

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SUNDAY 9 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 3%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 26
Tithi: Triyodashi
Star: Revathi
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6.00 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.34 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 6.24 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.26 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.45 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 4.09 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 4.37 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,72,991)	(+2,812)
2,20,60,960	2,39,660

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+27,397)
TN: 13,51,362 15,412

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

15,76,49,446

DEATHS

32,86,591

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Covid-19 snatches away ‘Golden Men’ Ravinder Pal and MK Kaushik

New Delhi, May 8: When Maharaj Krishan Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh stood on the victory podium in Moscow 40 summers back, little did they know that cruel twist of fate would put them together in life and now in death. On Saturday, Kaushik and Ravinder, decorated members of India's last gold winning Olympic team lost their battle against the COVID-19. They had dribbled past formidable opposition with deft stick-work but the virus which has ruined lives of thousands committed a deadly foul ending their match of life. This wasn't quite the end that 66-year-old Kaushik and 60 year old Ravinder Pal would have ever envisaged but destiny plays its own games. For the legendary MK Kaushik, the game of hockey was a religion as no other player of his generation served the game as much as he did for over four decades in various capacities.

COUNTER

POINT



2nd wave? I am more worried about my 2nd dose of vaccine!

Violence: Bengal Guv summons chief secy

Kolkata, May 8: Stating that the state home secretary failed to apprise him of law and order situation regarding post-poll violence, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday asked the Chief Secretary to see him by evening.

Mr Dhankhar tweeted that the home secretary did not forward reports of the state's director general of police (DGP) and commissioner of

Kolkata police to him in this regard.

“Such drifting of governance @MamataOfficial from constitutional prescriptions is unfortunate and cannot be overlooked,” he tweeted.

“While the state passes through most severe post-poll violence, there is just no input to the constitutional head. This is least expected,” Mr Dhankhar wrote. *PTI*

STATE | 3

Shankar Jiwai new Chennai police commissioner



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

Only essential services allowed, public transport banned 2-week total lockdown in state from Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 8

A total lockdown would be clamped in the state from 4 am on Monday, May 10, to 4 am on Monday, May 24, which is expected to bring all normal activities to a complete standstill and fully free the roads of vehicles.

However, to prepare the people for the lockdown, the government allowed the shops to open without the restrictions imposed earlier on Saturday and Sunday. So, people are allowed to go out and buy essentials on the two days till 9 pm.

Buses would be operated in the two days to help people reach their homes from the capital city or vice versa, after which no transport would be allowed for 14 days.

The new government led by M.K. Stalin took the decision, seeking to curb the spread of Coronavirus that is wreaking havoc in its second wave, after holding discussions with district collectors, medical experts, public health professionals and others.

According to a government press release, all shops and business establishments would remain closed during the 14 day period with grocery, vegetable, fish and meat vends alone remaining open till 12 noon.

Only take away service would be allowed in hotels, restaurants and other eateries that would function from 6 am to 10 am, 12 noon to 3 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm. Even e-commerce food delivery services would be permitted only during those hours.

Street vendors of vegetables and flowers would be allowed to do business till noon and fair price shops will be open from 8 am to 12 noon. Liquor shops would be closed completely during the lockdown period.

The services exempted from the lockdown are those related to health, revenue, government secretariat, disaster management, police, home guards, fire and rescue, prisons, district administration, industrial centres, electricity, water supply, local body administration, treasuries and social and women welfare departments.

■ P3



The overflowing Kothavalchavadi market in Chennai on Saturday

— E.K. Sanjay

For today

SHOPS WILL BE OPENED TILL 9 PM

FROM MONDAY

What's open:

- Grocery, vegetable, fish, meat vends: till 12 noon.
- Take away service in hotels, restaurants, eateries: 6 am- to 10 am; 12 noon to 3 pm; 6 pm to 9 pm.
- Street vendors of vegetables and flowers: Till 12 noon
- Fair price shops: 8 am to 12 noon

Allowed:

- Industries in continuous process and making essential commodities.
- Agricultural activities
- Media, private courier services, hospitals and related services, pharmacies, ambulance and hearse services.
- Ongoing construction works
- Nursing attendants

Exempted services:

- Health, revenue, government secretariat, disaster management, police, home guards, fire and rescue, prisons, district administration, industrial centres, electricity, water supply, local body administration, treasuries and social and women welfare departments.

Stalin asks PM for more O2

Chennai, May 8: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday requested the Centre to enhance the medical oxygen allocation to Tamil Nadu to 500 metric tonnes.

The Chief Minister, who had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, assured him that Tamil Nadu would stand by the Centre in the fight against Coronavirus.

The Prime Minister told Mr Stalin that he would consider his request



immediately, an official release here said.

The Prime Minister, the release said, asked the Tamil Nadu government to continue testing for the virus on a massive scale and focus on monitoring the mild coronavirus

patients at home.

Mr Stalin also sought the Centre's cooperation in containing the spread of the infection in Tamil Nadu.

In his first official communication to Modi after taking over as chief minister on Friday, Mr Stalin had flagged the "severe crisis" over availability of medical oxygen and sought the PM's intervention to ensure supplies and make available containers and trains to transport the life saving gas to the state.

WORLD | 5

Boris Johnson welcomes wins in local election



SPORT | 8

Hamilton takes 100th pole in Spain



Vol. 17 No.43 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| 4.00

SC sets up task force to streamline oxygen supply

THE TASK FORCE

12-member task force

Cabinet secretary to be convenor

Experts, corporate hospital honchos to be members

Tenure: Six months

Main task: Assessing and making recommendations

New Delhi, May 8: The Supreme Court has constituted a 12-member National Task Force of top medical experts to formulate a methodology for allocation of oxygen to states and Union territories for saving lives of Covid-19 patients and to facilitate a public health response to the pandemic.

The top court named a sub-group for carrying out the audit exercise for Delhi's health infrastructure and allocation of oxygen and said that it shall consist of Dr Randeep Guleria of AIIMS, Dr Sandeep Budhiraja of Max Healthcare and two IAS officers not below the rank of joint secretary -- one each from the Centre and the Delhi government.

A bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah said that the cabinet secretary will be the convenor of the National Task Force and may nominate

an officer not below the rank of additional secretary to depute for him, when necessary.

The top court said in its order passed on May 6 uploaded on Saturday that the secretary of the Union ministry of health and family welfare will be ex-officio member of the task force.

The bench said other members of the task force will include Bhabatosh Biswas, former vice-chancellor,

West Bengal University of Health Sciences, Kolkata;

Devender Singh Rana, chairperson of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi; Devi Prasad Shetty, chairperson and executive director, Narayana Healthcare, Bengaluru; Dr Gagandeep Kang, professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu; and J.V. Peter, director, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

■ P4

Test report not must for hosp. admission

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 8

In a significant move, the Union ministry of health and family welfare has revised the national policy for admission of Covid-19 patients to various categories of Covid facilities.

Under the new policy, a positive test report for Covid-19 virus is now not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility and the government has directed that no patient will be refused services in any hospital on any count.

The Supreme Court had last week asked the government to revise the admission policy saying it was not reasonable to insist on the test report which could delay admission.

India on Saturday recorded over four lakh fresh cases and 4,187 deaths in the last 24 hours. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with the chief ministers of Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu on the Covid situation in their states.

SC had last week asked the government to revise the admission policy saying it was not reasonable to insist on the test report which could delay admission

The high rising cases have started showing some downward trend in Maharashtra and Delhi while 180 districts in the country have had no fresh cases in the last seven days. Yet, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh continue to report very high cases.

As per the Union government directive to all states and UTs, hospitals under the Central government, state governments and Union Territory administration, including private hospitals managing Covid patients, shall ensure that they admit suspect cases to the 'suspect wards' and start treatment immediately instead of insisting on a positive Covid-19 test for admission. ■ P4

Assam BJP MLAs meet today to elect new CM

MANOJ ANAND, YOJNA GUSAI | DC GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, MAY 8:

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a strong contender for the post of chief minister, announced on Saturday that the decision on who will lead the government in Assam would be taken at a BJP legislature party meeting slated to be held in Guwahati on Sunday.

On Saturday, the BJP

top brass, including party president J.P. Nadda, Union home minister Amit Shah, general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh and party's state in-charge Bijayanta Panda held a series of meetings with incumbent chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Mr Sarma, who had been summoned to Delhi by the party leadership.

After the BJP leadership held separate and joint meetings with the two of

them, Mr Sarma told the media, “The BJP legislature party meeting will be held tomorrow in Guwahati. Answers to all questions will come out of that meeting.”

The state unit of the party is abuzz that around 40 MLAs, including alliance partners, are backing Mr Sarma, who was the first one to meet Mr Nadda. Later, the party top brass held a meeting with Mr Sonowal separately.

Palestinians, Israeli police clash at historic mosque

Jerusalem, May 8: Israel's national police chief on Saturday announced that he was beefing up forces in Jerusalem ahead of expected disturbances in the coming days following a night of heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police in the holy city.

Palestinian medics said more than 200 Palestinians were wounded in the Friday night clashes at the

Al-Aqsa mosque compound and elsewhere in Jerusalem. The violence drew condemnations from Israel's Arab allies, and calls for calm from the United States and Europe.

Israel has been dealing with the heaviest unrest in Jerusalem in several years, with near-nightly clashes between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters throughout the current Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The protests broke out at the beginning of Ramadan three weeks ago when Israel restricted gatherings at a popular meeting spot outside Jerusalem's Old City.

It was unclear what set off the violence at Al-Aqsa, which erupted when Israeli police in riot gear deployed in large numbers as thousands of Muslim worshippers were holding evening prayers at the sprawling hilltop

esplanade. Throughout the night large groups of protesters could be seen hurling rocks as Israeli police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades. At one point, the police entered one of the buildings in the complex, which includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and the iconic golden Dome of the Rock.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said 88 of the wounded were hospitalised. The

Palestinian Health Ministry said 83 people were wounded by rubber-coated bullets, including three who were shot in the eye, two with serious head injuries and two with broken jaws. The Israeli police said protesters hurled stones, fireworks and other objects at them, wounding 17 officers, half of whom were hospitalised.

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holi-

est site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the biblical temples. It has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

Saturday night is “Laylat al-Qadr” or the “Night of Destiny,” the most sacred in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. — AP

OTHER STORY

UCCs made Covid-19 war rooms

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

The state government has decided to designate unified control centres (UCCs) as Covid-19 war rooms to monitor the oxygen stock at hospitals across the state.

In a statement, the health department said the decision was taken after Chief Minister M. K. Stalin announced on Wednesday the formation of Covid-19 war rooms. "Since the UCC is already acting as a cross-departmental leadership hub for Covid-19 control activities in the state, it has been decided to designate them as Covid-19 war room. The war room will act as the single nodal point and command centre for managing the bed availability at government and private hospitals, especially for critically ill patients who require oxygen. The oxygen cylinder requirements in private hospitals will also be coordinated through the war room with the support of the state drug controller. The war room through the 104 Health helpline and social media will reach out and address the needs of the public during the second wave of the pandemic.

Temporary suspension of metro services

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

As per the instructions of Government of Tamil Nadu for complete lockdown in the state and temporary prohibition of public transport for curbing the spread of Covid-19 Chennai Metro Rail Limited has decided to suspend its metro train services from May 10, 4 am to May 24, 4 00 am.

Mad scramble at Tasmac shops

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 8

Tasmac shops across the state witnessed a mad scramble for liquor with tipplers lining up under the hot sun through the day and police had to intervene in many places to restore law and order.

Though it was business as usual at the shops when they opened for the day at 8 am, as per the revised timing under the new lockdown norms that came in yesterday, by around 10.30 am the crowds started swelled as television channels carried the news of complete lockdown from Monday.

As closure of all liquor shops during the entire fortnight from May 10 to 24 was highlighted in the television news, tipplers woke up to the impending reality and rushed to the shops that were otherwise supposed to shut down by 12 noon.

However the government relaxed the existing lockdown norms for Saturday and Sunday and extended the shop timings to enable people buy goods before the total lockdown and Tasmac shops too were allowed to remain open till 6 pm.

So the crowds that gathered at the liquor shops continued to stand in line waiting for their turn. But on seeing the men walking out with gunny bags full of bottles, those standing at the bag end of the winding queues turned panicky and started raising objections over large scale procurements.

Madurantakam shop penalised for violating Covid-19 restrictions

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

The Madurantakam municipality on Saturday penalized a Tasmac shop in the Bazaar area for violation of Covid-19 norms.

