undivided Nizamabad district.

After his defeat in the 2018 Assembly election, Ravinder Reddy is maintaining a low profile. The lone Congress MLA from undivided Nizamabad district, Jajala Suresnder of Yellareddy, joined the TRS, but the party cadre divided into two groups of Suresnder and Ravinder Reddy.

Close sources to Ravinder Reddy said that the TRS leadership 'neglected' him after defeat in the last Assembly election. Unable to adjust in the party, Ravinder Reddy joined hands with Etala Rajendar, the political observers felt.

Strengthening of TRS in undivided Nizamabad dis-

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 11

Former Jammikunta agriculture market committee (AMC) chairman Tummeti Sammi Reddy on Tuesday regretted that when people are dying due to non-availability of oxygen in the on-going pandemic situation, people are playing politics to lure away supporters of ex-minister Etala Rajendar.

In a statement, Sammi Reddy said since past few days, opposition and ruling party leaders are offering costly vehicles and contracts to people's representatives in Huzurabad, who have won with the support of Etala Rajendar.

He maintained that the former minister continues to have enormous popularity not only in Huzurabad region but the entire state, as he had helped people of all sections for past seven years, irrespective of their caste and communal affiliations. But attempts are now being made to spoil Rajendar's

● **UNABLE** to adjust in the party, Ravinder Reddy joined hands with Etala Rajendar, the political observers felt.

trict, Ravinder Reddy had played a vital role and his support to Rajendar may show impact in old Nizamabad district too,

image. Asking the former leader's supporters not to succumb to allurements, Sammi Reddy pointed out, "Rajendar was with you in your hard times and will continue to look after you. Do not take any hasty decision."

He pointed out that many people in Huzurabad region are suffering due to non-availability of beds and lack of oxygen in hospitals.

Try to help such people as well as farmers, who are waiting at purchasing centres to sell their produce, he underlined.

they believed. Meanwhile, Intelligence sleuths and TRS leadership is keenly observing the movements of Ravinder Reddy.

It is learnt that MLA Suresnder was told to be alert to the political movements in Yellareddy Assembly constituency.

Lockdown fear



Tipplers thronged liquor shops in Karimnagar on Tuesday as the government announced lockdown with effect from Wednesday.

—DC

Lockdown is welcome, situation
will steadily improve, feel peopleDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM MAY 11

The citizens here have welcomed the lockdown imposed by the state government from May 12, saying this is the need of the hour under the present grim situation of a serious health crisis.

Gopu Narasimha Rao, correspondent of the Khammam Study Circle said, "The present lockdown is welcome. Even a third wave is feared to be on the way and it could be more deadly as scientists and virologists have stated."

The nation would require time to catch up with the situation and organise sufficient doses of vaccine, medicines and equipment to handle this crisis."

By the end of this month, vaccines like Covishield and Covaxin

● **VADDEBOINA NARASIMHA** Rao, a Congress leader, said: "The DRDA drug 2-DG will also come into the market in June. Scientists are hopeful that the drug available in powder form will kill the virus. We can expect one or two more such medicines to treat Covid patients in the coming days."

will be available in larger quantities, he hoped.

Doctor MF Gopinath: "The availability of remdesivir injections is improving compared to the scene a fortnight ago. The situation could further ease by this month-end. This can save the lives of the Covid patients. At this juncture, lockdown helps in reducing the virus spread."

K. Sravani, lecturer in an engineering college: "We would need to show patience. Our hope is that the we will get some relief by next month."

The Sputnik-V vaccine is also coming by June

and the producers of both Covishield and Covaxin vaccines are set to increase their supplies. As of now, the lockdown is the best way forward. Else, hospitals cannot cope with the flow of patients."

Vaddeboina Narasimha Rao, Congress leader: "The DRDA drug 2-DG will also come into the market in June."

Scientists are hopeful that the drug available in powder form will kill the virus. We can expect one or two more such medicines to treat Covid patients in the coming days."

MLA HELPS IN
SHIFTING
BODY FROM
DUBAI TO INDDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 11

The body of an NRI who died of cardiac arrest in Dubai, UAE, was airlifted to India and reached to his native place at the initiative of Choppadandi MLA, Sunke Ravi Shankar. Bojja Thirupati, the native of Ragampet village of Choppadandi mandal in this district went to Dubai 15 years ago for work. He died five days back, but the officials there refused to send the body back to India.

His family members and village sarpanch Mamidi Latha took the help of the MLA to get the body to India.

Ravi Shankar said he spoke to higher officials who, in turn, got in touch with the Indian diplomatic mission in the UAE. He also bore the ambulance fee for shifting the body from Hyderabad to Rangampet.

CMO secretary reviews
Sitamma project worksDC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, MAY 11

The TRS government started concentrating on the completion of Sitammagar Multi-Purpose Irrigation Project that will make available of 36.57 tmc water to cater the water needs of irrigation, Mission Bhagiratha and Bharat Heavy Water Plant in Bhadradi-Kothagudem, Khammam and Mahabubabad districts. The project will store the water and release it to the Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project and other purposes during summer. In flood flow times, the water will be sent through the canals of SRLIP.

CMO secretary Smitha Sabarwal, who reviewed the project works in Singareni Guest House in Kothagudem, asked the officials to continue the project works on war-footing by taking all precautionary measures in Covid-19 situation. "The pro-

ject is prestigious to the government and all tanks adjacent to the canal will be filled with the water", she said. The officials of water resources department, L&T representatives and district officials were involved in the meeting. Smitha said that the revenue officials should speed up land acquisition to the canal and bunds to be built on both sides of the project to lift the water from the project. The engineers told her that the bore holes investigation is completed at 158 places against 269 spots. As per the details given by the officials, Geological Survey of India director visited the site for the investigation and submitted the report. Unearthing of sand 15.30 lakh cubic meters were sanctioned by the district collector of Bhadradi district.

The CMO secretary told that two pump houses to the Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project were completed and the 3rd one is ready to complete.

NO LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS FOR
MEDICAL, HEALTH SERVICES IN TSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11.

All medical and health services, including all government and private hospitals, diagnostic and testing centres will function normally as they do during any other period. The lockdown will not affect any health services anywhere in the State of Telangana.

The government vaccination centres delivering Covid-19 vaccination to people will also function normally. However, as announced previously, only those eligible for getting their second dose will be given the vaccines. But those seeking the second dose should show proof of having taken the first dose,

either in form of a partial vaccination certificate that they can download from cwin.gov.in, or the message they may have received confirming them taking their first dose. Those eligible should also take their Aadhaar card with them.

Those seeking to get their second vaccine dose, or anyone suspecting that they caught Covid-19, can go to the nearest vaccination, or testing centres and avail the services. The police department has been informed to allow free movement of citizens seeking to get their vaccine shots or wanting to get themselves tested for Covid-19 at their nearest available centres. Vaccinations will be given at the centres from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

RAPID ACTION

Police identify the accused based on CCTV footage

Cops crack murder case within hrs

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 11

Nizamabad I town police traced and arrested six accused in a murder case within hours of the incident. The arrested were identified as Sheikh Arbaaz alias Saddam (20), Syed Faizan alias Patel (20), Sheikh Zaheduddin (23), Sheikh Kaleem (18), Abdul Ibrahim (25) and Abdul Azeem Siddique (20), all belongs to Nizamabad city.

Speaking to the media persons, Nizamabad assistant commissioner of police, Are Venkateshwarlu said that all the accused parked

● **SANJAY, 35**, hailing from Hadgoan in Maharashtra passed by the car of the accused and noticed a cell phone inside the vehicle. Suspecting him to be thief, the accused chased him and caught him.

● **THEY PULLED** Sanjay into their vehicle and took him to fruit market at Bodhan road. There they severely beat him up with sticks.

● **UNABLE** to bear the beatings Sanjay died on the spot.

their car near railway station on Monday to have tea. Meantime, Sanjay (35), of Hadgoan in Maharashtra passed through the car of the accused and noticed a cell phone inside the vehicle.

Suspecting him as thief, the accused chased him at

railway station road and caught him. They pulled Sanjay into their vehicle and had taken to fruit market at Bodhan road. The accused severely beaten Sanjay with sticks and unable to bear the beatings Sanjay died on the spot. I town police received

information about murder and rushed to the spot on Monday. The body was shifted for postmortem at Government General Hospital.

Based on Closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage, police identified the accused and had taken them into custody on Tuesday from various colonies in the city. The accused were sent to judicial remand. I town SHO Anjaneyulu is also present.

Commissioner of police, Kartikeya appreciated the police team for quick investigation in murder case and declare cash rewards.

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SHORT TAKES

CIVIC WORKER
SEIZES MOTHER'S
VEGETABLE CART

Pune, May 11: Leading by example, a municipal council employee in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district has seized vegetables being sold on a handcart by his mother in violation of the pandemic restrictions.

A video of Rashid Shaikh seizing the vegetables placed on the handcart parked near his house in Pathardi town and dumping them in the municipal council vehicle has gone viral on social media.

"As the restrictions are in place due to Covid-19, vegetable vendors are supposed to sell their produce by moving from one place to another. They are not supposed to set the stall at one place or sit in the market," said Shaikh who works as a conservancy staff with the Pathardi municipal council.

Shaikh said he had warned his mother who sells vegetables in advance about the rules.

"I had alerted my mother that all the vegetable vendors are supposed to sell their produce while on the move. During our drive, I found my mother had parked a handcart of vegetables outside our house in the main Bazar area. To send a stern message that violators will not be spared, I initiated the action and seized vegetables," said Shaikh.

UDDHAV URGES
RESERVATION
FOR MARATHAS

**DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, MAY 11**

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to provide reservation to the Maratha community by including them into the Social and Economic Backward Class (SEBC). The move has come after the Supreme Court's order striking down the quota for Marathas, calling it "unconstitutional".

Mr Thackeray led a delegation of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders to meet Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on Tuesday evening and submitted a letter addressed to the President Ram Nath Kovind and Mr Modi seeking their intervention for providing reservation to the Maratha community.

After the meeting, Mr Thackeray said he will also be meeting the Prime Minister to seek reservation for the community. The delegation included deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, chairman of the sub-committee of Cabinet on Maratha reservation issue Ashok Chavan, Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat, Home Minister Dilip Walase-Patil, Minister for Urban Development Eknath Shinde, minister for water resources Jayant Patil and state Congress chief Nana Patole.

KERALA'S 'IRON
LADY' K.R. GOWRI
AMMA NO MORE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 11: Legendary Marxist fire-brand and former minister K. R. Gowri, one of the founding leaders of the Communist movement in Kerala and the lone woman member in the state's first cabinet, died at a private hospital here on Tuesday.

She was 102 and had been suffering from various age-related ailments for some time, party sources said.

The chief of Janadhipathya Samrakshana Samithi (JSS), the veteran politician breathed her last at 7 am while undergoing treatment in the ICU, they said.

One of the most powerful and tallest women leaders of Kerala politics, Gowri Amma, as she was fondly called, belonged to the erstwhile Communists who had toiled hard to build up the Left movement in the southern state battling police brutality under the colonial regime and stiff opposition from the then administrators.

Her vibrant political activism, fierce fights against the feudal system, strong stand taken for the women cause and exceptional administrative acumen have garnered her the nickname 'iron lady' and helped her carve an exclusive space in the male-dominated politics of Kerala.

She was the lone surviving member of the first Kerala legislative assembly headed by legendary Communist leader EMS Namboothiripad in 1957 and the only woman in the first state cabinet.

ED lodges money laundering case against Anil Deshmukh

Cong dubs the ED's move as an attempt to cover up Modi govt's 'failure'

**DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, MAY 11**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case against Anil Deshmukh, the former home minister of Maharashtra, and others on the basis of FIR registered by the CBI. The CBI has booked Mr Deshmukh for allegedly asking police officers to collect Rs 100 crore extortion from hotel and bar owners in Mumbai every month.

In the first week of April, the Bombay High Court had directed the CBI to conduct a preliminary inquiry into the corruption allegations against Anil Deshmukh levelled by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Based on the conclusion of a preliminary inquiry into the matter, the CBI on April 24 had registered an

FIR against Mr Deshmukh and others. The CBI said that Mr Deshmukh had used his official position to obtain undue advantage and had also influenced the transfers and postings in the Mumbai Police, as alleged by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

On the basis of this FIR, the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) has been registered in Mumbai and soon searches could be conducted by the agency.

The agency, however, has not specified the quantum of illegal gratification in its ECIR.

Now as per normal course of procedure summons could be issued to the ex-Maharashtra home minister and others in the coming days and ED officials will record their statements.

"The ED will soon con-

duct searches as part of its investigation into the case. Summons will also be issued to the former home minister and others in the coming days and their statements will be recorded by the ED officials," sources said.

The NCP and Congress alleged that the ED's case against Mr Deshmukh was politically motivated.

"Right from Singh's allegations to the filing of the case by the ED, it is all politically motivated and aimed at defaming him (Deshmukh) by misusing power. It is clear that the BJP is playing politics using the CBI, ED and other Central agencies,"

NCP spokesman Nawab Malik said.

The Congress dubbed the ED's move as an attempt to cover up the Modi government's "failure" to manage the pandemic by diverting the public attention. "Why the ED has come into picture when there was no money transaction. Actions of Central agencies have become a joke," Congress spokesman Sachin Sawant said.

Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh on March 20 had written a letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray alleging that Mr Deshmukh had asked accused assistant inspector Sachin Waze and ACP Sanjay Patil to collect Rs 100 crore for him every month. Of this 100 crores, Rs 40-45 crores were to be extorted allegedly from hotels, bars and restaurants.

Waze has alleged that Mr Deshmukh had asked him to pay Rs two crore for his reinstatement with the Mumbai Police. The court however, has not taken his letter on record.

Relying on details published in news reports about the contents of Mr Singh's letter, a city based lawyer Jayshree Patil had filed a petition in the Bombay High Court seeking inquiry into this matter. She had stated that first she had approached the police but no action was taken on her complaint following which she moved the HC. Allowing her plea the HC had directed the CBI to conduct preliminary inquiry against Deshmukh and register FIR only if required after the inquiry.

CBI officials questioned various people including Deshmukh and then registered the FIR.



The newly appointed Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma chairs first meeting of the cabinet in which the 13-member council of ministers on Tuesday.

New Assam Cabinet reviews Covid situation

**MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, MAY 11**

The first cabinet meeting of newly appointed Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Tuesday while clearing the detailed Covid Action Plan, formed a high-power committee headed by finance minister Ajanta Neog to prepare the roadmap for implementation of giving appointment to one lakh unemployed youth of Assam. This was a poll promise of the BJP.

announced in case further strict steps would be required to take to contain the spread of Covid. Earlier during the day the chief minister held a meeting with ministers and senior officers to assess the Covid situation in Assam and stressed the need to intensify containment measures. In the wake of escalating numbers, he also directed officers to ensure strict enforcement of restrictions to bring down the positivity rate.

He directed the ministers and senior officers to extensively travel all corners of the state to contain the spread of the pandemic.

The chief minister also reviewed the vaccination status, vaccine stock, availability of oxygen, and essential medicines.

He further stressed on the importance of creating mass awareness to ensure strict adherence to Covid protocols by all sections of the society to arrest the rising number of cases and directed to ensure rapid vaccination in big cities to restrict the spread of the pandemic to the villages.

The cabinet also decided to increase Assam government's stake in Numaligarh Refinery Limited to 26 percent. Announcing this, Mr Patowary said that people of Assam's sentiments are involved with NRL as it was set up as per provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985.

Earlier Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma distributed portfolios to 13 cabinet ministers which had Ms Ajanta Neog as first woman finance minister of Assam.

Rain struggles



Pedestrians wade through a water logged road, after heavy rain in Kolkata, on Tuesday.

— PTI

SC agrees to hear Centre's Char Dham plea on May 14

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 11**

● **THE COURT** rejected a plea by an NGO, Citizens for Green Doon, which is opposing the widening of the highway on environmental grounds

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear on May 14 the Centre's plea for widening the highway in Uttarakhand linking the Char Dhams — the Hindu pilgrimage sites. The Centre has approached the court seeking its permission for widening of the 900-km Char Dham highway, not just for facilitating the travel of devotees going on pilgrimage but for defence requirements, to enable the movement of troops and military equipment up to the India-China border.

Agreeing to take up the Centre's plea for an urgent hearing, a bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari said that the matter was of national importance and had to be examined at the earliest.

The court rejected a plea by an NGO, Citizens for Green Doon, which is opposing the widening of the highway on environmental grounds, for a three-week adjournment, saying it will decide the matter after hearing all the sides.

Attorney-general K.K. Venugopal, appearing for the Centre, pleaded that the road width has to be seven meters to enable the easy movement of heavy military vehicles. He was pleading against the Supreme Court order in September last year to limit the road width of the entire Char Dham route to not more than 5.5 meters as was earlier proposed by the ministry of road transport and highways in its circular in 2018.

A bench headed by Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman had allowed the width of 5.5 meters. The A-G told the court the min-

istry has since amended its 2018 circular, noting that the roads are to be used for different purposes, going right up to the India-China border.

Posting the matter for hearing on Friday, the court sought all documents, including its earlier orders, by Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning at the latest.

The matter relates to the Char Dham project to improve access to four Hindu pilgrim sites in Uttarakhand, but NGOs, including Citizens for Green Doon, are up in arms over the possible landslides and floods as cutting the mountains for the highway may cause devastation and heavy loss of lives.

The Centre earlier asked the Supreme Court to go by the majority view of the high-powered committee that favoured a 10-meter wide road for the Char Dham project, which was rejected by the bench headed by Justice Nariman.

X-CATEGORY SECURITY GIVEN TO 77 BJP MLAS

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 11**

A day after Union home ministry decided to provide X-category security over to all 77 BJP MLAs in West Bengal, the Central intelligence agencies, sources said, will also closely monitor threat perception to other senior party functionaries and submit regular updates on the same to the ministry for an "appropriate follow-up action".

There has been considerable tension between the Centre, governor and newly-elected Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal ever since she came back to power with a thumping majority on May 2. Fearing possible violent retaliation from Trinamul cadre, the Central agencies will keep a close watch on the possibility of attack or violence not just against senior functionaries of the state BJP but also middle-level leaders in various districts and blocks.

2 BJP MLA-elects to remain MPs

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 11**

Two first-time BJP MPs Nishith Pramanik and Jagannath Sarkar, who won in the West Bengal elections but didn't take the oath last week, will resign from the Assembly to retain their Lok Sabha seats. This will bring down the BJP's strength in the Assembly from 77 to 75.