In the Madurantakam Bazaar area, a Tasmac shop was doing business by defying the restrictions by not following social distancing. The shop was overcrowded with many found not wearing masks.

Based on complaints, the municipality officials conducted an inspection and found the Covid-19 norms violated. A Spot penalty of Rs 5,000 was



levied and collected, a municipal official said. The officials also warned

several shops for compromising on Covid-19 restrictions.

ements.

Many shop keepers devised their own method to regulate the sales and announced that not more than 10 bottles would be sold to a single buyer. That made some in the queue to call their friends to rush to the shop and join the queue.

It was interesting to watch the men lug huge bags full of liquor bottles and those who rushed to the shop without bothering to pick up carry bags were seen holding them in the fold of their lungs and lumbering out, a witness at a shop said.

The impromptu buying spree also led to many tipplers leaving their vehicles

in a haphazard manner outside the shops to run and join the queue. The disorganized parking of large number vehicles led to traffic jams in many places in Chennai.

Outside a shop in the Luz area, the road choked with the vehicles and the men waiting for their turn to reach the counter, prompting the police to rush to the spot and clear the blockade. In Tambaram, too, a similar incident was reported.

That shop in Tambaram was located on the Grand Southern Trunk Road, which meant that the traffic jam affected the movement of vehicles on the main road, causing more inconvenience to the people.

The situation was the same all over the state, including small towns. In Tindivanam, too, there was a mad rush for bottles as the tipplers there who normally visit the neighbouring Pudukcherry region for their drinking requirements were already upset over the shops closed in the Union Territory.

Many in the line were also crying foul over the bulk procurements. They said bootleggers with the help of shopkeepers and using their agents were buying in large numbers as they could sell them in the black for high rates once the lockdown came into force on Monday.

TN adds 27,397 new cases, 241 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

The state on Saturday added 27,397 new Covid-19 positive cases and 241 deaths, registering yet another surge in daily cases across the districts. The figure went up from 26,465 new cases and 197 deaths on Friday. A total of 23,110 patients were discharged from hospitals across the state, a rise from 22,381 on Friday.

According to the health department data, the total Covid-19 tally in the state has reached 13, 51,362 while death toll touched 15,412, including 5,153 in Chennai.

Chennai has registered another single day spike with 6,846 cases, a surge from 6,738 on Friday. A record 72 cases of deaths were also reported in the district. Total number of positive cases in the district now stands at 3,83,644.

Chengalpattu district recorded 2,154 cases. At least 10 people succumbed to Covid-19 in the district. Total cases in the district now stand at 94,964.

The number of daily cases in Coimbatore went up to 2,117 from 2,101 on Friday. Four people died in the district due to Covid-19.

Thiruvallur district recorded 1,284 cases while the figure on Friday was 1,243. A total of 17 people lost their lives in the district.

Madurai district also recorded 1,000-plus cases on the second consecutive day with 1,217 cases. Seven deaths were also reported.

Cuddalore (519), Erode (779), Kancheepuram (906), Kanyakumari (542), Selam (550), Thanjavur (857), Theni (521), Thoothukudi (853), Tirunelveli (674), Tirupur (655), Trichy (820) and Vellore (574) crossed the 500-mark while Dharmapuri (305), Didigul (361), Krishnagiri (429), Nagapattinam (392), Ranipet (325), Thirupathur (318), Thiruvannamalai (346) and Thiruvallur (338), breached the 300-mark. While five districts reported over 200 cases, five other districts recorded over 100 cases.

Chennai and surround-

ing districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu added 10,588 new cases while the tally was 10,276 on Friday. Daily active cases have also gone up to 1,39,401 from 1,35,355 on Friday. Daily total active cases in the Chennai district touched 32,858, a dip from 33,068 on Friday.

Kancheepuram recorded 14 deaths while the death toll in Trichy is 12. Selam and Thirupathur registered 10 and 11 deaths respectively.

The death toll goes as: Cuddalore -9, Dharmapuri-3, Dindigul-6, Kallakurichi-2, Kanyakumari-9, Karur-4, Krishnagiri-4, Nagapattinam-2, Thenkasi-5, Thanjavur-7, Theni-2, Thoothukudi-5, Thirunelveli-3, Thirupathur-3, Vellore-5, Villupuram-5 and Virudhunagar-5. Five other districts reported one death each.

A total of 1,48, 295 persons took RTPCR tests through 264 labs while total individual tests on Friday were 1,45,352. At least 2,34,18,282 individuals tested so far in the state.

Poor, vulnerable face another bout of misery

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 8

As Tamil Nadu braces for another complete lockdown, the vulnerable communities and small scale industries, still unable to come to terms with the impact of previous lockdown, are poised for days of struggle ahead.

The state government has allotted Rs 2,000 as immediate Covid-19 relief for each cardholder, but the livelihood of these sections remains at stake. The transgender community, slum-dwellers, wayside vendors and employees at small scale industries were the immediate victims of the earlier lockdowns. Again they are staring at loss of means of livelihood.

Swetha Sudhakar, founder of Born2Win Social Welfare Trust for transgender persons, pointed out that the new lockdown would definitely land the community under more stress. "We are still struggling to cope with the impact of the first lockdown. Though the government announced Rs 2,000 as immediate relief for cardholders, only a few transgender persons have ration card. Many transgenders have been running small businesses to earn livelihood. Most of the people have survived the first lockdown with the help of the public who supported our fundraising activities. Now we are not getting much response to fundraising campaigns. The new lockdown will be more painful than the first one. There are more than 2,000 registered transgender people in and around the city. So, the government should provide at least Rs 7,000 as relief for each transperson," said Swetha.

Highlighting the tough situation in the manufacturing sector, K.E. Raghunathan, former president, All India Manufacturers Organisation, said the new lockdown will add more stress in the sector resulting in huge job loss. "Many of the manufacturing units have already shut down due to the impact of the first lockdown. This is the second lockdown. We don't know how long it will last. Either way, this lockdown will impact the sector severely unless the government provides some sort of cushion to absorb the shock," he said.

V. Sudhakar, convenor, MSME Competitiveness Panel, Confederation of Indian Industry, also echoed the view of Raghunathan. But, he maintained that desperate time required desperate decisions. It will definitely impact the sector economically, he said.

Ever since the Covid-19 outbreak was reported in the city in March last year, the slum-dwellers, who are largely daily wage workers, have been struggling to make ends meet as most of them lost their livelihood in the lockdown. With the new lockdown announced, a great deal of fear started to set in about the future turning upside down.

Y. Manikandan, of K.M. Garden near Perambur, one of the largest slums in the city, said the impact of the first lockdown was still evident in the settlement. "Many elders, who were working as domestic helps, sanitation workers and watchmen, lost their job post lockdown. Their jobs never returned though the lockdown was withdrawn. My wife was working as a domestic help. She lost her job after lockdown. However, a few weeks ago, she was able to find a job. The new lockdown will change our life again," he said.

Covid passenger stopped from boarding flight to West Bengal

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

A 40-year-old man was stopped from boarding a flight to West Bengal as he had tested positive for the coronavirus and was instead admitted to the government hospital in Chennai on Saturday.

An Indigo Airlines flight to West Bengal was scheduled to depart from Chennai Airport on Saturday. While they were checking the medical certificates of the passengers, the staff at the counter found that Pradeep Rai (40), had already tested positive for Covid-19.

They cancelled his journey and immediately alerted the Health Department. Airport sources said after he had developed a cough and cold, he was tested for the infection. When the results came Covid-19 positive, he was asked to undergo treatment. However, ignoring the direction of the officials, he had decided to go back to West Bengal and continue his treatment there. But when he reached the airport, he was stopped from boarding the flight when the airline staff checked his medical report.

Officials from the state Health Department admitted him to a Government hospital in Chennai. At the Airport, the place where Pradeep Rai stood and the airline counter were fully sanitized.



'Splash Mob', a Covid awareness campaign, organised by RPF, Chennai division, at Chennai Central station on Saturday.

—DC



Health minister Ma Subramanian and minister for Hindu religious and charitable endowments department Sekar Babu inspect a new Covid ward at Government Stanley Hospital along with hospital dean Dr P. Balaji. —DC



With the Tamil Nadu Government announcing complete lockdown from Monday, several people set off to their hometowns. Since public transport will be non-operational then, crowds throng the Koyambedu mofussil bus terminus on Saturday. —N. Sampath



Pallavaram municipality conducts a free vaccination camp behind Chromepet bus stand where many seniors turned up and maintained social distance on Saturday.

—DC

₹12.21 L worth gold seized by customs

Chennai, May 8: Air customs seized gold valued at ₹12.21 lakh from a passenger on Saturday at the city airport.

Based on the information, Mathivallaban Karunamoorthi, 23, of Trichy who arrived from Dubai by Air India flight AI906 was intercepted at the exit. On examination of his bag, one small cordless vacuum cleaner was found among his personal effects which appeared to be a bit heavy. On opening, a small cylindrical gold piece wrapped in the black adhesive tape was found concealed inside. Total 251 grams of 24 k purity gold valued at ₹12.21 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is on.

Chennai will miss the two grand newsmakers



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Not a day passes without one going through at least one poignant obituary note on social media these days. Not only does the print media's obituary corner overflow with grief even the news pages bring sad tidings regularly on the passing away of popular persons. Amidst the overall gloom and the spate of personal tragedies, the demise of two grand old newsmakers of Chennai on the same day, last Tuesday, set my thoughts rolling back to the times when they grabbed news headlines independently for different reasons.

Though the men were poles apart in their life, both, I

would say, were mavericks for different reasons. They attracted the news brigade like bees to honey and hence both men were familiar to the people of Chennai. While the younger of them, Traffic Ramaswamy (87 years), provided grist to the ever whirling news mills through his activism that apparently bordered on altruism, V Kalyanam (99) had nuggets of historic information that the media wanted to lap up. For those not familiar with them, Kalyanam was Mahatma Gandhi's personal assistant dealing with communications in the last four years of Gandhi's life, and

Ramaswamy was a local daredevil who valiantly took on the establishment, fascinating the media.

Making news through his fights against a wide range of things that piqued him, ranging from the sticking of wall posters to the erection of cutouts and flex boards by political parties to official corruption, Ramaswamy was in the media's reckoning till his death. An incorrigible litigator, who fought cases of public interest against the government and whoever he felt had violated a law, he earned a plethora of enemies. He had been beaten up, thrown out of the house where he lived and was at one point provided police security. The lone armed guard had to accompany him wherever he went and Ramaswamy would even ride pillion on the cop's bicycle, presenting a comic spectacle. But the man remained indefatigable and continued to fight against the establishment. He was quite

popular for his activism that his obituary appeared even in foreign media. An eponymous film in Tamil, 'Traffic Ramaswamy,' was made in 2018 with the movie producer and father of actor Vijay, S A Chandrasekhar essaying the titular role.

Unlike Ramaswamy, who made history on the street now and then as a feisty fighter, Kalyanam was known as a Gandhian and a repository of historic treasures that he shared once in a while with the seekers, at times creating a storm. He once said that he did not hear Gandhiji saying 'Hey Ram' when Godse shot him at point blank range. Kalyanam claimed that he was a few metres behind Gandhiji at that time. He spoke exhaustively about Gandhi and his values that a book, titled August 15, was written by Kumari S Neelacantan. Newspapers and magazines too featured him elaborately, particularly about the collection of photo-

graphs with Gandhi that he exhibited at his house in Chennai. Since he was the last man alive who had worked closely with Gandhiji, in the last two decades many media personnel had approached him for his views and for information relating to Gandhi. He had been speaking out on various issues and had been hailed as a man who belonged to a bygone glorious era. The media found that he lived a simple life, taking care of his personal needs, sweeping the yard, watering the plants, washing the dishes and so. His death was covered by newspapers across the country.

But not many know that it was a controversy that shone the media klieg lights on him in 1997 first. He was in fact 'traced' to Chennai after a London-based International Auctioneers and Valuers, Phillips, suddenly put up a huge bunch of 'Gandhi papers' for auction in

London. Those letters and papers in manuscript form were valued at several million dollars and hence drew the attention of the Indian government. Since all papers related to Gandhi were properties of the Navjeevan Trust as per the probated will of Gandhi himself, no one has the right to possess those papers, leave alone auction them in public. Every memorabilia of Gandhi is considered a national treasure and the papers were seen as the country's heritage. So the then High Commissioner to Britain L M Singhvi took up the case.