The BJP central leadership, sources said, accepted the two MPs' request to retain their Cooch Behar and Ranaghat parliamentary seats and not enter the Assembly. Their absence at the May 7 swearing-in of new MLAs led to speculation about

their intentions.

On Tuesday, Mr Pramanik said: "The party fielded me in the Assembly polls, which I won. Since two posts cannot be held simultaneously, I have been asked by our party central leadership to resign from my Assembly seat. I accepted their decision and will abide by them." Mr Sarkar said: "I will follow our party's decision. An MP cannot become an MLA."

A BJP insider said the party gave more importance to the MP posts due to the huge votebank in seven Assembly segments of each parliamentary seat it won in 2019.

3 LeT militants killed in encounter

**DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, MAY 11**

Three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Vailoo village of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Anantnag district early Tuesday.

The police said that all the slain were local Kashmiris and identified them as Ilyas Ahmad Dar alias Sameer, Ubaid Shafi alias Abdullah and Aqib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil.

A statement issued by it here said that fighting broke out at around 4 am

after a joint team of J&K police's counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG), the Army's 19th Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on receiving information about the presence of militants in the village laid siege to it.

It said that when the presence of militants in a private house was established, they were given an opportunity to surrender. "However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated".

STRUGGLE IS REAL

This is sixth increase since election result day

Petrol, diesel prices rise again

New Delhi, May 11: Petrol and diesel prices on Tuesday were hiked for the sixth time this month, propelling prices to cross the Rs 100-a-litre-mark in places from Nanded in Maharashtra to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.

Petrol price was hiked by 27 paise a litre and diesel by 30 paise per litre, according to a price notification by state-owned fuel retailers.

The increase took petrol and diesel prices to their highest-ever level across the country. In Delhi,

petrol now comes for Rs 91.80 per litre and diesel is priced at Rs 82.36.

This was the sixth increase in prices since May 4, when the state-owned oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

The price increase led to petrol rates crossing the Rs 100-mark in more places of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local

taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at Rs 102.70 per litre and Rs 95.06 a litre respectively. Also in Rajasthan, petrol crossed the Rs 100-mark in Jaisalmer (Rs 100.71) and Bikaner (Rs 100.70) while it neared that mark in Barmer (Rs 99.82).

Petrol in several districts of Madhya Pradesh,

including Shahdol (Rs 102.06), Rewa (Rs 102.04), Chhindwara (Rs 101.67) and Balaghat (Rs 101.98) crossed the physiological mark. It neared that mark in Indore (Rs 99.90 a litre) and Bhopal (Rs 99.83).

If rates continue to rise, Bhopal will be the first state capital to see petrol at Rs 100.

In Nanded district of Maharashtra, petrol was being sold at Rs 100.30.

In six increases, petrol price has risen by Rs 1.41 per litre and diesel by Rs 1.63.

After raising petrol price

by a record Rs 21.58 per litre and diesel by Rs 19.18 since the government raised excise duty to an all-time high in March last year, state-owned fuel retailers, IOC, BPCL and HPCL had reduced petrol price by 67 paise a litre and diesel by 74 paise per litre effected between March 24 and April 15.

Oil companies, who have in recent months resorted to unexplained freeze in rate revision, had hit a pause button after cutting prices marginally on April 15.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

UZBEKISTAN JAILS ANTI-CORRUPTION BLOGGER

Tashkent: A court in Uzbekistan has sentenced a blogger known for speaking out on corruption to 6.5 years in jail on extortion and libel charges, his lawyer said on Tuesday.

The case of Otabek Sattoriy, a popular video blogger from the southern town of Termez in the Central Asian country, was widely viewed as a test for authorities who according to rights groups have been clamping down on free speech ahead of a leadership election in October.

A court in the southern Surkhondaryo region sentenced Sattoriy to six years and six months in jail on Monday, lawyer Umidbek Davlatov said, calling the verdict “completely unfair” and pledging to appeal. “We don’t know for the moment on what precise basis the court ruled to send him to jail,” Davlatov said by telephone.

THAILAND SEEKS HUMANITARIAN FIX FOR JAILED SCRIBES

Bangkok: Thailand said on Tuesday it was seeking a “humanitarian” solution for three Myanmar journalists arrested after fleeing across the border to escape a junta crackdown.

The trio’s employer — the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) — and the Thai foreign correspondents’ club urged the authorities not to deport them, warning their lives could be in danger if they returned to the coup-hit country.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, triggering a mass uprising as large swathes of the population take to the streets to demand democracy.

The junta has responded with force — shooting protesters, arresting suspected dissidents in night raids, and targeting journalists and news outlets by shutting them down.

Thai authorities on Tuesday confirmed the arrests, while foreign ministry spokesman Taneer Sangrat said they were seeking a way out of the case.

TEXAS COPS SHOOT MAN FOR FIRING GUN IN HOME

Lancaster (US): Officers in a Dallas suburb fatally shot a man firing a gun in a home on Monday, hours after he was released from a hospital where he had a mental health evaluation.

Officers were dispatched to a home in Lancaster on Sunday night after receiving a report of a man refusing to let a woman leave. They found Kalon J. Horton, 29, who appeared to be intoxicated and in an altered mental state. He was taken to a hospital for evaluation and was later released, according to a police statement.

On Monday, police in the city about 16 miles (26 kilometers) south of downtown Dallas received a shooting report and arrived to find Horton firing a gun in a different home occupied by two children, police stated.

Police Chief Samuel Urbanski said officers confronted and shot Horton, who was later pronounced dead at a hospital. He said the others in the home were not injured. Urbanski said the shooting remained under investigation.

OZ PLANS BIG DEFENCE, SECURITY INVESTMENTS

Canberra: The Australian government released a big-spending economic plan for the next fiscal year on Tuesday that includes hefty investments in defence and national security as relations with China worsen.

The government plans to spend 270 billion Australian dollars (USD 212 billion) over the next decade on upgrading defence capabilities to “promote an open and peaceful Indo-Pacific,” Treasury Department documents say.

This includes AU\$ 747 million (USD 585 million) to upgrade four military training areas in the Northern Territory where U.S. Marines have a temporary base. The government announced in March that it would begin building its own guided missiles in close collaboration with the United States. The AU\$1 billion (USD 784 million) project would produce the first Australian-manufactured missiles since the 1960s.

The government also plans to spend AU\$1.3 billion (USD 1.02 billion) over a decade to enhance the ability of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

US accepts Pfizer shot for 12-15 year olds

It is a way to protect adolescents before they go back to school; vaccination to begin on Thursday

Washington, May 11: US regulators on Monday expanded the use of Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine to children as young as 12, offering a way to protect the nation’s adolescents before they head back to school in the fall and paving the way for them to return to more normal activities. Shots could begin as soon as Thursday, after a federal vaccine advisory committee issues recommendations for using the two-dose vaccine in 12- to 15-year-olds. An announcement is expected Wednesday.

Most Covid-19 vaccines worldwide have been authorised for adults. Pfizer’s vaccine is being used in multiple countries for teens as young as 16, and Canada recently became the first to expand use to 12 and up. Parents, school administrators and public health officials elsewhere have eagerly awaited approval for the shot to be made available to more kids. “This is a watershed moment in our ability to fight back the Covid-19 pandemic,” Dr Bill Gruber, a Pfizer senior vice president who is also a pediatrician, said.

The Food and Drug Administration declared that the Pfizer vaccine is safe and offers strong protection for younger teens based on testing of more than 2,000 US volunteers ages 12 to 15. The agency noted there were no cases of Covid-19 among fully vaccinated adolescents compared with 16 among kids given dummy shots. More intriguing, researchers found the kids developed higher levels of virus-fighting antibodies than earlier studies measured in young adults. The younger teens received the same vaccine dosage as adults and had the same side effects, mostly sore arms and flu-like fever, chills or aches that signal a revved-up immune system, especially after the second dose.

Pfizer’s testing in adolescents “met our rigorous standards,” FDA vaccine chief Dr Peter Marks said. “Having a vaccine authorised for a younger population is a critical step in continuing to lessen the immense public health burden caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.” Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech recently requested similar authorisation in the European Union, with other countries to follow.



Queen Elizabeth II reads the Queen’s Speech on the the Sovereigns Throne, as Britain’s Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) listens, in the House of Lords chamber, during the State Opening of Parliament at the Houses of Parliament in London on Tuesday, which is taking place with a reduced capacity due to Covid-19 restrictions. — AFP

England, N. Ireland, Scotland record zero Covid-19 deaths

United Kingdom, May 11: England has recorded zero daily Covid deaths for the first time since July, in a situation welcomed by experts who said it reflected the impact of lockdowns and vaccination against the disease.

Monday marked the first time since 30 July last year that no deaths within 28 days of positive Covid test were reported in England, following Monday 3 May’s

report of a single death by the same metric. No deaths were recorded in Scotland or Northern Ireland on Monday. However, four Covid-related deaths were recorded in Wales.

While experts cautioned that the figures were only one measure of Covid-related deaths, and were often affected by time lags in reporting, they said the declining death toll was promising.

Rowland Kao — a professor of epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh who contributes to the Spi-M modelling subgroup of Sage, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies — said the fall in deaths reflected the impact of vaccination. “There is always a higher recording of deaths in the second half of the week ... but overall it is good news,” he said.

— Agencies

The latest news is welcome for US families struggling to decide what activities are safe to resume when the youngest family members remain unvaccinated. “I can’t feel totally comfortable because my boys aren’t vaccinated,” said Carrie Vittitoe, a substitute teacher and freelance writer in Louisville,

Kentucky, who is fully vaccinated, as are her husband and 17-year-old daughter. The FDA decision means her 13-year-old son soon could be eligible, leaving only her 11-year-old son unvaccinated. The family has not yet resumed going to church, and summer vacation will be a road trip.

— AP

CHINA WARNS BANGLA OVER JOINING U.S.-LED QUAD ALLIANCE

Dhaka, May 11: China has warned Bangladesh against joining the US-led Quad alliance, saying that Dhaka’s participation in the anti-Beijing “club” would result in “substantial damage” to bilateral relations.

The unusual warning from Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming came weeks after visiting Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe emphasised to Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid that Beijing and Dhaka should make joint efforts against powers from outside the region establishing a “military alliance” in South Asia and practising “hegemonism”.

“Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship, Ambassador Li said at a virtual meeting organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh on Monday.

— PTI

Nine killed, 10 injured in high school shooting in Russia

Moscow, May 11: At least nine people including eight pupils were killed on Tuesday after two unidentified attackers opened fire at a high school in the central Russian city of Kazan, news agencies reported.

“Eight school children and a teacher were killed,” a source told the *Interfax news agency*. Ten more people were injured.

Spokespersons for police and the emergencies ministry refused to comment.

News agencies reported that two unidentified people had carried out the shooting and one, a 17-year-old, had been detained.

Images broadcast on state television from the scene showed dozens of people outside the school building with fire services and police vehicles lining nearby streets.

A source told the *Interfax news agency* that a second shooter had barred himself in on the fourth floor of the building.

The *TASS state news agency*, citing sources in the emergency services,



Ambulances seen at the scene of a shooting at School No. 175 in Kazan, the capital of Russia’s republic of Tatarstan, on Tuesday. — AFP

said that 10 people had been injured and were rushed to hospital.

“I was in class, I first heard an explosion, then gunshots,” TASS quoted a teacher as saying.

The city administration was cited as saying that children were evacuated from the school and that

security had been bolstered at other educational facilities in the city.

Another source cited by the RIA Novosti agency said they had heard an explosion and could see smoke rising from the building.

Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov had

arrived at the scene of the shooting, news agencies reported.

Russia has relatively few school shootings due to normally tight security in education facilities and the difficulty of buying firearms legally, although it is possible to register hunting rifles.

— AFP

CHANGING CURVE

As per 7th census, nation recorded increase of 5.38% from 2010

Chinese population rises at slow pace

Beijing, May 11: China’s population grew at its slowest pace to reach 1.41178 billion, keeping its status as the world’s most populous country amid official projections that the numbers may decline from next year, leading to labour shortages and a fall in consumption levels, impacting the country’s future economic outlook.

According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China’s population in all the 31 provinces,

autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010. The figures do not include Hong Kong and Macao. “Data shows that China’s population has maintained slow growth in the past decade,” Ning Jizhe, head of the National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS) told the media here while releasing the census results.

China has conducted a national census every 10 years since the 1990s. The country’s population on

● **AS CHINA** faced population decline, India, whose population was pegged around 1.366 billion in 2019 is projected to surpass China as the world’s most populous country around 2027.

the mainland has reached 1.41178 billion, up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010, the latest census data shows. As China faced population decline, India, whose population was pegged around 1.366 billion in 2019 is projected

to surpass China as the world’s most populous country around 2027, according to a UN report released in June, 2019.

According to the data released by the NBS, the new census figures reveal that the demographic crisis China faced was expected to deepen as the population above 60 years grew to 264 million, up by 18.7 per cent last year. “Data shows the aging of the Chinese population has further deepened, and we will continue to face the pressure to achieve

long-term balanced population development,” Ning said. China’s working-age population, or people aged between 16 and 59, stands at 880 million, Ning said, adding the average age of the Chinese population is 38.8, almost the same as the US’ 38, he said.

The growth rate of the population was 0.53 per cent annually on average in the 7th census conducted last year in comparison to 0.57 per cent in the 6th census in 2010 and 1.07 per cent in the fifth census held in 2000.

— PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

12 MAY 2021

Get moving on vaccines as Indian lives do matter

The Union government's contention before the Supreme Court that its vaccine policy was made after several rounds of consultation and discussion with experts, state governments and vaccine manufacturers and hence calls for no judicial "interference" flies in the face of facts that are in the public domain. And the suggestion that the court was making "overzealous, though well-meaning" intervention reflects the government's attempt to play the victim card.

The court is grappling with a question as to why the Union government and the state governments get the vaccines at differential prices with the states paying almost double what the Union government does when the ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens of India. In layman's words, what makes the Centre force the state government to cough up more money to the vaccine manufacturers to inoculate the most productive segment of the population, that is those aged between 18 and 45 years, is the question on hand. That the Centre placed large purchase orders as the reason for cheaper price is hardly convincing as

India claims to host the world's largest vaccine manufacturing unit but the government lost precious time in helping it augment its production facilities to meet the home requirements

the states, put together, will have to make a similar-sized order. The principal scientific advisor to the government has already warned of a third wave of the pandemic, and experts are saying in unison that vaccination is the most effective tool to stop it from wreaking havoc. The US government is planning to lift public health restrictions on July 4 by which date its plans to administer at least one dose to at least 70 per cent of the population. In India, launching the world's largest vaccination programme, the government aimed at inoculating the frontline health workers in the first phase as it is a safeguard against the threat they face at their workplace. A couple of months later, the Election Commission of India ensured that all those officials who were part of the election process in four states and one Union territory were administered two doses of the vaccine. It is more than evident that being vaccinated is a precondition in these times of a devastating pandemic for the people to stay alive and go about earning their daily bread. It is a right available to every person, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The court's efforts must be seen as an attempt to hold the government accountable to the Constitution, which is its mandate, and not as interference.

The government's plea that the current need for vaccination was both "emergent and urgent" does not appear to reflect the whole truth. India claims to host the world's largest vaccine manufacturing unit but the government lost precious time in helping it augment its production facilities to meet the home requirements. While the US government worked closely with manufacturers there and gave them funds in advance, the Serum Institute of India, which manufactures AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, was waiting for a similar help this April.

A free universal vaccination programme is one of the best tools to remove the threat to life, and hence is a right of every citizen. The government should, instead of questioning the motive of those who question its non-action, get into the action mode. Indian lives matter.

Uncertainty looms in Nepal

The defeat of Nepal Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli in a confidence vote last Monday is reflective of the tenuous political situation in the Himalayan state that can be exploited by China, which has been actively meddling in Nepal's affairs since the last general election in 2017 which brought Mr Oli to power in a power-sharing deal with Pushp Kumar Dahal Prachanda of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.

While Mr Oli has lost the confidence of the House, his Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) remains the largest single political formation in the House. It is not considered unlikely that he would seek to manoeuvre various parties in the Pratinidhi Sabha (Lower House) to join him in a coalition under his leadership, although Nepali Congress, the main Opposition party, has rebuffed an approach.

Mr Oli first built up his nationalist credentials by mounting a cartographic coup against India by incorporating changes in the India-Nepal boundary (Kalapani area) through a constitutional amendment that was passed unanimously since no party wished to run the risk of being seen as less than nationalist. This would have pleased Beijing, the other power in contention in Nepal's affairs.

After strengthening his position on the map issue, Mr Oli's power-hunger led him to renege on internal arrangements made with Mr Prachanda to rotate the Prime Minister's post with the CPN (Maoist) leadership. Faced with the prospect of loss of support in the House, he dissolved Parliament with the connivance of President Bidya Kumari Bhandari and called for fresh elections. This unpopular move was thwarted by the Supreme Court. The PM was thus faced with a no-confidence motion.

The fragile internal political situation in land-locked Nepal can render it helpless in dealing with the Covid pandemic, and drive it into the arms of Beijing. New Delhi needs to keep a careful watch on the unstable state of affairs. Negative developments in Nepal have a bearing on India's security.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Vizakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Vizakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Venagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalpally Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Amid pandemic, Britain, EU eye India trade deals



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

On the face of it, the time hardly seems propitious for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reach out to his foreign friends. His ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has suffered electoral setbacks in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh and been reprimanded by the courts. People blame his government for the mix of complacency and inefficiency that aggravated the fearsome second wave of Covid-19. But stricken India desperately needs the emergency medical aid that is pouring in from several richer countries.

Britain is one of them. Prime Minister Boris Johnson needs a treaty with India, especially after Brexit, and also to highlight the failure of his predecessor, Theresa May, to secure one. Undaunted by a series of setbacks, he bubbles that the "Enhanced Trade Partnership" and the "memorandum of understanding on India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership" that he and Prime Minister Modi had endorsed on May 4 "mark the beginning of a new era in the UK-India relationship".

Britain sees India as an Indo-Pacific partner in the great game of countering China. Britain is also the country with which India interacts most intimately at many levels. As Mr Johnson put it without inquiring too closely into the downside, "a living bridge" unites the two countries. Given that demographic link, British public opinion reacts swiftly and spontaneously to domestic Indian developments like the 1984 Sikh carnage, the Gujarat communal killings in 2002, constitutional changes in the former Jammu and Kashmir state, and the Citizenship Amendment Act.