Writing about the incident 10 years later, Singhvi said, "V Kalyanam, a typist working with Gandhi, had simply walked away with a suitcase full of Gandhi letters and papers in manuscript form after his assassination. Kalyanam gave those immensely valuable papers to Swami Sivaya, a Shaivite

sanyasi of American origin. We do not know the details of the deal they struck." So those papers were handed over to the auction house by the Swami for mobilizing funds for his monastery in Hawaii.

Through Singhvi's stellar efforts the auction was first stopped. When Kalyanam was tracked down in Chennai, he was adamant in claiming that the Gandhi papers belonged to him. I remember him telling a reporter that they were his property. Even those negotiating with him to explain that he cannot possess any paper related to Gandhi found it difficult to convince him. It is a different matter that Phillips, Swami Sivaya and Kalyanam finally came around and the papers are now at the Nehru Memorial Museum. But that was Kalyanam's maiden brush with the media. That he was a Gandhian was discovered subsequently.

IN BRIEF

Woman cop commits suicide

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 8

A Grade II women police constable attached to the Keeranur police station, allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself in her car shed at Ayyappan Nagar here, late on Friday night.

Police said the constable, Geetha (43), was mentally upset for the last few months. On information, K.K. Nagar police recovered the body and sent it to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial government hospital here, for post-mortem. Police are investigating.

NLCIL mulls setting up oxygen plants at its units across India

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 8

The public sector Neyveli Lignite Corporation of India Limited, (NLCIL), Neyveli, Cuddalore, has proposed to start medical oxygen plants at its units in Neyveli, Chennai, Rajasthan, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh to meet the growing demand for medical oxygen among Covid-19 patients.

Panruti MLA T. Velmurugan has welcomed the NLCIL's proposal to set up oxygen plants in Neyveli, Chennai, Barsingsar in Rajasthan,

Sambalpur in Odisha and Ghatampur in Uttar Pradesh. The NLCIL decided to start production of medical oxygen after a news report published in Deccan Chronicle titled- 'Centre urged to allow NLC make medical oxygen' dated April 28, 2021.

Besides units in Tamil Nadu, the NLCIL has plants in Rajasthan, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar islands. Hence, it is easy for the company to launch plants in various parts of the country for quick transportation of medical oxygen to the most needy

states.

Recently, the Tamizhaga Vazhuvirimai Katchi leader and Panruti MLA T. Velmurugan requested the central government to grant permission to the NLCIL to start medical oxygen plants in various places across the country. Similarly, G Sundararajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal, an environmental organisation, had also requested the Centre to grant permission to NLCIL to start medical oxygen plants on a war-footing.

Following this, on Friday, the NLCIL floated a tender for supply of medical oxy-

gen generators and oxygen concentrators. It invited tender for supply of nine medical oxygen generators of 30 NMx3 per hour capacity and supply of 500 oxygen concentrators of 10 litre per minute capacity for the units of NLCIL at Neyveli, Chennai, Barsingsar in Rajasthan and Sambalpur in Odisha and Ghatampur in Uttar Pradesh.

Welcoming the move, Velmurugan requested the NLCIL to allot medical oxygen produced in the plants in Tamil Nadu only to the state to meet the challenges faced by the new government.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday handing over a public grievances box and its key containing petitions collected during 'Stalin in your constituency' campaign, to special officer Shilpa Prabakar Satheesh, at the secretariat as a token of commencing work on the pre-poll pledge to public that their grievances would be solved within the first 100 days of his assuming office of the Chief Minister of the state. M. Subramanian, Health and Family Welfare and Minister and P. K. Sekar Babu, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department minister, are present.

—DC

Department heads requested to arrange transport for employees

From P1

The department heads have been requested to arrange transport for the employees to reach their workplace as all kinds of transport would be barred during the lockdown.

As far as industries go, some of the activities relating to certain type of industries such as those in continuous process and those making essential commodities that had been given exemption earlier alone would function.

Many activities in the agricultural sector and those related to agriculture have been exempted from the lockdown, which would not be applicable to the media and newspapers, private courier services, hospitals and related services, pharmacies, ambulance and hearse services. Transport of agricultural

products and items needed for agriculture like fertilisers, pesticides and other essential items would be allowed. Oxygen-carrying vehicles would not be stopped.

Ongoing works at construction sites would be allowed to continue but there is a bar on taking up new projects. Nursing attendants taking care of the aged, invalid and disabled would be allowed to work provided they produce identity cards and documents when they are out on the road.

Most of the earlier restrictions for marriages and funerals would continue to be in force. The exemptions given earlier to carry out warehouse operations, functioning of petrol and diesel stations and transport of employees to their workplaces continue.

No public gathering is

allowed anywhere, be it political, social, cultural, entertainment, educational and so on. No school or college or coaching centre would be allowed to open and the theatres, malls, shopping complexes, entertainment parks and other places of amusement continue to remain shut. Spas, barber shops, beauty parlours and salons that were earlier ordered to be closed in urban areas would not be shut all over the state. Restrictions on air travel would continue.

Political parties extended their support to the lockdown. Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K.S. Alagiri and AIADMK coordinator O. Panneerselvam stressed on the need for the lockdown and urged people to cooperate with the government through separate statements.

Govt's move to bear Covid treatment cost hailed

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 8

The Makkal Sakthi Iyakkam congratulated the DMK president M.K. Stalin for assuming office of the Chief Minister and welcomed his announcement about medical expenses for Covid-19 treatment at private hospitals across the state being borne by the government, under the Chief Minister's comprehensive medical insurance scheme.

Iyakkam state president, Dr. T. Rasalingam, in a release here on Saturday welcomed the efforts of Chief Minister Stalin for contacting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for additional allocation of oxygen to Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Rasalingam suggested that all government

hospitals across the state be specifically categorised for Covid-19 treatment on the basis of ultra medical infrastructure facilities available with them, and to ensure that oxygen produced in the state be shared with other states, in case of surpluses.

The government should directly purchase life-saving drugs and vaccines for treating Corona cases, and supply the same to vaccination centres besides expediting vaccination activities, he added.

Urging the government to also fix medical expenses in private hospitals for the benefit of those without medical insurance, Dr. Rasalingam assured that the Iyakkam would extend its full cooperation to the government.

Scouting for places to produce more oxygen: Collector

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, MAY 8

The district administration is exploring the possibility of producing oxygen in five places in the district, said Collector M. Govinda Rao here on Saturday, after distributing essentials worth Rs 1,000 each to 1,820 folk artists of Thanjavur and adjoining districts.

Commenting on the oxygen

situation in the district, Rao said that there was no dearth of oxygen as of now. He appreciated the Sri Ramakrishna Mutt here which arranged the relief materials (provisions worth Rs. 1,000 each) through the Indian Red Cross to help folk artists during the Corona crisis. He appealed to voluntary organisations to come forward and help people during this difficult period. Relief

materials were also given to sanitary workers and autorickshaw drivers. Apart from Thanjavur district, folk artists from Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Ariyalur and Mayiladuthurai districts received the relief materials. Sriram Virmurthananda Maharaj, head, Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Thanjavur, S. Muthukumar, treasurer, Indian Red Cross, participated in the meeting.

Information to buy Remdesivir vials

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, MAY 8

The sale of Remdesivir commenced in the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital (MGMGH) here from Saturday, and the injection is also being sold in the Government Physiotherapy College from 10 am to 4 pm.

Dr. K. Vanitha, dean, MGGMH, told newsmen that they have received 300 vials on Saturday, and those who want the vials, should bring documentary evidence including prescription and

certificate from the concerned physician, mentioning the name and current status and need of Remdesivir injection for the patient. The prescription should have the name of patient with the name of the prescribing doctor's signature, seal, mobile number and registration number for verification, CT scan report (original) or RTPCR report of the patient, Aadhar card original of the patient and xerox for submission and Aadhar card of the person buying the drug, she added.



With Chief Minister M.K. Stalin signing an order that made bus travel free for women, passengers express their happiness for the free travel. Pictures taken by our DC photographers in Chennai and Coimbatore.



One killed, two hurt in mishap near Perambalur

DC CORRESPONDENT
PERAMBALUR, MAY 8

One person was killed and two others injured when

their car capsized on the roadside at Othiyam road on the Perambalur-Manamadurai highway near here on Saturday.

Police identified the deceased as Nallamuthu (65) of Kallampudur village. Two others who hailed from the same village have been

admitted to the government headquarters hospital, Perambalur. They were on their way to Perambalur from Kunnam when the mishap

occurred, as the driver lost control of the vehicle while attempting to overtake another vehicle. Kunnam police are investigating.

Shankar Jiwal takes charge as Chennai police commissioner

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 8

Shankar Jiwal on Saturday took charge as Chennai city's new police commissioner. According to police sources, former police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal handed over the charge to Shankar Jiwal at the commissioner's office in Vepery. Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal hasn't been assigned any post yet. In an order issued late

on Friday, the state government announced the postings with immediate effect. The order said that Shankar Jiwal, who will be replacing Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal as the police commissioner in Chennai is a 1990-batch IPS officer. He is currently the ADGP, Armed Forces, in Chennai.

Senior IPS officer and present Coimbatore City Police Commissioner S Davidson Devasirvatham has been appointed as the Chief of State Intel-

ligence. P Thamarai-kannan (presently ADGP Welfare) has been posted as the State ADGP for Law and Order.

S Davidson Devasirvatham is a 1995-batch IPS officer, who is currently the Commissioner of Police, Coimbatore city, will now be replacing C. Easwaramoorthy. P. Thamarai-kannan will take charge as the new ADGP for Law and Order in the state. He will be replacing K. Jayanth Murali.

Pondy Lt Guv: If people fail to follow safety norms, lockdown would become inevitable

Puducherry, May 8 :

Puducherry Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday appealed to people to adopt self-discipline and adhere to COVID safety norms so that imposition of total lockdown in the union territory would not be felt necessary. Addressing reporters on the sidelines of a government function near here, the Lt Governor said, "lockdown can be imposed in the current context of surge in Covid 19 cases in Puducherry. It can be done in a minute. But, we should also take into consideration the implications of total lockdown particularly in its impact on livelihood of the poor." "All aspects need to be considered before resorting to total lockdown," she said.

Soundararajan urged



people to be very cautious and adopt safety norms and specifically not be negligent in wearing masks. She said she could see while driving in her car in and around the city that the youth were totally careless in using masks. Of late it has been seen that coronavirus was hitting the youth more than others.

Hence, no complacency should be shown by the youth, she added. When

her attention was drawn to the announcement by Tamil Nadu government to adopt two week long total lockdown from May 10, she said, "we cannot emulate immediately the step taken in some other state. We should consider the local conditions and adopt measures." "We are assessing all the prevailing situations to prevent spread of covid 19 in Puducherry," the Lt Governor said adding the Centre was coming to the rescue of territorial government in ensuring proper infrastructural facilities, availability of drugs and equipment to tackle the coronavirus. She also promised that she would extend her cooperation to the elected government for implementing its decisions for ameliorating the lot of the people. —PTI

IN BRIEF

Man held on rape charge in U.P.

Shahjahanpur : Police here arrested a 45-year-old man in connection with the rape of a mentally-challenged woman. Tilhar police station SHO Harpal Singh Balian said on Friday, a 50-year-old mentally-challenged woman was sleeping in her hut when the accused from the same locality raped her. Citing contents of the complaint registered against the accused, the SHO said another person made a video of the rape. Police arrested the accused on Saturday while the woman was sent for a medical examination. The case was registered on the complaint of a resident of the same locality, police said.

TIGER FOUND DEAD IN CANAL IN MP'S BALAGHAT DIST.

Bhopal: A carcass of a tiger was found floating in a canal of an inter-state water project in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, neighbouring Maharashtra, an official said on Saturday.

The carcass was found floating in a canal of Rajiv Sagar project at Khadagpur village of Balaghat district's Waraseoni tehsil on Friday, the official said.

Photographs of the stripes of the sub-adult big cat will be sent to forest officials in Maharashtra for identification, Madhya Pradesh additional principal chief conservator of forest (Wildlife) J. S. Chauhan said.

"We are going to send a picture of the stripes of the sub-adult (18 to 24 months) tiger to our Maharashtra counterparts to identify if he belonged to that state, as Navegaoan-Nagzaria Tiger Reserve in Bhandara and Gondia districts was not far from the spot," Chauhan said.

Officials will also study the stripes of the tiger to ascertain if he belonged to MP, as parts of the Kanha Tiger Reserve fall in Balaghat district, he added.

It is easy to identify tigers, as their stripes are recorded in cameras, which are installed to photograph them during tiger census in the state, the official said.

MP CM SLAMS SOREN FOR HIS REMARKS ON PM

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday condemned his Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren's recent remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said that he has lowered the dignity of the post he holds through his comments.

Soren, in a tweet on Thursday night following a telephonic conversation with Modi over the Covid-19 situation in Jharkhand, had taken a dig at the prime minister, saying that he only spoke "Mann ki Baat" and that it would have been better if he had discussed business.

Taking to Twitter, Chouhan said, "Hemant Soren ji has lowered the dignity of the chief minister's post by making comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. No chief minister has ever used such lowest level of language against the PM."

Chouhan said that Soren tweeted about his telephonic discussion with the PM not only for his political gains, but his language also lacked sobriety and dignity.

"I strongly condemn it," he said.

Sena blames Modi for virus crisis, lauds Nehru, Gandhi

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 8

Holding the Narendra Modi Government responsible for the prevailing Covid situation in the country, Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has said the country is running because of the institutions created by the Nehru-Gandhi family. It has also slammed the Union Government for continuing with the work of the Central Vista project amidst the pandemic. "The corona crisis has badly affected India's economy. Despite this, the country has survived because of the system created in the past 70 years by previous prime min-

isters like Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh," said the Uddhav Thackeray-led party in a hard-hitting editorial in the party mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Saturday. "Many poor countries are offering help to India to tackle Covid-19. Earlier, countries like Pakistan, Rwanda and Congo used to get help from others. But due to the wrong policies of today's rulers, India that prides itself as Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) is going through that situation now," said the party.

According to the editorial, India has reported the highest number of Covid deaths in the last 10 days. Globally,

one out of the five active patients is in India. In the last ten days, 36,110 deaths have occurred. Every hour, there are 150 Covid deaths in the country. We have left the USA and Brazil behind in terms of deaths due to the virus. The world fears India now. Several countries have stopped their citizens from doing business with India, due to which the country's economy has been hit hard.

BJP MP Subramanian Swamy has demanded that Union minister Nitin Gadkari be given the charge of the health ministry and this is a proof that the current union health ministry has been a complete failure, it added.

Over 9 lakh on O2 support: Health min

Oxygen production now 9,400 MT a day; Vardhan says 1.34% Covid cases in ICU, 0.39% on ventilators

New Delhi, May 8: While 1,70,841 Covid patients across the country are on ventilator, as many as 9,02,291 patients are on oxygen support, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Saturday.

In his virtual address at the 25th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) to discuss the pandemic situation, the minister said that 1.34 percent of Covid caseload was in ICU, 0.39 percent of cases were on ventilators and 3.70 percent Covid patients were on oxygen support.

He said that across the country, the number of patients in ICU beds is 4,88,861 while 1,70,841 patients were on ventilators and 9,02,291 patients were on oxygen support. The meeting was attended by Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar, Minister of Civil Aviation Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of State for Ports,

Black fungus claims eyesight of some Covid-19 survivors in Guj.

Ahmedabad, May 8: Cases of Mucormycosis, a fungal infection, affecting some Covid-19 survivors are on the rise in Gujarat which has left many patients blind, doctors and officials claimed on Saturday. Mathur Savani, chairman of Surat-based Kiran Super multi-speciality hospital, said mucormycosis was detected in a patient who had recovered from Covid-19

disease around three weeks back.

"This number has gone up to around 50 now while 60 more such patients are awaiting treatment," Savani said.

The hospital, which is managed by a trust, has been receiving several patients diagnosed with Mucormycosis who are being referred from various areas in Surat and other parts of Gujarat, he said.

"As of now, 50 mucormycosis patients are getting treated at Kiran Hospital and 60 others are awaiting (treatment). They all came to our hospital in the last three weeks. All the patients who are suffering from mucormycosis had recovered from Covid-19 recently," said Savani. According to Savani, seven such patients have lost their eyesight so far.

— PTI

Shipping and Waterways and Chemical and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya and Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs Nityanand Rai. Ashwini Kumar Choubey,

Minister of State, Health and Family Welfare and Dr Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog were present virtually.

Paul gave a detailed report on the work of the

Empowered Group-1 and highlighted the various efforts made towards ramping up hospital infrastructure for effective clinical management of hospitalised patients.

Giridhar Aramane, Secretary, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (Chair, EG-2) presented the current scenario of Liquid Medical Oxygen Production, Allocation and Supply. Aramane stated that the production of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) has been maximised to meet the present demand of Covid patients.

The domestic production has increased to more than 9400 MT/day, the health ministry quoted him, adding that he also enumerated steps to import LMO, the status of establishment of PSA oxygen plants through the support of PMCARES fund with the support of DRDO and CSIR, enhancement of tanker availability, the functioning of the web portal and mobile application for Real-Time Tracking of LMO Tankers.

— PTI

Test result not must for hosp. admission

From P1

The order further said no patient will be refused services on any count.

This includes medications such as oxygen or essential drugs even if the patient belongs to a different city.

"No patient shall be refused admission on the ground that he/she is not able to produce a valid identity card that does not belong to the city where the hospital is located. Admissions to hospital must be based on need. It should be ensured that beds are not occupied by persons who do not need hospitalisation. Further, the discharge should be

strictly in accordance with the revised discharge policy," the order said.

Meanwhile, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has announced that tankers and containers carrying liquid medical oxygen will be exempted from user fee at toll plazas on national highways across the country.

In view of the current unprecedented demand for the medical oxygen due to the Covid-19 surge, containers carrying LMO will be considered at par with other emergency vehicles like ambulances for a period of two months or till further orders, NHAI said in a statement.



People, not adhering to social distancing norms, visit a wholesale market during lockdown in Nagpur, on Saturday.

— PTI

Over 84L doses available with states, UTs: Govt

New Delhi, May 8: More than 84 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and union territories and over 53 lakh doses will be distributed to them in the next three days, the Centre said on Saturday.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said that so far over 17.49 crore vaccine doses have been provided to states/UTs, out of which around 16.7 crore doses have been consumed.

"Of the vaccine doses provided, the total consumption, including wastages, is 16,65,49,583 doses (as per data available at 8 am on Saturday). More than 84 lakh Covid vaccine doses (84,08,187) are still available with states/UTs to be administered," the ministry said.

It said that states with a negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as

they have "not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to the armed forces". "Furthermore, more than 53 lakh (53,25,000) vaccine doses will be received in addition by states/UTs within the next three days," the ministry announced.

It said that Delhi received 40.22 lakh vaccine doses, out of which it consumed 36.09 lakh doses. The ministry said that the national capital still has a balance of 4.12 lakh doses available and within the next three days, it is likely to receive one lakh doses more. The projected population of Delhi was taken at 2.04 crore as on October 1, 2020. Out of the 53.25 lakh vaccine doses expected to be distributed among states and union territories in the next three days, Gujarat will get 8.98 lakh vaccine doses, which is the maximum number of doses any state or UT will receive.

— PTI

Govt allows cash payment of ₹2L

New Delhi, May 8: The Income Tax Department has issued a notification allowing hospitals and nursing homes to accept cash payments of ₹2 lakh and more for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which frames policy for the department, issued the notification on Friday.

It said hospitals, dispensaries, nursing homes, Covid care centres or similar other medical facilities providing Covid-19 treatment to patients are being "specified for the purpose of section 269ST of the Income Tax Act".

This section restricts any person from receiving an amount of ₹2 lakh or more in cash, from a

person in a day, in respect of a single transaction or in respect of transactions relating to one event or occasion from a person.

It was introduced by the Union government in 2017 as a measure to curb black money.

The notification said the latest provision is being made for a period between April 1-May 31 "on obtaining the PAN or Aadhaar of the patient and the payee and the relationship between the patient and the payee" by such hospitals or Covidcare centres.

Officials said the move was aimed to remove the hardship being faced by relatives and caregivers of Covid-19 patients who visit hospitals for treatment.

— PTI

SC forms task force for O₂

From P1

The remaining five members are Dr Naresh Trehan, chairperson and MD, Medanta Hospital and Heart Institute, Gurugram; Rahul Pandit, director, critical care medicine and ICU, Fortis Hospital, Mulund (Mumbai, Maharashtra) and Kalyan (Maharashtra); and Dr Saumitra Rawat, chairman & head, department of surgical gastroenterology and liver transplant, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi; Shiv Kumar Sarin of Institute of Liver and Biliary Science (ILBS), Delhi; and Zarir F Udhwadia of Hinduja Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital Mumbai.

The top court said, "We expect that the leading experts in the country shall associate with the work of the Task Force both as members and resource persons as this will facilitate a meeting of minds and the formulation of scientific strategies to deal with an unprecedented human crisis."

"The establishment of this Task Force will enable the decision makers to have inputs which go beyond finding ad-hoc solutions to the present problems. The likely future course of the pandemic must be taken into contemplation at the present time," the bench said.

It added that this will ensure that projected future requirements can be scientifically mapped in the present and may be modulated in the light of experiences gained.

"The establishment of the Task Force will provide the Union government with inputs and

strategies for meeting the challenges of the pandemic on a transparent and professional basis, in the present and in future," the bench said.

The top court made 12-point terms of reference which include assessing and making recommendations for the entire country based on the need for, availability and distribution of medical oxygen and to facilitate auditing by sub-groups within each state and UT.

It said that the sub-groups will do audit to determine whether the supplies allocated by the Centre reach the concerned state/UT, the efficacy of the distribution networks in distributing supplies meant for hospitals, health care institutions and others and whether the available stocks are being distributed on the basis of an effective, transparent and professional mechanism.

The top court said that the Task Force will constitute sub-groups/committees of each state/UT for auditing and it will comprise of an officer of the state/UT government not below the rank of secretary to the state government, an officer of the Centre not below the rank of additional/joint secretary and two medical doctors in the state/UT concerned including at least one with administrative experience of managing the medical facilities of a hospital and a representative from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation. The bench clarified that the purpose of the audit is not to scrutinise the decisions made in good faith.

— PTI

BJP suspends 6 leaders in MP for rebellion

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 8

The state BJP unit has issued show-cause notice to veteran leader and former minister Jayant Malaiya for indulging in anti-party activities and suspended the primary membership of his son Sidharth and five mandal presidents.

Mr Malaiya, a seven-time-MLA, regretted that he was being made a scapegoat for the party's defeat in the Damoh by-poll and held that the show-cause notice issued to him was a consequence of his ongoing rivalry with Union tourism min-

● UNION MINISTER Patel, who represented Damoh parliamentary constituency, had earlier attributed the party's loss in Damoh by-poll to "internal sabotage".

ister Pralhad Patel. "Why is the chief minister not being held accountable for the defeat of the party in Damoh by-poll since it was he who led the party campaign in the by-elections," he added.

The BJP leadership's move comes in the wake of the defeat of the party candidate, Rahul Singh

Lodhi, in the April 17 by-polls to Damoh Assembly constituency. Mr Lodhi has blamed Mr Malaiya and his family for his defeat in the by-elections.

"A show-cause notice has been served to Mr Malaiya seeking clarification to anti-party activities during the Damoh by-poll. The party also suspended primary membership of Sidharth Malaiya and five mandal presidents," BJP media in-charge Lokendra Parashar said.

Union minister Patel, who represented Damoh parliamentary constituency, had earlier attributed the party's loss in Damoh by-poll to "internal sabotage".

30 ambulances lie unused in Bihar, Yadav raises questions

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MAY 8

Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) chief Pappu Yadav, on Saturday, raised the political pitch in Bihar by targeting BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy after a fleet of unused ambulances was found parked on the campus of the Amnour Community Centre in Saran district.

Mr Yadav demanded an explanation as to why around 30 ambulances with Rajiv Pratap Rudy's name, and reportedly purchased using MPLADS funds, were parked unused on the campus of the community centre.

"When the state is battling a huge crisis due to lack of medical resources, why are so many unused

ambulances with BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy's name parked here? There are more than 30 ambulances here and I have information that there were more than 100 ambulances parked here earlier, but were moved," the JAP chief said.

Mr Yadav also released a video on social media that showed him removing the cover from the ambulances and pointing at Mr Rudy's name and the word 'MPLADS' mentioned on it. However, Mr Rudy, who represents the Saran Lok Sabha constituency, accused Mr Yadav of indulging in politics. He said that unused ambulances were parked due to the unavailability of drivers.

He also said that the dis-

trict magistrate of Saran was informed about the situation and advertisements were also put up for drivers, but nothing transpired.

"Pappu Yadav is trying to indulge in politics by raising baseless allegations. He doesn't know that out of the 80 ambulances, 56 are operational and serving the people. Pappu Yadav can take these ambulances, but he should promise that he will provide drivers and serve the people of Saran during this pandemic.