That is only natural.

Britain's 2011 census recorded 1,451,862 Indian-origin persons, accounting for 2.3 per cent of the population. Migration has long been a contentious issue, and British-Indians are particularly curious about the new deal's provision for employment for 3,000 young Indian professionals annually, in return for New Delhi taking back Indian illegals in Britain.

Identifying and repatriating these illegals is bound to cause friction. If the "noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!", to quote Samuel Johnson, the flight to Heathrow airport is beaten in attractiveness only by the flight to New York for many aspiring Indians. Very few Indians who go nowadays to a Western country to study ever return to the motherland, with its bleak employment opportunities.

The phenomenon isn't exclusively Indian. A special British scheme to facilitate the import of chefs from Bangladesh for so-called "Indian" restaurants at once attracted floods of Bangladeshis whose only aim was to migrate to the West. The scheme was quickly abandoned.

When migration was discussed during Theresa May's 2016 visit to India, London claimed that as many as 100,000 Indians lived illegally in Britain. New Delhi disputed this figure, throwing in the counter-argument that tens of thousands of young Indians who go to Britain to study are denied job opportunities there. Another charge was that Britain is about the only country in the world that counts post-graduate Indian students staying on for a year or two's practical training as migrants. Indians felt especially

aggrieved when visa rules for Chinese students were greatly liberalised. One obvious explanation lies in the old saying: "Money talks!" With £8.63 billion in Chinese investment in the UK (with some of them being in public utility undertakings) and around 800 Chinese companies employing 71,000 people in the UK, Beijing could demand concessions. Moreover, Beijing's rigid controls guaranteed that all its students and trainees would sooner or later be recalled. Britain was not afraid of becoming a vast Chinatown.

The repatriation of Indian "illegals" is supposed to facilitate the legal movement of students and professionals and enhance cooperation in addressing illegal migration. But the late and much maligned right-wing British politician, Enoch Powell, was not alone in warning that "rivers of blood" would flow unless non-white immigration was checked. London is so acutely conscious of sensitivity about Commonwealth citizens from Asia and Africa that even Clement Attlee's Labour government back in the 1940s quietly set up a committee to examine how the British Nationality Act of 1948, which granted colonialism the right to enter, live and work in Britain, could be revised without creating a huge uproar.

Apart from a series of agreements on climate change, technology and pharmaceuticals, the Narendra Modi-Boris Johnson negotiations had finalised Indian investment worth £1 billion to create over 6,500 jobs in Britain. The other significant outcome was a commitment by both sides to begin trade talks this year to "negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement", remove

Mr Johnson probably hopes that Britain will upstage the European Union and sign an FTA with India first

trade barriers, and double bilateral trade by 2030.

The partnership deal will lift all export barriers on goods ranging from British apples to medical devices and open up India's legal services to British firms. In return, Britain agreed to improve access to its fisheries and nursing sectors.

Mr Johnson probably hopes that Britain will upstage the European Union and sign an FTA with India first. Negotiations with the EU, which started in 2007, have been stalled since 2013 but were resumed on May 8 when the 16th India-EU virtual summit was held at Porto, Portugal. India was represented by Mr Modi and the EU by Charles Michel, European Council president, and Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, besides all the 27 member countries. The unsurprising news was that they decided to restart talks on trade, investment protection and geographical indications.

The major sticking points in the India-EU negotiations — tariffs on automobiles, wines and spirits, restrictions the on free movement of professionals, data security status for the IT sector, market access and waiver of patent rights on Covid-related innovations — are important but are not explosive like migration. Ironically, Saturday's summit host, Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa, is an "Overseas Citizen of India."

Many assume that the presence of three ethnic Indians (Rishi Sunak, Priti Patel and Alok Sharma) in important positions in Mr Johnson's Cabinet will make it easier for other immigrants. But it's a worldwide trend for those who have boarded the gravy train diligently to ward off any newcomers. As home secretary, Priti Patel has already acquired a formidable anti-immigrant reputation.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

REDUCING GRAFT

Though the politicians, police, judiciary and media are corrupt in that order, they are Indians (*Check India's corruption, or insurgencies will go up, DC, May 11*). Indians are impatient and want to get things done immediately and are happy to comply with the by now famous "formalities". The myriad rules and regulations give ample scope for corruption to thrive. By making procedures simple, granting permissions or sanctions online with transparency, supported by an efficient grievance redressal system, a beginning can be made towards ending or at least reducing this evergreen topic of conversation.

S. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

SYSTEM FAILURE

The authorities are baffled over the uncontrolled spread and consequent sufferings of people (*Humanity wins where system fails in times of the pandemic, DC, May 11*). The habit of recommendations and doing favour in return for some money is the biggest hurdle that is leading to failure of the system. Consequently, the persons responsible are ignoring the importance of the system and aggravating the pandemic. Here humanity is playing a role to replace the system.

M.G. Sai Baba
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

High level meet on Telangana

NEW DELHI, May 11. The "fair" share for Telangana in the Plan funds of State is one of the issues expected to be resolved at the Prime Minister's half-yearly review here tomorrow.

The Chief Minister Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. J.V. Narsing Rao, and the Telangana Regional Committee Chairman, Mr. J. Chokka Rao, have arrived in the capital for the meeting. The issue to be resolved is between the claim of Mr. Chokka Rao for a 40 per cent share to Telangana of the State Plan funds and allocation by Mr. Brahmananda Reddi of a 35 per cent share on the basis of population plus 40 per cent of the funds earmarked for backward regions.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



As deaths rise, Covid deals a body blow to the steel frame

Is India's fabled "steel frame" only creaking or is it screaming? The coronavirus pandemic surge has devastated big cities including the capital and brought the healthcare system to its knees. India has now been recording the highest number of new coronavirus cases in the world and the death toll is mounting.

The second wave of the pandemic has spared no one, not even the elite administrative services that are charged with oiling the wheels that run the nation. According to sources, more than 100 senior officers, including IAS, IPS, IRS and others, have lost their lives to Covid. The news of the deaths of senior babus including Bihar chief secretary Arun Kumar Singh and three of his 1985 batchmates — former CBI director Ranjit Sinha, former secretary, department of land resources, R. Buhiril and serving director of the panchayati raj department in Bihar and many others — has got the babus rattled.

Further, the president of the UP IAS Association Deepak Trivedi and additional secretary of health in Bihar R.S. Chowdhury too died, both within a week. In recent weeks, nearly two dozen top babus across central government ministries and departments, including the health ministry, have tested positive for the coronavirus.

The severity of the epidemic has hit home. When even the powerful in the land are not safe and anxious about their health and that of their families, they are pushing the panic button. The "System", normally a bulwark against the vicissitudes of fate that often visit upon the citizenry, has collapsed this time. It must be a novel experience for the nation's elite administrators. Clearly, the old trusted "networks" and reliable connections have failed.

Naturally, none of them can say this openly but India's once-fabled "steel frame" has bent and buckled

in the face of the pandemic headwinds. The creaking is audible, even if it actually feels like screaming.

MAMATA BRINGS BACK COPS TRANSFERRED BY EC

After her hard-fought victory in the recently concluded state Assembly elections, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is busy setting her house in order. This has primarily meant that she is bringing back a large number of senior IPS officers who had been transferred by the Election Commission during the campaigning. Sources say that within hours of taking oath for the third consecutive time, Didi brought back senior IPS officer Virendra as director general of police. Virendra will be retiring this month. Similarly, Vivek Sahay has been reinstated as director of security.

Sources say that the state government has decided to clean up the mess in police administration and

issued transfer orders to a large number of IPS officers whose role during the election period has been seen as not only doubtful but in violation of norms.

However, the return to "normalcy" may take longer. After reports about the violence that erupted in certain parts of West Bengal after the elections, the ministry of home affairs has deputed a team of top home ministry officials led by an additional secretary-level officer to undertake a fact-finding exercise in the state to assess the "ground situation". This again is likely to set off a fresh round of friction between Didi and the Centre.

EC SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE

The Election Commission (EC) is split down the middle over its response to the censure by the Madras high court on its role in conducting elections during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EC has approached the Supreme Court against the cen-

sure, but its petition was swiftly rejected. One of the panel's counsel has resigned stating that his "values are not in consonance with the EC's".

After Sunil Arora's retirement as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on April 12, the three-member Commission has Sushil Chandra as CEC and Rajiv Kumar as Election Commissioner. The position of the third EC was vacant.

Many remember what happened the last time when there was a schism within the Election Commission. In the 2019 general elections, the then Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa had opposed the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on charges of violating the election model code of conduct. We all know how that went.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49161.81	-0.69
Nifty 50	14850.80	-0.61
S&P 500*	4,144.59	-1.05
Dollar (₹)	73.34	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.65	-0.28
Euro (₹)	89.22	-0.003
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,308	212 0.44
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.32	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.008	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.616	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Moody's cuts India growth forecast to 9.3%

Moody's Investors Service slashed India's growth forecast for the current financial year to 9.3 per cent, from the 13.7 per cent projected earlier, on account of the negative impact of the Covid second wave. India is experiencing a severe second wave of coronavirus infections which will slow the near-term economic recovery and could weigh on longer-term growth dynamics, the rating agency said.