"I would urge Pappu Yadav to keep his politics for Madhepura because people of Saran know the truth and they will not get influenced by him," Mr Rudy said.

SHORT TAKES

TWO ARRESTED
IN MALDIVES
BOMB ATTACK

Mal, Maldives: Maldives police have arrested two people over an assassination attempt on former president Mohamed Nasheed who has been taken off life support, officials and relatives said on Saturday.

The Indian Ocean island has called in international help to investigate Thursday's bomb attack that left the democracy pioneer and climate activist needing 16 hours of surgery to remove shrapnel from his lungs, liver, chest, abdomen and limbs.

Police said two people had been arrested but did not give details.

They were looking for four suspects seen in the vicinity of the attack on Thursday night just as Nasheed was about to get in his car.

Australian Federal Police officers and two experts from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime were expected to join the investigation on Saturday.

LIBYAN MILITIAS
TAKE OVER TRIPOLI
GOV'T HEAD OFFICE

Cairo: In a show of force, armed militiamen briefly took over a hotel in the Libyan capital of Tripoli that serves as headquarters for the interim government, officials said on Saturday.

Friday's development came after the three-member presidential council earlier this week appointed a new chief of the intelligence agency, Libya's version of the CIA. The militias, which control Tripoli, were apparently unhappy with the choice of Hussein Khalifa as the new spy chief. Presidential council spokeswoman Najwa Wheba said no one was hurt in the takeover of Hotel Corinthia, in the heart of Tripoli.

The hotel was mostly empty on Friday, the Muslim weekend. After a while, the militias left the hotel, according to an official at the Interior Ministry who spoke on condition of anonymity under regulations. Khalifa and the militia leaders were not immediately available for comment on Saturday.

ROYAL SCANDAL:
NEW ZULU KING'S
CLAIM DISPUTED

Cape Town: A new Zulu king in South Africa was named amid scenes of chaos on Friday night as other members of the royal family questioned Prince Misuzulu Zulu's claim to the title and bodyguards suddenly whisked him away from the public announcement at a palace.

The controversy over the next king, a largely ceremonial role but one with great significance for South Africa and its 12 million Zulu people, has arisen after the death in March of King Goodwill Zwelithini, who had reigned since 1968. Zwelithini apparently named one of his six wives, Queen Mantfombi Shiyiwe Dlamini Zulu, as the "regent of the Zulu kingdom" in his will, but her death just over a week ago after holding the title for only a month has thrown the royal succession into turmoil. The commotion broke out at the reading of Queen Mantfombi's will and hours after a memorial service for her.

NASA'S NEW CHIEF
HEDGES ON 2024
MOON LANDING

Cape Canaveral: NASA's new administrator is big on tackling climate and diversifying the agency's workforce, but hedging on whether the US can put astronauts on the moon by 2024. In his first interview since becoming NASA's top official this week, former Sen. Bill Nelson said on Friday that tracking climate change is a top issue. He also wants to diversify the space agency's workforce so it reflects America.

As for landing astronauts on the moon, Nelson said the goal remains 2024, a deadline set by the Trump administration. But he cautions space is hard and he needs more time to review the matter, especially with a contract protest over the lunar lander for astronauts.

"We all know that space is hard," he said, noting there are often delays developing new technologies. "But the goal is 2024." His underlying vision for NASA "to explore the heavens with humans and machines", Nelson said he did not seek the NASA administrator job and had recommended three women to lead the space agency.



Masked Palestinian followers of the Hamas movement near Beit Lahia in the Gaza Strip, prepare to fly incendiary balloons across the northern border toward Israel, on Saturday.

—AFP

Israel braces for
Jerusalem riots,
over 160 injured

Jerusalem, May 8: More than 160 people were wounded after Israeli riot police clashed with Palestinians at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound late Friday, capping a week of violence in the Holy City and the occupied West Bank. Stones, bottles and fireworks were hurled at officers who fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at the crowds at Islam's third-holiest site, also revered by Jews as the location of two biblical-era temples.

At least 163 Palestinians and six Israeli officers were reported wounded at Al-Aqsa and elsewhere in east Jerusalem, as the Palestinian Red Crescent said it had opened a field hospital because emergency rooms were full.

Police said officers had restored order because of the "rioting of thousands of worshippers" after evening prayers.

Tensions in Jerusalem have soared in recent weeks as Palestinians have protested against Israel's restrictions on access to parts of the Old City during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and after authorities

ordered several Palestinian families to leave their homes to make way for Israeli settlers.

The United States called for "de-escalation" and said the threatened evictions could worsen the situation in east Jerusalem, as the United Nations warned the forced evictions could amount to "war crimes".

Friday's unrest came on Al-Quds (the Arabic name for Jerusalem) Day, an annual day of pro-Palestinian rallies held by Iran, the arch-enemy of Israel, which also saw many thousands march in majority-Muslim countries across the region and as far as Pakistan.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said that he held the Israeli government "responsible" for the unrest and voiced "full support for our heroes in Aqsa".

International observers urged calm, with UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland tweeted his concern, and urged all parties to "respect the status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City in the interest of peace & stability." —AFP

Boris Johnson
welcomes wins
in local elections

London, May 8: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was enjoying an election bounce on Saturday as many of the local and by-election results went in favour of his ruling Conservative Party.

In what is seen as a result in support of the government's coronavirus vaccination programme as well as the handling of Brexit, the Opposition Labour Party faced a crushing by-election defeat in a traditional stronghold of Hartlepool in north-east England, which the party had held for many decades.

The Johnson-led Conservatives secured key victories over Labour as they took control of a number of councils in the West Midlands. The Tories have hailed it as a continuation of the crushing Labour defeats in the 2019 general election.

"What happened in 2019 was that people mandated us to get Brexit done and to begin the process of uniting and levelling up. I think what's happened now is they can see we did get Brexit done and to a

certain extent they can see we delivered on that," said Johnson, on a visit to Hartlepool to congratulate the new Conservative parliamentarian Jill Mortimer.

"I think what people want us to do now is get on with delivering on everything else. And so, number one is continuing the vaccine rollout - making sure we go from jabs, jabs, jabs to jobs, jobs, jobs. Make sure we have a strong economic recovery. But then get on with a massive project for this country - and it is a very ambitious thing," he said.

"Every government has tried it to some extent but I don't think any government has tried it as wholeheartedly as this government is trying. And that is uniting and levelling up," he added. The Hartlepool vote and this week's local elections, for which the results are continuing to be counted, were Labour leader Keir Starmer's first major electoral test after just over a year as Labour leader. The general picture has been dismal, focussing scrutiny on his performance over the last 12 months. —AP

EU seals deal for up to 1.8 bn
extra BioNTech/Pfizer doses

27-nation bloc is on track to have 70% of adults vaccinated by late July

Porro Portugal, May 8: The EU has concluded a deal with BioNTech/Pfizer for up to 1.8 billion extra doses of their Covid-19 vaccine, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday.

"Happy to announce that the EU Commission has just approved a contract for guaranteed 900 million doses (+900 million options) with BioNTech/Pfizer for 2021-2023," she tweeted from an EU summit in Portugal. "Other contracts and other vaccine technologies will follow," she promised.

The contract, on top of the 600 million BioNTech/Pfizer doses the commission has already secured, aims to supply the bloc — population 450 million — with enough jabs for booster shots, the EU said.

They could also expand vaccination to minors and for exports to lower-income countries outside the EU, it added.

Von der Leyen has said that the mRNA technology used by BioNTech/Pfizer and other vaccine-makers has proven safe and effective.

BioNTech of Germany and Pfizer of the United States have stepped up supply Europe with their jointly produced doses, and their vaccine is currently the main one being used in the EU.

Others in the EU vaccine portfolio include those from AstraZeneca — which delivered far below the quantities it had promised, and whose jab has been tarnished by a link to very rare blood clots — as well as from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

After a slow start, the EU's vaccination rollout has greatly picked up speed, with more than a quarter of its population having received at least one jab. The 27-nation bloc is on track to have 70 percent of adults fully vaccinated by late July, and is already cautiously reopening ahead of its vital summer vacation period.

Von der Leyen has stood by the EU strategy of her Commission being responsible for negotiating vaccine contracts for all member countries, despite early criticism that rollout was too slow. Europe is now debating with the United States over whether lifting patents on Covid vaccines could boost supplies to poorer countries.

The EU has so far sent more than 200 million doses to non-EU countries, while the United States has dispatched just 2.7 million to Mexico in what it describes as a "loan". The head of the World Health Organization, Ted



Friends toast each other as they drink a beer on a terrace in Brussels, on Saturday, as the Belgium government eased the restrictions put in place to curb the spread of Covid-19.

—AFP

EU invites 'concrete' US
plan on lifting vax patents

Porto, Portugal, May 8: Europe on Saturday passed the ball back to Washington in a debate over Covid vaccine patents, pushing the US for a concrete proposal and a commitment to export much needed jabs.

European Council chief Charles Michel, attending an EU summit in Portugal, said the bloc was ready to discuss a US offer to suspend patent protection on vaccines — once the details are clear. "We are ready to engage

on this topic, as soon as a concrete proposal would be put on the table," Michel said, as EU leaders discussed the issue in Porto. Michel, who represents the EU's 27 national leaders, cautioned however that the bloc has doubts about the idea being a "magic bullet" in the short term. The quickest solution to ramp up the distribution of vaccines globally was exports, and the EU encouraged "all the partners to facilitate the export of doses," he said.

France has adopted a similarly sceptical approach — with President Emmanuel Macron saying Saturday that "patents are not the priority" — while Germany is openly hostile to the idea.

Influential voices have risen to back the push to waive patents, not least Pope Francis, who on Saturday criticised putting "the laws of the market or intellectual property above the laws of love and the health of humanity". —AFP

● **THE CONTRACT,** on top of the 600 million BioNTech/Pfizer doses the commission has already secured, aims to supply the bloc — population 450 million — with enough jabs for booster shots, the EU said.

Britain finalises post
Covid travel system

London, May 8: The UK government has set out 12 so-called "green list" countries under its traffic light system where people from England will be able to travel quarantine-free when the country's next level of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted on May 17.

Non-essential travel will no longer be classed as illegal from May 17, but strict border control measures will be in place for those entering the UK in order to keep a check on Coronavirus variants.

India remains on the "red list" since last month amid a second wave surge in Coronavirus infections, which means all travel remains banned between India and the UK except for British residents and nationals who must self-isolate for 10 days in a designated quarantine hotel.

The Maldives, Nepal and Turkey have now been added to the "red list" of around 40 countries, amid concerns around new variants.

—PTI

Blast near Afghan school kills 25

Kabul, May 8: A blast outside a school in the Afghan capital on Saturday killed at least 25 people and wounded another 52 including students, the interior ministry said.

Residents were out for shopping ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr next week that marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, when the blast took place.

"Fifty-five wounded people have been taken to hospitals," interior ministry

spokesman Tariq Arian told reporters.

Arian's deputy Hamid Roshan said that an investigation had begun into what he said was a "terrorist attack", adding that casualties included students.

Health ministry spokesman Dastagir Nazari said several ambulances had been rushed to the site and were evacuating the wounded.

"People in the area are angry and have beaten a number of ambulance

workers," he told reporters.

The blast comes as the US military continues to pull out its last remaining 2,500 troops from the country despite faltering peace efforts between the Taliban and Afghan government to end a decades-long war in Afghanistan.

The Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood is populated largely by the Shiite Hazaras and is often a target for Sunni Islamist militants.

In May last year a group

of gunmen attacked a hospital in the area in a brazen daylight raid that left 25 people killed, including 16 mothers of newborn babies.

No group claimed that attack, but Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blamed the Taliban and the Islamic State group.

On October 24, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a tuition centre in the same district killing 18 people including students in an attack that also went unclaimed. —AFP

SPACE | ALERT

Chances of debris landing on an inhabited zone are tiny, probably 1 in a million

Chinese rocket set to re-enter atmosphere

Beijing, May 8: A large segment of a Chinese rocket is expected to make an uncontrolled re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere on the weekend, but Beijing has downplayed fears and said there is a very low risk of any damage.

A Long March-5B rocket launched the first module of China's new space station into Earth's orbit on April 29. Its 18-tonne main segment is now in freefall and experts have said it is difficult to say precisely

where and when it will re-enter the atmosphere.

Re-entry is expected to be around 2300 GMT on Saturday, according to the Pentagon, with a window of nine hours either side.

Chinese authorities have said most of the rocket components would likely be destroyed on re-entry.

"The probability of causing harm... on the ground is extremely low," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters on Friday.

Although there has been

● **CHINESE AUTHORITIES** have said most of the rocket components would likely be destroyed on re-entry.

fevered speculation over exactly where the rocket — or parts of it — will land, there is a good chance any debris that does not burn up will just splash down into the ocean, given that the planet is 70 percent water.

"We're hopeful that it will land in a place where

it won't harm anyone," said Pentagon spokesman Mike Howard.

Howard said the United States was tracking the rocket segment but "its exact entry point into the Earth's atmosphere cannot be pinpointed until within hours of its re-entry". Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin earlier said that the US military had no plans to shoot it down, and suggested that China had been negligent in letting it fall out of orbit.

"Given the size of the

object, there will necessarily be big pieces left over," said Florent Defelie, an astronomer at the Paris-PSL Observatory. The chances of debris landing on an inhabited zone are tiny, probably one in a million." In 2020, debris from another Long March rocket fell on villages in the Ivory Coast, causing structural damage but no injuries or deaths.

Jonathan McDowell, an astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics,

said that although there was no need to worry "too much", the rocket's design needed a re-think to stop such a scenario happening again. "There is a real chance of damage to whatever it hits and the outside chance of a casualty," he said.

"Having a ton of metal shards flying into the Earth at hundreds of kilometres per hour is not good practice, and China should redesign the Long-March 5B missions to avoid this." —AFP

SAUDI-PAK
SIGN PACT TO
IMPROVE TIES

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, May 8: Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed agreements on Saturday to improve ties, after months of strained relations between the close allies over the disputed region of Kashmir.

Although the kingdom was the first foreign country Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan visited after his 2018 election, Riyadh appeared frustrated with Islamabad last year.

And while the wealthy nation has supported Pakistan with billions of dollars in aid and loans in recent years, observers say the kingdom is also keen not to upset India, a key business partner and importer of Saudi oil.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and Khan, who arrived Friday for a three-day visit, held talks in which they stressed "the importance of expanding and intensifying the horizons of cooperation." Officials from both countries signed two agreements in the western city of Jeddah addressing the treatment of criminals, and crime. —AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

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Sanjeev Ahluwalia
Off the beaten track

The social media djinn: Excluding and unsocial

Social media — the use of online platforms, as substitutes for old style, high-touch, physical contact formats like newspapers and one-on-one meetings — is now near ubiquitous, boosted greatly by the pandemic.

The ebb and flow of advertising revenues best illustrates the media preferences of customers. Digital marketing accounted for more than half the \$530 billion global advertising spend in 2020, up from just under two per cent in 2000, growing faster than television ever did (*Financial Times*).

One driver for the dramatic switch in audience preferences could be that mainstream media — newspapers, radio and TV — tend to patronise the recipient, being top down and unidirectional. Social media, however, empowers the user by making them essential participants in media creation, in a manner, unmatched by the tamer mainstream options of writing letters to the editor or being in the audience of TV shows.

It is not very empowering to be a couch-potato, a passive recipient of TV or radio news and entertainment, with no room for “self-expression”, except to change channels, much like dissatisfied voters do quinquennially.

Social media, in contrast, encourages you to create content and share it publicly, to be listened to, read, seen and appreciated. You can do your stuff on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter or Koo — comedy, fashion, disseminate gyan, list your professional achievements, cook, sing, make music, teach and mentor like Khan, sir of Bihar, coach, share your art, your writings, your magic, comment on anything under the sun or support #Hashtagged global causes, followed by the expectant, anxious wait to get your efforts acknowledged and the rush of joy, when inundated by “likes”.

Nearly 4 billion out of the 7.7 billion global population is hooked onto the net and 54 per cent of the traffic is via mobile phones. This number can only grow. Only infants and the 900 million poor — who earn less than the World Bank’s PPP \$1.9 per person per day poverty line and whose numbers have increased during the pandemic, are likely to remain excluded.

Digital connectivity is the next “life-line”, after electricity, as digital interface becomes the norm, the opportunities for physical contact dwindle and digital lockers become the only safe storage for Aadhar, BPL cards, bank details, medical insurance — proof of the new-age identities, necessary for accessing social services.

A story best illustrates the point. A nanny from three decades ago, recently turned up where we used to live. Her son was covid positive and needed medical assistance. She had a medical insurance cover. But the hospital wanted a deposit of ₹30,000 which she did not have. So, she went looking for help to her previous employers. We had moved long ago. But the new occupants were good enough to call and tell us. Another family, for whom she had worked, told us they helped her with some ready cash. But she had left no contact number. All we could do was to wait for her to call. But she never did. Maybe, with her son incapacitated, she lost her only digital connect with the world — her son’s pre-paid phone. When every minute mattered, her only option was to walk about begging for money, oblivious of all the available crowd-sourced initiatives for help and the many charities providing covid relief.

Compare the frustratingly, isolated life of this mother, a poor, senior citizen, with the socially replete life of those with 24x7 connectivity even as the pandemic rages — sharing updates on the next available oxygen bed or oxygen concentrator, videos on the benefits of prone breathing, learned discourses on covid dos and don’ts, venting frustration by fingering hate objects or dispensing gyan via webinars, catching up on the prospects for peace in Myanmar or the impact of Presidents Biden’s next political-spend splurge on the Indian stock market. The disconnect between the well-off and the poor is near complete.

And yet it is not just the poor who are left behind. Only half as many Indian women use the Internet as men. The gap is worse in the rural areas. Only 33 percent of Indian women use social media, versus 67 per cent of men. Women are 26 per cent less likely to access mobile Internet due to misogyny, harassment and revenge porn (ORF, May 2021).

Add to that, the use of social media for narrow political ends without regard for social harmony. The disproportionate market power digital commerce endows, on a few companies. The billions of tax dollars avoided by multinational e-commerce, whilst feeding off the commercial data generated by their customers, often without explicit permission and without compensation and we have a fishbowl of growing global inequity.

This was not where the Internet was headed, way back in 1974, when the first Internet Protocol Suite was written. Nor was a world splintered by digital privilege, the intention in 1997, when the first social media platform — Six degrees — launched. Back then, the idea was to shrink the world, lift people and institutions to their fullest potential. Like Alice, we stepped through the looking glass. It is time to look back.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



The architecture of hubris



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

Fascism has a strange fascination with architecture. The moment the Nazis rode to power in 1933 Herr Hitler started unveiling his plans for building a new capital for his thousand-year Reich.

To be named Germania it envisaged the grand redevelopment of Berlin.

From the mid-1920s itself much before power ever loomed over the horizon Hitler fantasised about his blueprint for Germania. It finds a prominent mention in his book called the *Mein Kampf*. Hitler had even prepared the drafts of the grandiose monuments that he proposed to erect. In his mind’s eye Adolf Hitler in addition to being The Great Helmsman was also the immortal designer.

In the spring of 1936, Adolf Hitler commissioned his pet architect Albert Speer who later became his minister of armaments to execute his vision and construct “the” megapolis that would be the epicentre of his Reich.

Hitler was resolute that the centerpiece of his Nazi dystopia christened Welthauptstadt-World Capital Germania should be completed by 1950. Speer had been the de-facto Nazi architectural director since 1934. He had created a distinct impression on Hitler with his exotic metamorphosis of classical architecture into mammoth but manifestly ascetic Nazi architecture that was designed both to intimidate and overwhelm.

This transfiguration was personified in one of Speer’s initial but key undertakings, the Nuremberg parade grounds laid out for the 1934 Nazi Party Congress. The impact of the classicist architecture of that stadia is intimately captured in an array of propaganda films curated by the Nazi information czar Joseph Goebbels.

It was designed to provide a backdrop to the stunning imagery of militarised discipline of Nazi cadres forming

a geometrical aligned corporate congregation united in their allegiance to the Fuhrer. The political ontology portrayed by the overpowering impact of this architectonic setting is of Being-as-One. One people, One nation and One Reich, which Hitler emphasized in his oration in that arena. He preached both “complete unity” and asked for blind the obedience of the German nation. Isn’t it eerily similar to the one leader one nation election rhetoric that we hear these days with elections of course being dispensable even in the medium term?

Hitler’s visualisation was to transform Berlin into Welthauptstadt Germania — the greatest city of them all. However stripped of sophistry it was at best plagiarism on a malevolent scale. The only originality being cloning and super sizing of the landmark monuments that Europe had on offer then.

These monoliths were to be erected along a seven-kilometre (4.3 miles) Boulevard of Splendours to create an overarching persona of Nazi preeminence on citizens and travellers alike. At the south end of this avenue was to be located the Triumphal Arch six times more humongous than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. At its north end the concourse was supposed to pan out into a parade ground containing a gigantic Palace for the Fuhrer, the Reich Chancellery, and a gargantuan Grand Hall. Mark the Palace for the Fuhrer.

Hitler perceived monumental architecture as a means of creating a beguiling sense of shock and awe. He was fervent in his conviction that colossal constructions were powerful weapons of projecting political supremacy. For him architecture was not simply the means of giving form to space. It was the virtuosity of creating power through prodigious spatial imagery.

The budget for this vanity project was an estimated 46 million Reich Marks about 50 billion US Dollars at today’s cost. Hitler dismissed all concerns with regard to the both timing and cost notwithstanding an on going war. For in his megalomaniac existence it was about perpetuating his legacy. The only way of leaving your indelible footprint on the sands of time was by erecting grandiose edifices.

Moreover the Nazi party was a pioneer in the use of propaganda both during its relentless quest and perpetuation of power. As the Reich minister of propaganda it was Joseph Goebbels’ conviction that “propaganda becomes ineffective the moment we are aware of it”. Inspired by this credo the Nazi Party consciously created a myth about opposing the status quo and presenting its Supreme leader as both, an outsider to the incestuous alchemy of the decadent elite and a radical messiah, ironically while being in bed with the very same set. Does it not contextualise the constant railing against Lutyens’ Delhi and the fabled Khan Market Gang?

The Nazis were not alone in this endeavour. The Fascist Dictator of Italy Benito Mussolini also launched an ambitious building drive. However, it was the creation of the Casa del Fascio (House of the Fascist Party) that most caught Italian fancy. Primarily it was the headquarters of the Fascist Party. Archetypes of this new building got constructed across the Italian peninsula. Stereotypically situated in the town centrum these structures were built to typically dwarf the church’s dominant role in Italian social life. They metaphysically underscored the eternal presence of Il Duce — as Mussolini was called. Antiquity was equally important weapon in the Fascist arsenal. Isolamento as it was known as, involved the valorisation and refurbishment of rhetorically momentous structures.

Monuments as statements, as manifestations of a civilisation and its values and accomplishments, is an impulse that began to fade with the invention of the

printing press. The mass market book, carrying the soul and complexity of a civilisation, became the representative artifact.

The ideas, concepts, aspirations of a people did not need large and expensive agglomerations of masonry to articulate and announce themselves. The written word, the book, cheap and universally available, could do it to perfection.

It is the reason the exemplary founding fathers of modern India did not first, in 1947, move to raze building and raise buildings to announce the dawn of a new freedom and a new covenant of equality and fraternity and justice for all Indians: they chose to sit down, almost three hundred of the very best of them, for almost three long years, to debate and dissect and carve the most important book of contemporary India, the Constitution.

Democrats create festivals of ideas, crusades of justice and equity, carnivals of creativity, in which all may participate, on some kind of equal footing. It is only autocrats and fascists, monarchs and megalomaniacs, who seek statues and monuments to awe their subjects, to bring them to their knees. Modernity with all its commitment to freedoms and reason is sought to be subordinated by monumental architecture to the will of the fascist state. This is precisely what we are witnessing with the relentless and profoundly vulgar redevelopment of the central vista in New Delhi (in the middle of a crippling pandemic at an enormous financial cost).

All this bombast of masonry and unbridled arrogance, is one more eternal blunder by a government and a leader who have unleashed untold misery across the country for the last seven years with their terrible decisions. In the final count, in the story of our ancient civilisation, all the grandiloquence of the central vista project will not be worth a single page of the Indian Constitution.

The author is a lawyer, MP and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS VACCINE WARRIORS

At a time when there is a rat race among the states to procure as many doses of vaccine against Covid-19 so that they are able to vaccinate the maximum, we come across reports about the wastage of the same. Even, considering that the wastage is inevitable due to innumerable reasons reports from Kerala state that against a total receipt of 73.39 lakhs doses of vaccine, it could vaccinate 74.26 lakh people. This means that the state has squeezed out even the last drop in each vial. The full credit for this should go to the nurses of Kerala and one must salute these warriors, for, even when they are stretched beyond a point particularly during the times of Covid, their resolve to serve humanity stands out. No wonder, they are everywhere – in India and abroad serving the patients with a smile – in the real sense of the word.