Ruchi Soya to acquire biscuits biz from Patanjali



Ruchi Soya Industries announced the acquisition of biscuits business from Patanjali Natural Biscuits Pvt Ltd in a slump sale at ₹60.02 crore. The company, in a regulatory filing, said its board on May 10 approved the signing of a Business Transfer Agreement in this regard with the PNBPL. The acquisition will be completed in the next two months, it added. The sale consideration is payable in two tranches.

HUL to provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators

Hindustan Unilever Ltd said it will provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators to India to address the acute shortage of medical oxygen. Under its Mission HO2PE, HUL will send 4,000 concentrators to the worst affected cities which includes Delhi, Lucknow, Bengaluru, etc, it said. "Patients can avail of this service by calling the Mission HO2PE helpline number and request for oxygen concentrators," it added.

3 private telcos add new users in February

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio widened its mobile subscriber base to 414.9 million in February, with healthy addition of 4.2 million users, as it managed a comfortable lead in the market, according to TRAI data. In fact, all three private operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea added subscribers during the month, as per Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.



■ New dividend rules for top 1,000 firms Sebi makes policy on dividend a must

New Delhi, May 11: To strengthen corporate governance practices and disclosure requirements, Sebi has notified new rules, including that top 1,000 listed firms will have to formulate a dividend distribution policy.

The regulator has also put in place a framework in relation to applicability, constitution and role of the Risk Management Committee (RMC) and eased norms for re-classification of a promoter as a public shareholder, according to a notification dated May 5.

In addition, the regulator has asked listed firms to make available audio and video recordings of analyst and investor meets on their websites as well as stock exchanges within 24 hours or before the next trading day and also notified rules regarding Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BSSR).

Sebi has amended Listing of Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) rules and the new rules have come into effect from May 5.

In a notification, Sebi said the requirement for formulation of dividend distribution policy by the existing top 500 listed entities has been extended to the top 1,000 listed entities on the basis of market capitalisation.

The other listed entities can disclose their dividend distribution policies on a voluntary basis on their websites and provide



a web-link in their annual reports.

In addition, requirement to constitute the RMC has been extended to the top 1,000 listed entities by market capitalisation from the existing top 500 listed entities.

The RMC needs to have a minimum three members with the majority of them being members of the board of directors, including at least one independent director.

The quorum for a meeting of the RMC needs to be either two members or one third of the members of the committee, whichever is higher, including at least one member of the board of directors in attendance.

"The meetings of the RMC shall be conducted in such a manner that on a continuous basis not more than 180 days shall elapse between any two consecutive meetings," as per the notification.

The role of the RMC has been specified which includes formulation of a

detailed risk management policy and monitoring its implementation; periodic review of such policy; review of the appointment, removal and terms of remuneration of the chief risk officer (if any).

Further, the regulator has rationalised the existing framework pertaining to reclassification of promoter/ promoter group entities.

This includes exemption from existing requirements, in cases of reclassification pursuant to an order of the regulator under any law in line with existing exemption already available in cases of resolution plan approved under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

The exemption has also been provided from the requirement of seeking approval of shareholders in cases where the promoter seeking reclassification holds shareholding of less than one per cent, subject to the promoter not being in control, Sebi said.

PROMOTERS PLEDGED STAKE DIPS TO 1.64% FROM 2.09%

Mumbai, May 11: Faster-than-expected recovery from the pandemic induced disruptions and the resultant improvement in balance sheets in the second half of FY21 have helped India Inc promoters to redeem their pledged shares, according to a brokerage analysis.

The pledged holding of the BSE-500 index shows that the value of pledged promoter holdings as a percentage of promoter holding declined to 1.64 in the March quarter from 2.09 in the December 2020 quarter, according to a Kotak Institutional Equities analysis.

When looked at from a percentage of the overall promoter shareholding and the pledged holding, GMR Infrastructure (72.8), Omaxe (63.8) and Sterling & Wilson (53.7) were leading the chart. Companies with the highest promoter pled-ged holdings as of March 2021 include Suzlon Energy (88.5 per cent), Future Consumer (88.4) and Max Financial Services (88.4), GMR Infrastructure (72.8), and Omaxe (63.8).

Similarly, there was a widespread decline in pledged promoter holdings in almost all the Nifty-50 companies, except for IndusInd Bank where it increased.

However, it has to be kept in mind that pledging of shares does not necessarily imply that a company or a promoter is under financial stress.

—PTI

French auto major Citroen begins C5 Aircross delivery

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 11

French automobile major Citroën has commenced delivery of the new Citroën C5 Aircross SUV in Hyderabad. The company's flagship SUV is assembled in India at the company's plant in Thiruvallur, near Chennai.

This 'Comfort Class SUV' has a distinguished dynamic design and is available in four body colours and an optional black roof, for a personalised look.

Globally, the brand's leadership is illustrated by its "unique comfort" signature and embodied by the five key aims of the Citroën Advanced Comfort Programme illustrated in the new Citroën C5 Aircross SUV.

The vehicle comes in three models and is priced (ex-showroom, Hyderabad) between ₹29.9 lakh and ₹31.9 lakh.

To make the Citroën ownership extremely com-



French automobile major Citroën begins delivery of the new Citroën C5 Aircross SUV in Hyderabad.

fortable, the company has launched Citroën Future Sure for Indian customers.

This comprehensive package allows customers to own a Citroën with an easy monthly payment of ₹49,999, including an

assured future value on the new Citroën C5 Aircross SUV.

The package also includes Routine Maintenance, Extended Warranty, Roadside assistance and an on-road financing for upto five years.

Business NOTE

Markets tumble on inflation fears

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 11

Indian equity market corrected after four sessions of gains in line with global market on expected US inflation spike fear and US Fed's monetary policy tightening sooner than later which led to overnight sell off in the technology sector stocks in the US market.

Nasdaq Composite index was down 1.34 per cent on Tuesday night too at the time of going to press

after falling 2.34 per cent on Monday on rising inflation and soaring global commodity prices.

The Sensex closed 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent down at 49,161.81 making a partial recovery from intra-day dip by over 600 points to 48,988.18 and gap down opening at 49,066 on weak global cues.

The Nifty-50 index closed at 14,850.75 down by 91.0 points or 0.61 per cent.

However, the broader market was quite resilient with BSE Mid-cap index

up 0.60 per cent and BSE Small-cap index up 0.80 per cent. PSU stocks were in big demand as BSE PSU index gained 2.44 per cent BSE CPSE index gained 3.16 per cent. "Rising inflation threatens the long-term revenue outlook of tech stocks. The run-up in commodity prices has stoked fears of the US Federal Reserve tightening its monetary policy much sooner than expected," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

Amitabh Bachchan can't resist Malkist

May 11: INBISCO India, a subsidiary of global food and beverage giant Mayora, has roped in film industry legend and icon Amitabh Bachchan as its brand ambassador for its flagship brand Malkist.

Headquartered in Hyderabad, INBISCO India offers unique and highly differentiated brands like KOPIKO-candy made with real coffee extracts, Choki Choki, Go Choco Rollz and Wheelz, in the confectionery category, Malkist, Coffee Joy and AttaBix in the biscuits category, and CHAIKO — a candy made with real tea extracts.

The latest ad campaign showcases Mr Bachchan in a series of TV commercials endorsing the brand's new positioning 'Malkist Can't Resist'. The campaign also features Anikha Surendran who rightly represents the target audience.

The campaign highlights the uniqueness of the cracker, which is made with delicious 14 crunchy layers and innovative toppings.

On his association with the brand Mr. Bachchan



said, "I found the whole concept of Malkist's crunchy layered crackers and cheesy cream topping so unique, that I had to taste it! And since then I really haven't been able to resist it!"

Achyut Kasireddy, MD, INBISCO India, commented, "Malkist is a much differentiated cracker with each biscuit made out of 7 layers, which makes it very crunchy... The new TVC highlights Malkist's proposition as crunchy crackers with cool toppings, which even Mr. Amitabh Bachchan can't resist!"

Business NOTE

FLIPKART TO ADD 5 WAREHOUSES FOR GROCERY BIZ

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 11

In order to strengthen its grocery supply chain infrastructure in the backdrop of lock-downs in several states, Flipkart plans to add over eight lakh square feet of space through five new fulfilment centres over the next three months.

The five new fulfilment centres will come up in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Coimbatore and Hyderabad. This will enable the company to handle over 73,000 grocery orders per day and provide its customers safe and seamless access to order daily essentials through quick and contactless doorstep delivery. Currently, Flipkart serves close to 64,000 orders a day.

"Our new grocery supply chain infrastructure will help us serve more customers in the country who can order daily essentials seamlessly and avail of contactless delivery. We are also continuously engaging with brand and marketplace partners to ensure stock availability across the country," said Smriti Ravichandran, vice president, grocery, Flipkart.

HUL's Sudhir to join Godrej as MD

New Delhi, May 11: FMCG major Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) on Tuesday said Sudhir Sitapati will take over as its managing director and CEO in October this year.

Sitapati is presently executive director, foods and refreshments, at Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL).

His appointment would be effective from October 18, 2021, following which Nisaba Godrej, who is currently the chairperson and managing director, will serve as executive chairperson, GCPL said in a regulator filing.

"The Board of Directors at its meeting held today, appointed Sudhir Sitapati as the managing director & CEO of the company for a period of five years with



Sudhir Sitapati

effect from October 18, 2021, subject to the approval of the shareholders in the ensuing Annual General Meeting," it said. On Monday, HUL had informed that Sitapati is stepping down. Srinandan Sundaram was named as his replacement.