V.S. Jayaraman, Chennai

A NOVEL WAY

A few days ago, in the village of Ganeshpur, Madhya Pradesh, people took out a torch rally to “drive out” coronavirus from their village. The local youths reportedly ran around, holding torches and chanting “Bhago corona bhago” (go corona go) slogans, believing that the virus would run away. Makkal Needhi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan is advised to rush to Ganeshpur and help the villagers in their fight against the pandemic. His ‘torch’ has been found ineffective in Tamil Nadu anyway!

P.G. Menon, Chennai

NO LOSS, ONLY GAINS

This refers to your report that after the poll rout, two of MNM vice-presidents, R. Mahendran and V. Ponraj have quit the party. Of course, such actions are not new in our political system, as there are many senior leaders, who too have deserted their own party, in search of greener pastures. Anyway, MNM Chief too will not miss them, as he himself would now concentrate on his profession both in cinema and television to enhance his bank balance.

Capt. N. Viswanathan, Coimbatore

DOOR TO DOOR

THE DELHI CM has claimed that Delhi will get vaccinated in three months. It is a good and welcome statement since NCR had witnessed the ferocity of the virus with many deaths. A lockdown is in force now. It is likely to be extended further in order to break the chain of virus spread. During lockdown days, people will be staying indoors. Taking this opportunity, the government can vaccinate the people by taking the shots to the doorstep of the residents. Summoning the services of the local hospitals’ mobile medical units and medical staff, this can be done in a hassle-free manner. It will help people avoid rush and disappointment.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai



Jay Bhattacharya

How the West can help India fight Covid war

Hospitals in Delhi are openly pleading for supplies of medical oxygen, a commodity so scarce that it is now being sold on the black market for almost ten times the normal cost. Makeshift crematoria are being set up around the city to cope with the surge in the number of deaths. Richer countries are asking why India, with 20 million Covid cases, is so reluctant to lock down again. It’s a good question. The answer lies in the disastrous effects of lockdown for so much of India’s population.

Closing any society has serious consequences, but the results were always going to be worse in the developing world. I have been watching the pandemic unfold in India from Stanford University, where I’m a professor of medicine. But for me, it is not just an abstract problem in a faraway country. I was born in Kolkata and still have many family members in India. Some have contracted Covid, while others have suffered from the terrible effects of lockdown.

As soon as the pandemic started, India followed the familiar litany of Covid lockdown policy: masks, a test-and-trace system, school closures and border closures. India was one of the

first emerging economies to announce a lockdown and adopted one of the world’s most stringent approaches.

Stay-at-home advice is easier to follow if you have a proper home. But in India’s slums, where millions live, quarantine is almost impossible – as is the concept of “working from home” or home-schooling.

Then there are migrant labourers, ten million of whom were living in India’s cities before the pandemic. Lockdown meant many of them immediately lost their jobs, livelihoods and homes. Millions started on the long journey back to their villages on foot, not knowing whether they would ever make it home.

Lockdown meant precipitating India’s largest human displacement since Partition in 1947. The forced resettlement of massive numbers of Bengalis, including my grandparents, is within the ancestral memory of my older family members, who recall the story with horror.

One way to understand the trajectory of cases in India is to see that the lockdowns at first protected the professional Zoom class from infection, while exposing the poor. But it was never a guarantee that more affluent popula-

tions would not end up affected by the disease as well. India’s experience is consistent with the track record of lockdowns around the world. Official Indian government estimates suggest that between 37,000 and 80,000 lives were saved by lockdown. Even if this is correct, the numbers are surpassed by the death and suffering lockdowns also caused.

What could have been done differently? A better strategy of vaccination, for a start. When the jab first became available in India, I argued for focused protection of the elderly population. There is a thousand-fold difference in the risk of mortality from Covid between the young and old, so protecting elderly Indians from infection would yield substantially lower Covid mortality and hospitalisation, as well as reduce pressure on healthcare systems.

So far, vaccines have been delivered to roughly 10 per cent of India’s population – which would have been more effective if jabs had been targeted at those most at risk. Instead, perhaps half these jabs have gone to those who had the virus and will therefore have natural immunity. Worse, nearly 60 per cent of these doses have gone to people under 60, leaving a vast number of the

older population vulnerable during the recent surge in cases. Rather than focus on those most at risk of dying, India has made the vaccine available to anyone over 18, which has diverted even more doses from the poor high-risk elderly to the more affluent low-risk young.

But before we in the West shake our heads at India’s misplaced priorities, we ought to ask: is Britain not also guilty? The UK’s vaccination success has now covered the at-risk groups who constitute 99 per cent of Covid deaths. The plan is to keep vaccinating the British population right the way down to teenagers and children. Why not donate these vaccines to India instead?

If Britain and America are sitting on millions of doses of vaccine that could save the lives of India’s elderly, what should we do? Share the vaccine? Or give it to those for whom it would make little or (in the case of those who have recovered from the disease) almost no difference? It is hard to find a moral justification for not doing more to help.

India makes lots of vaccines. Yet Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has complained that India is not exporting enough of its supplies to Europe. Discussion should instead focus on how to save as many lives as

possible – and how it is more important to vaccinate older, high-risk Indians than young Americans and Europeans with minimal mortality risk. President Joe Biden is sending raw materials to help make AstraZeneca vaccines in India: no great hardship, as the Astra jab hasn’t yet been authorised in the United States.

I was one of the signatories of the Great Barrington Declaration, which advocated shielding those most at risk, and fewer restrictions for those at low risk. When vaccine programmes have followed this general principle and been targeted at those most in need, the results have been extraordinary. We should ask: why not apply this principle worldwide? When our own at-risk groups have been protected, might we then start to help countries still in mortal peril?

Britain and America both have proud records of helping friends in need. There can be no better example, right now, of a country needing aid than India.

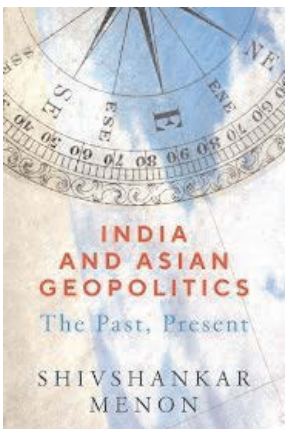
By arrangement with the Spectator

The writer is a professor of medicine at Stanford University

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

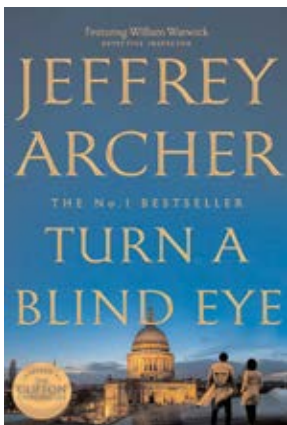
NON-FICTION

- 1 **INDIA AND ASIAN GEOPOLITICS: THE PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹699
- 2 **KARMA: A YOGI'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR DESTINY**
Sadhguru
Penguin, ₹299
- 3 **INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
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Ghazala Wahab
Aleph, ₹999
- 5 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799
- 6 **REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA**
Badri Narayan
Penguin Viking, ₹499
- 7 **ALL ROADS LEAD NORTH — NEPAL'S TURN TO CHINA**
Amish Raj Mulmi
Context Westland, ₹799
- 8 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 9 **THE MYSTERY OF THE PARSEE LAWYER**
Shrabani Basu
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- 10 **INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED**
Uttam Kumar Sinha
Penguin Vintage, ₹799



FICTION

- 1 **TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- 2 **WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹499
- 3 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 4 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- 5 **TAKEDOWN**
Brad Thor
Emily Bestler Books—Atria, ₹599
- 6 **THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAN**
Tarana Husain Khan
Tranquebar, ₹499
- 7 **KLARA AND THE SUN**
Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber & Faber, ₹699
- 8 **MURDER AT THE MUSHAIRA**
Raza Mir
Aleph, ₹799
- 9 **CLUB YOU TO DEATH**
Anuja Chauhan
Picador, ₹499
- 10 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

The exit of Delhi durbar, elite media's unmasking

Parsa Venkateshwar
Rao Jr

review

When academician-turned-journalist and former media advisor to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote without a twinge in his facial muscles about how Prime Minister Narendra Modi has effortlessly dislodged the power elite with its St Stephen's College-Oxbridge background, many mistook it for a dirge for the defeated lot with good manners and right accents. What was attractive about *India's Power Elite Class, Caste And A Cultural Revolution* (Penguin; 2021) was its anecdotal style with a gossip tinge to it. Baru places himself as an outsider/insider in Delhi's dress circle and with tongue-firmly-in-cheek pronounces the rather unlamented exit of Delhi's elite from the corridors of power. And to soothe the wracked nerves of this elite, he compared the Modi invasion to that of decade-long Mao's macabre bacchanalia Cultural Revolution with frenzied Red Guards chopping and stomping and destroying a whole generation of sensible middle rung communists. He was careful enough to point out that the fanatical Hindu vigilantes were relatively less hysterical than the raging Red Guards in terms of intensity and range.

What attracted attention, obviously, was his taking note of the upheaval caused

by Mr Modi's arrival in Delhi as Prime Minister; dealt with much panache in the first two chapters of the book under the attention-grabbing headings of "Bombard The Headquarters" and " and "Modi's Metaphors". But Baru digs deeper and looks at the changes that have come about among the elites — there is not a single group calling the shots — across the country and in different spheres. And he follows the example of his acknowledged inspiration for the book, American outlier sociologist C. Wright Mills' 1956 classic *The Power Elite*.

That there have emerged new elites from time to time in Independent India is rather an unattractive if factual proposition. What Baru outlines as he goes along is the emergence of new elite groups in different spheres, in politics, in business, in agriculture, in bureaucracy and military. He describes the ascent of Mr Modi as the conquest of the backward castes of an upper caste-based Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This will remain a debatable thesis because the OBC revolution in RSS-BJP was carefully engineered and it was the reason behind the emergence of Mr Modi. Baru indirectly raises the moot question whether the success of Mr Modi in national politics is due to the fact that as an OBC representative he

wins the approval of the numerical OBC majority in the country. But it remains an untested proposition because this presumes that all the designated OBCs form a single class or that they have shared class interest in the same manner that it is assumed that Hindus form a monolith.

He also narrates the shift in power from the feudal lords, zamindars and landlords to that of the rich peasants, who are mostly from the backward classes, and the rich peasants became the new rural elite. The transmutation continues as the "rural landowning castes who have acquired political power are able to obtain urban land and become super-rich." And he draws the conclusion, "Every major urban conglomeration across the subcontinent is now fertile ground for the provincial rich." The story of the elites in Baru's telling is a complex process.

INDIA'S POWER ELITE: CLASS, CASTE AND A CULTURAL REVOLUTION
By SANJAYA BARU
Penguin Viking, ₹699

The more interesting aspect of Baru's analysis of the changing elites is that of business interests in the country and their connection to the political elite. He traces the founding of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) inspired by Mahatma Gandhi as evidence of the alignment of the national bourgeoisie with the political class. He points out the compulsion of the political class, which has to perform champion the cause of the poor, and it should appear to be distant from business magnates, and shows how Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Mr Modi take an anti-elitist stance.

He argues the case of the Bombay Club, comprising top industrialists, who prepared an economic manifesto of sorts in 1944, advocating a mixed economy with an assigned role for the state in developing economic assets which are later to be transferred to the private sector. And controversially Baru argues that the First and the Second Five Year Plans, and especially the Second, which is attributed to P.C. Mahalanobis, was really a reflection of the ideas of the Bombay Club.

The chapter on "Business and the State" shows once again the change or displacement of old elites with the new. He traces the new business players with close links to the top political leadership, from that of the Tata and Birlas of the 1950s and the 1960s to that of the Ambanis, Nandas and Hinduja of the 1980s. He implies that that the much derided crony capitalism has been a part of modern India from the days before Independence.

Baru maintains the neutrality of a social scientist while describing the changes that had happened with the political and economic elites, but he offers for the first time an indirect moral critique of the elite groups when he writes about the policy intellectuals and public intellectuals, the media and the celebrity class. While pointing out that in the time of Nehru and Indira could become part of the power elite "because of their access to the PM", he cites the example of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's "first introduction to Nehru was made by Singh's Amritsar neighbour Mulk Raj Anand, a Cambridge scholar who became famous as a novelist..." he marks out the "corrupt" journalist category along with the "professional".