According to the Godrej group firm, the appointment of Sitapati, who has spent 22 years at HUL, will

enable GCPL to leverage his significant experience in building sustainable and profitable businesses to guide the growth strategy going forward.

Last year in June, Vivek Gambhir had stepped down as the MD and CEO of GCPL. Nisaba Godrej, who was then executive chairperson, had assumed additional charge as MD and CEO.

Commenting on the development, Nisaba Godrej said, "I am delighted to be welcoming Sudhir to Godrej. His significant experience and passion for building sustainable and profitable brands and businesses aligns very strongly with our purpose at GCPL. Sudhir's value-based leadership also makes him a great fit with the Godrej culture." —PTI

MFIs send SOS to RBI on Covid

New Delhi, May 11: The microfinance industry has sought additional support, including an extension of the emergency credit line, from the Reserve Bank of India to combat the challenges arising out of the second COVID-19 wave.

Sa-Dhan an association of the microfinance sec-

tor, in a letter to the RBI, asked for the Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 3.0, emergency credit line, special liquidity facility in addition to the recently announced support measures by the central bank.

Just when we were coming out of the effects of the first wave of the pandemic, the second wave

has descended on us with a vengeance.

In view of the fresh challenges brought on by the pandemic, Sa-Dhan executive director P. Satish said MFIs may be supported with an emergency credit line of up to 25 per cent of their outstanding with their lending banks.

—PTI

MF INVESTORS TURN CAUTIOUS IN APRIL, BET ON HYBRID FUNDS



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 11

The second wave of Covid impacted mutual investors' fresh allocations in April in equity mutual funds as inflows fell to ₹3,437.37 crore compared to ₹9,115.12 crore in March 2021.

Investors preferred investing in hybrid MF schemes with ₹8,641 crore inflows in April, higher than ₹6,210.05 crore in the previous month.

However, the start to fiscal 2021-22 has been quite positive with mutual fund industry average asset under management at all time high of ₹32.42 lakh crore due to inflows in all MF scheme categories — be it debt, equity, hybrid or other schemes and monthly SIP contribution at ₹8,591 crore, April month data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India showed.

"The quantum of redemption was almost the same as last month, the fund mobilised was lower than that in March suggesting some of the investors would have preferred to stay on the sidelines until more clarity emerges around the impact of the second wave of the pandemic on the economy. Additionally, few investors would have also held back their investments in anticipation of market correction given the ongoing concerns," Himanshu Srivastava, associate director (Research), Morningstar India said. "The flows during April 2021 were driven by liquid, overnight and money market schemes on the fixed income side, thematic/sectoral schemes and arbitrage and dynamic asset allocation schemes in the equity and hybrid segment," N S Venkatesh, CEO, AMFI said.

BAD | TIMES

Infection among staff halves Apple phone's production in India

Covid hits Foxconn's iPhone output in India

Bengaluru, May 11: Production of the Apple iPhone 12 at a Foxconn factory in India has slumped by more than 50 per cent because workers infected with Covid-19 have had to leave their posts, two sources told Reuters.

The Foxconn facility in the southern state of Tamil Nadu produces iPhones specifically for India, the world's No.2 smartphone market.

Tamil Nadu is one of the worst hit states in the second coronavirus wave engulfing India. Officials imposed a full lockdown in the state from Monday, closing public transport and shuttering shops, to try slow surging infections.

More than 100 Foxconn employees in the state have tested posi-



tive for Covid-19 and the company has enforced a no-entry ban at its factory in the capital of Chennai until late May, one of the sources said.

"Employees are only allowed to leave but not to enter the facility since yesterday," the person said. "Only a small part of output is being kept."

More than 50 per cent of the plant's capacity had been cut, both sources said, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

"They did not specify the plant's capacity and it was unclear how many workers were at the facility, which provides dormitory accommodation for employees."

Taipei-based Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker and a major supplier to Apple, said a small number of employees at one of its facilities in India tested positive for Covid-19 and the company was providing them with support, including medical assistance.

"Foxconn places the health and safety of our employees as our highest priority and that is why

we have been working closely with local government and public health authorities in India to address the challenges that we and all companies are facing in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis," it said in a statement to Reuters. Foxconn's shares fell as much as 6.2 per cent after the Reuters report. The stock closed down 5.31 per cent, outpacing a 3.8 per cent fall in the broader market on concerns about rising Covid-19 cases in Taiwan.

India has benefited from Apple's move to shift some areas of production from China to other markets as it navigates a trade war between Washington and Beijing, with Apple announcing in March it had started the assembly of the iPhone 12 in India. —Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Anand to feature in Covid fundraiser

New Delhi: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand and four other Indian Grandmasters will play simultaneous online exhibition matches against other chess players on Thursday to raise funds for Covid-19 relief work in the country. Any player who has a Chess.com blitz or FIDE standard rating of under 2000 can play with former world champion Anand by donating \$150 and with the other four GMs by paying \$25 as registration amount. Donations will also be accepted during the exhibition matches to be broadcast on Chess.com at 19.30 IST. The website said it will match all donations up to a total of \$10,000. All the proceeds from the simultaneous exhibitions involving Anand, Koneru Humpy, Dronavalli Harika, Nihal Sarin and Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu will go to RedCross India and the Checkmate Covid initiative of the All India Chess Federation (AICF). — PTI

Pacer Bumrah gets vaccinated

Mumbai: India's star pacer Jasprit Bumrah and women's national team opener Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday said they received their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. Joining the duo was veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik. All three cricketers posted pictures of themselves on their respective social media accounts while urging everyone to get inoculated. Several of his teammates, including skipper Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma, had got their first jab in various vaccination centres across the country. Head coach Ravi Shastri was the first from the Indian cricket team to receive the vaccine. He got his first jab in the first week of March. — PTI

Don't break Covid protocols: Rijiju

New Delhi: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday cautioned Indian sportspersons against breaking Covid-19 protocols of foreign countries while travelling for training or competition. Rijiju posted the comment while wishing Olympic-bound shooters a successful trip to Croatia, for which they left earlier in the day. "Safe journey! Never break the Covid-19 protocols of other countries. Focus on training, take care and stay safe. Will provide all necessary support to our athletes and the coaches. All the best," Rijiju tweeted. The remark came in the backdrop of Bengaluru FC's AFC Cup play-off against Eagles FC in Male being postponed after the visiting team had to tender an apology for violating quarantine protocols in the host city. Maldives sports minister Ahmed Mahloof had asked BFC to leave the country. — PTI

Fulham relegated from top flight

London: Relegation, promotion, and now relegation again. Fulham's rollercoaster ride between the top two divisions of English football has taken the London club back out of the Premier League, their fate sealed by losing to Burnley 2-0 on Monday. Fulham joined Sheffield United and West Bromwich Albion in going down to the Championship, wrapping up the Premier League's relegation battle at the earliest ever stage with three rounds still to go. "I'm bitterly disappointed, I'm hurt, I'm gutted," said Fulham manager Scott Parker, who also presided over the team's relegation two seasons ago when he was in charge on an interim basis. — AP

Westbrook sets record in NBA

Los Angeles: Russell Westbrook wrote his way into NBA history on Monday, bagging the 182nd triple-double of his career to break Oscar Robertson's 47-year-old record. Washington Wizards star Westbrook, who had equaled Robertson's record of 181 triples on Saturday, sealed his record-breaking triple with 8 minutes and 33 seconds remaining in Monday's 125-124 defeat to the Atlanta Hawks. Westbrook's 36th triple-double of the season included 28 points, 21 assists and 13 rebounds. A triple-double occurs when a player makes double-digit tallies in three of the five major statistical categories in a game — points, rebounds, assists, steals and blocks. — AFP

TWO-HORSE RACE

Dhawan, Pandya in contention to lead second-string team

New Delhi, May 11: Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant allrounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July. India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters said on conditions of anonymity.

"In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good "one and half IPLs" in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for past eight years," an official said.

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either.

"Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer," the official said. — PTI

JUVENTUS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING RONALDO

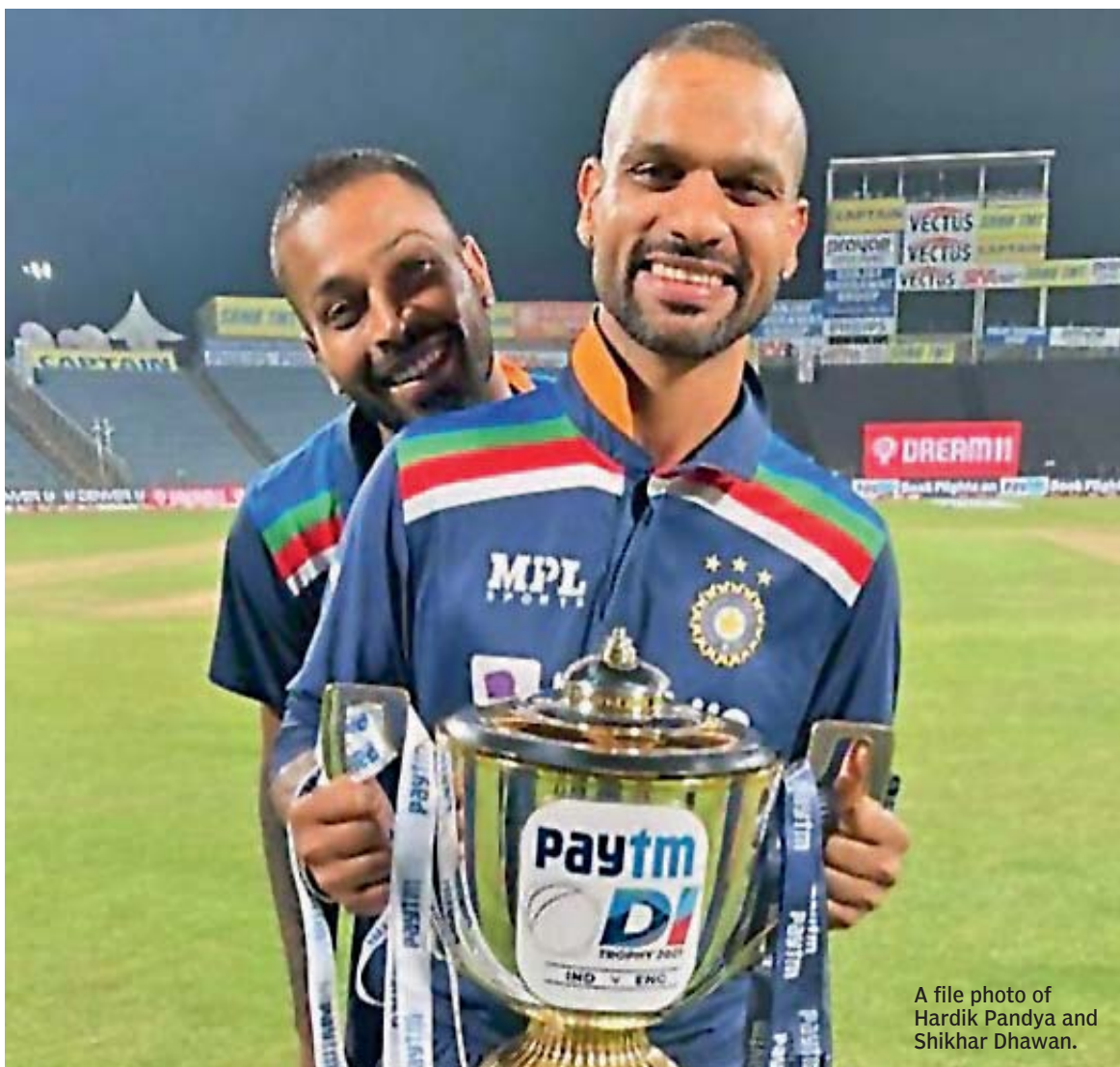
Rome, May 11: With their nine-year reign in Serie A ended and club president Andrea Agnelli roundly criticised for his role in the aborted European Super League, Juventus now risk missing out on next season's Champions League. Juventus were knocked out of Italy's top four last weekend following a 3-0 home defeat by AC Milan, leaving coach Andrea Pirlo's position increasingly under threat entering the final three games. Juventus last missed out on the Champions League in 2011 while Cristiano Ronaldo, the competition's all-time leading scorer with 134 goals, has featured in every edition since 2003. Failing to qualify would see Juventus lose out on roughly 80 million euros, jeopardising their ability to retain Ronaldo and afford his reported pre-tax annual salary of 54 million euros. It would likely spell the end of Ronaldo's Turin spell, who despite turning 36 in February is the leading scorer in Serie A this term with 27 goals. That could though free up opportunities for others to emerge. — AFP

MCC says bamboo bats will be illegal

London, May 11: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has shot down the idea of bats made from bamboo, saying it would be "illegal" under the current set of rules governing the game.

The guardians of the laws of cricket, however, said they will deliberate on the matter during their laws sub-committee meeting.

According to a study by Darshil Shah and Ben Tinkler-Davies from the University of Cambridge, bats made from bamboo



A file photo of Hardik Pandya and Shikhar Dhawan.

A FEW INDIANS DIDN'T LIKE RESTRICTIONS: PAMMENT

Auckland, May 11: Mumbai Indians fielding coach James Pamment has claimed that some senior Indian players did not like being subjected to restrictions inside the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble but it felt completely safe till the time cases from participating teams hadn't come to light.

Pamment did not elaborate on his assertion about the Indian players and did not take any names either. The IPL was

suspended on May 4. "Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"But we did feel safe, at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge," he said.

The New Zealander, a former Northern Districts coach, said he and the MI players started to feel apprehensive shortly before the competition

was halted. "It was when cases started to come with the teams. They were a little more fearful, a little more apprehensive," said the 52-year-old, who returned home on Saturday.

"Chennai (CSK) announced their cases and we'd played Chennai at the weekend, so straight away, the dynamic changed. I certainly noticed from within my group. I'd spend most of my time with the Kiwis and the Aussies, their

mindset had changed.

"We started to get Indian guys in our environment whose families were sick. There were bereavements as well and we were taking a bit of a cue from those guys who were saying 'no, we want to carry on' and the messages were coming back that this is a good distraction."

Pamment said at no stage did he feel his health was going to be put in jeopardy within the bubble set up by MI at a Mumbai hotel. — PTI

No England stars for IPL phase 2

London, May 11: England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is rescheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year — one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in September and October, while they will compete with Australia at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by *ESPNcricinfo*.



England's Sam Curran (left) and Moeen Ali represent Chennai Super Kings in IPL.

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL.

"None of us knows what a rearranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New

Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile cricket including the T20 World Cup and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players." — PTI



A study by University of Cambridge suggests bats made from bamboo are economically sustainable.

be recognised as a wood, this would still be illegal under the current law, which bans lamination of

the blade, except in junior bats."

The researchers found the bamboo bat to be "stiffer, harder and stronger than those made of willow, although more brittle" and also supposed to have a larger "sweet spot, closer to the toe of the bat."

"The sweet spot on a bamboo bat makes it much easier to hit a four off a Yorker for starters, but it's exciting for all kinds of strokes," Shah had said in the report.

MCC, however, said it

needs to tread carefully to ensure that the balance of bat and ball remains intact. "MCC's role as Guardian of the Laws includes maintaining the balance between bat and ball, and any potential amendments to the Law would need to carefully take this into consideration, particularly the concept of the bat producing greater power."

The apex body said it will discuss the matter as finding alternatives to willow in a relevant issue. — PTI

COVID | SCARE

Doubts raised over Olympics

Tokyo, May 11: Japanese superstar Naomi Osaka has admitted she is "not really sure" the coronavirus-hit Tokyo Olympics should go ahead, as doubts grow about the Games just weeks before the opening ceremony.

The four-time tennis Grand Slam winner joined fellow Japanese player Kei Nishikori in raising concerns as Tokyo and other parts of Japan remain under a virus state of emergency.

A top politician also warned that Japan still had to make a "careful decision" about whether to hold the Games, which have scant public support, according to opinion polls.

Scrapping the 2020 Olympics, postponed last year as the pandemic advanced, is an idea that has never quite gone away, despite repeated assertions from officials that they will proceed.

A survey by a leading Japanese daily released on Monday found 59 percent of respondents want the Olympics cancelled, underlining persistent public concerns over the risk of infections.

Osaka, Japan's biggest sports star and a major gold-medal prospect, said "to be honest, I'm not really sure", when asked if the Olympics should take place as planned.

"I'm an athlete, and of course my immediate thought is that I want to play in the Olympics," the four-time Grand Slam winner told the BBC.

"But as a human, I would say we're in a pandemic, and if people aren't



Naomi Osaka

I would say we're in a pandemic, and if people aren't healthy, and if they're not feeling safe, then it's definitely a really big cause for concern.

— NAOMI OSAKA
Japanese tennis star

healthy, and if they're not feeling safe, then it's definitely a really big cause for concern."

Nishikori said there "definitely should be a discussion" on whether Tokyo should plough ahead. "I don't know how much they are thinking about how they are gonna make (a) bubble, because this is not like 100 people," he said.

NADAL 'NOT SURE'

World number three Rafael Nadal admitted he is unsure if he will take part in the Summer Olympics.

"In a normal world, the Olympic Games were always my main priority. In the current world, the Olympic Games are still a priority, but things have changed. We have been for almost year-and-a-half under this pandemic and the only thing I can say it is that I take the decision based in a short term," Nadal said. — AFP

TORCH RELAY PULLED OFF STREETS IN JAPAN

Tokyo, May 11: The Tokyo Olympic torch relay is being pulled off the streets in Hiroshima prefecture as Covid-19 cases rise in Japan barely 10 weeks before the opening ceremony. Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki said that a ceremony next week without the relay is likely to still take place. This is at least the sixth change to the relay — from rerouting to cancellation — in the last several weeks.

Organisers warned before the relay began that changes and delays were expected. "It is certain there will be no relay on public streets since we are all trying to reduce going out, and how to do the ceremony without the relay on the streets is still being discussed with the organisers," Yuzaki.

The relay began on March 25 in northeastern Japan and is to end on July 23 at the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Tokyo and other areas are under a state of emergency until May 31. — AP



Indian shooters Elavenil Valarivan (left) and Sanjeev Rajput take a selfie. — Twitter

Indian shooters leave for Croatia

New Delhi, May 11: The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team on Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage, Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your

inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, National Rifle Association of India president tweeted before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy. The Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make the final of the men's skeet event on Monday. The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI. After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning on July 23. — PTI