While dealing with the intellectual and celebrity class, he returns to the theme of how Mr Modi has bypassed the experts and the media, he seems to hold himself back from commenting on the consequences of doing away with intellectual inputs or a watchful media. It is indeed the right thing to do because there are enough number of people lamenting the anti-intellectual stance of the Prime Minister. Baru's book is a teaser where it seems to offer good gossip but it abandons the temptation and doles out serious stuff in an easy-to-read style. It promises to be the 1991 bestseller, *You Will Not Eat Lunch Again In This Town* of Julia Phillips, the Hollywood outsider/insider, but settles into a sober social analysis tract.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

THE GRANDEUR AND MYRIAD HORRORS OF A BEGUM'S DASTAN

Aditi
Sriram

review

Books are defined, at their most basic, as stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end. But classics like the *Mahabharata* and *The Thousand and One Nights* are enjoyed for how frequently these three sections are interrupted. Structuring a book to consist of stories within stories allows author to escort the reader through some portions of the story, and later force the reader to plunge, unassisted, into a new section. The result is dizzying, but unforgettable. Characters blend into one another, time and space collapse, and dreamworlds feel real.

Readers like me delight in these narrative rabbit holes; we become Alice, eager to explore Wonderland with the book as our guide.

Tarana Husain Khan's *The Begum and the Dastan* is one such nested story about a Muslim family and the fate of its women, generation after generation. Feroza is forced to become Begum to

Nawab Shams Ali Khan in Sherpur (which appears to be a fictionalized version of Rampur in Uttar Pradesh), in the late 19th century. Ameera is her great granddaughter (p.6), of school-going age in 2016, who is forced to stay home because her father cannot afford the fees.

Restless Ameera implores her dadi to tell stories about Feroza Begum, whose own restlessness had ruined her life. What follows is a 250-odd page book about inheritance, religion, and the occult. A map is most definitely required.

Khan realises this. Her chapter headings are accompanied with a narrator's name and the year, and every few pages, footnotes identify various sources Khan has used to build her story: Urdu poetry, unpublished memoirs from the royal harem, the oral traditions of dastangoi, and photographs. As Ameera's grandmother warns, once: "There are stories, whispers and then there is the truth. My

story can draw from any of these or from all of these." (p.31).

Indeed, Khan's novel does. Having acquainted her readers with Feroza Begum and Ameera, she introduces a third narrator; Kallan Mirza, who is a professional storyteller, or dastan. Appearing every few chapters, he recites scenes from the famous *Tilism-e-Hoshrub*, an Indo-Islamic fantasy epic?contemporaneous with Feroza's story. It is not a coincidence that the protagonist of this story is another royal woman.

Princess Lalarukh, and the calamities written into her fate.

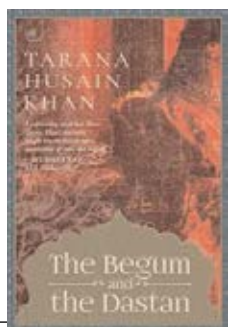
This braid of stories weaves between Feroza Begum, Ameera, and Princess Lalarukh. But the writing style becomes hectic at times. Sections begin with quotations from varied sources, including Urdu couplets which Khan has herself translated. Words are inconsistently in brackets or italics, creating unnecessary hierarchies between Urdu and English. Occasionally, one narrator's direct address to another character clashes with the exposition that follows. Structurally, too,

Ameera's circumstances feel temporary compared to Feroza Begum's lifelong entrapment; the latter is better synchronised with Lalarukh's adventures.

But Khan accomplishes much: a flavour of Nawabi daily life, Rohilla military culture, the Sunni-Shia tensions mixed in with colonial influence, and, ultimately, the women representing each of these categories. What these protagonists share is *?Ujmeed*, hope in the face of fate.?(p. 94), which propels each of their stories onto the next page, through a time portal, over an interruption, and finally, to the last page.

Such novels rely as much on author's mastery as on the reader's commitment, and Khan's attempt is deeply researched. But for a novel which can manipulate time and space, whose characters are consummate storytellers, it doesn't land as powerfully as one of its colleagues, *The Hakaui* by Rabih Alameddine published in 2009, which opens thus: ?isten. Allow me to be your God. Let me take you on a journey beyond imagining. Let me tell you a story."

Aditi Sriram teaches writing at Ashoka University and has authored *Beyond the Boulevards: A Short Biography of Pondicherry* (2019)

THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAN
By TARANA HUSAIN KHAN
Tranquebar, ₹499

FAST FACT: Poet and critic **Shankha Ghosh** (1932-2021) is one of the latest Covid-19 victims from the world of letters. His *Babarar Prarthana* (Bengali) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977. He received the Padma Bhushan in 2011 and the Jnanpith Award in 2016. Seldom strident or flamboyant like the 'Hungry Poets', his poems are marked with a quality of proportion. They convey message, but are free of polemics.



Loneliness, aging and what it means to be a 'woman at midpoint'



Chloë Ashby

review

After falling in love with Italy as a young woman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri broke with English and began writing in Italian. Her new novel — a slim and bewitching tale of a woman at her midpoint — she wrote first in Italian and has since translated. The story is told in a series of vignettes, the lengthiest six or so pages. Each is titled with the setting — in

the office, at the register, on the street — and paints an exquisite picture of a single soul moving thoughtfully about her city.

"I don't share my life with anyone," says that soul early on. She lives alone in a spartan apartment, and with only herself to worry about she never fills the fridge. She teaches, though, as she reminds us: 'I'm here to earn a living, my heart's not in it'. Twice a week she

goes for a swim, and twice a month she gets her nails done — 'my one indulgence'. Slight variations in her routine include tasting various dishes at the local trattoria and always choosing a different seat at the theatre. Her 'daily meanderings' are broken up by small pleasures, from a simple sandwich to a fleeting embrace.

The novel is tinged with melancholy; death stalks each vignette. Pedestrians on a bridge look like "skittish ghosts advancing in a row, obedient souls passing from one realm to another". The narrator's office feels 'a bit sepulchral' while the pool is a "container of clear water lacking life". Her father, buried in a crypt at the heart of the city, died

when she was 15 and her mother is "in precarious health — 'she's nearing her end'". Since turning 45, the narrator too has

become acquainted with odd afflictions and mysterious pains. In her own words, she is "a middle-aged woman, slightly on edge".

Also, on the edge. A modern-day flâneuse, she strolls through the city and scopes the crowd from which she remains separate. She's peripheral, privy to tender conversations and bitter fights, familiar with faces but not the people they belong to. Each of the carefully observed characters tells us something about her, from the friend who has everything she doesn't — "a husband, kids, constant plans, a country house" — to the kind philosopher whose watchful gaze seems to say: "Signora, I know you're having a hard

time." There's the married friend "for whom I represent... what, exactly? A road not taken, a hypothetical affair?" *Whereabouts* might be called a quiet book, but it isn't without bite: "I've had my share of married men."

Lahiri has spun a delicately layered story of a woman reflecting on her past, present and future. It lends itself to being read in a single sitting, during which time you'll feel your own life standing still, suspended. The author has a talent for capturing the everyday, a talent the narrator acknowledges when she and her friend's husband go their separate ways after a chance encounter: "Then we, too, become two shadows projected on to the wall: a rou-



Lahiri — THE SPECTATOR

tine spectacle, impossible to capture." Impossible for some, perhaps, but not for Jhumpa Lahiri.

By arrangement with the Spectator

Laugh and also ponder what patriarchy might do next



Kushalrani Gulab

review

When judging a book by its cover, ask these questions: Is the cover so attractive that you would consider buying the book whatever the story might be like? Or is the cover only worth the price of the book because of what lies beneath it?

I juggled these questions in my head before I started reading Aditi Patil's *Patriarchy and the Pangolin: A Field Guide to Indian Men and Other Species*. Because the fact is, I did buy this book for its cover — a painting by Sheela Roy that gives me little thrills of happiness whenever I look at it. But I also bought it in the hope that the story would be as charming as the cover.

Fortunately, I judged the cover correctly. *Patriarchy and the Pangolin* is a delightful account by a beleaguered conservation researcher of field trips in Gujarat to investigate the impact of the government's agro-forestry policy on farmers. As she gamely gets to work, she encounters more men with moustaches, bureaucrats and lawyers than actual wild creatures along the way.

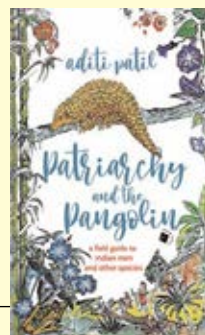
The book has no plot of course. It's the diary of a field researcher, funny, eye-opening and cynical in turns, written in the style of a person who often laughs to stop herself from crying.

Patil is an idealist, a person who quit a well-paying information technology job to help save the world. But her ideas of the things that constitute field research and conservation are similar to the ideas of bureaucrats and men with moustaches only in the most superficial way. The bureaucrats just want to know that their policies work (please note: not 'if' the policies work). The mustachioed men cannot bring themselves to communicate with women and in any case have no intention of causing trouble for themselves, courtesy bureaucrats, law enforcers and lawmakers, by discussing any sort of truth. In the face of all this resistance, Patil grits her teeth and gets on with her job, even fighting past her own occasional belief that her work will accomplish nothing.

Her observations, therefore, are often hilarious, especially on those occasions when she tries to escape reality by focusing on something completely unrelated to the issue at hand. This is her way of coping, she explains. "I've looked away from problems all my life," she says in the book. "Not facing them is a skill I've developed over the years and it has taken a lot of practice." In spite of this self-deprecation, Patil has no choice but to face the problems and in presenting them in this book, she shoves them in our faces. What kind of lives do we lead, her book makes us ask, that we're so casual about destroying the very things that support our lives on this planet? What kind of lives do we expect to lead that we don't ensure our governments and their machinery actually work to conserve our only home?

Humour is a fabulous way to get harsh points across. Patil does this brilliantly. As for the cover that got me to buy the book, I'm tearing it off and framing it.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea

PATRIARCHY AND THE PANGOLIN: A FIELD GUIDE TO INDIAN MEN AND OTHER SPECIES
By ADITI PATIL
Hachette India, ₹399

SHORT TAKES

Abid hits double ton for Pakistan

Harare: Pakistan took total control on the second day of the second Test against Zimbabwe on Saturday, outclassing the home side with both bat and ball to take a big step towards sealing a 2-0 series victory. Zimbabwe were 52 for four at the close in reply to Pakistan's 510 for eight declared, 458 runs behind.

Opening batsman Abid Ali made 215 not out and Nauman Ali slammed 97 before being stumped off a wide.

The Zimbabwe innings got off to a bad start when 36-year-old debutant Tabish Khan struck in his first over before a run had been scored.

Three more wickets fell before the close and Zimbabwe looked in desperate trouble. — **AFP**
Brief scores: Pakistan 510/8 decl. (Abid 215*, Nauman 97, Muzarabani 3-82) vs Zimbabwe 52/4 (Chakabva 28*, Sajid 1/0, Hasan 1/7).

Bopanna out of Madrid Open

Madrid: India's Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov of Canada fought hard before losing in three sets to German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the men's doubles quarterfinals of the Madrid Open here.

Bopanna and Shapovalov went down 6-4, 3-6, 10-5 against their German opponents to crash out of the ATP Masters 1000 tournament. The Indo-Canadian pair hit five aces as against their opponent's three, but they committed more double faults, which hampered their prospects. Bopanna and Shapovalov had committed five double faults as against two by the German pair. Earlier in the tournament, the unseeded pair of Bopanna and Shapovalov had stunned top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah in straight sets. — **PTI**

9th straight title for biggie Bayern

Dortmund, Germany: Bayern Munich were confirmed as Bundesliga champions for the ninth straight season on Saturday after Borussia Dortmund beat second-placed RB Leipzig 3-2. Leipzig's defeat meant it can no longer overhaul Bayern, who held a seven-point lead — 71 to 64 — before hosting Borussia Monchengladbach in the late game.

Two rounds remain after this weekend's games. England winger Jadon Sancho netted twice in Dortmund's home win, a result that meant Bayern became champions without kicking a ball before their home game. The victory lifted Dortmund into the Champions League places, but Eintracht Frankfurt can knock them out of fourth place if they beat Mainz on Sunday. — **AFP**

Short-handed Jazz outshine Nuggets

Los Angeles: Bojan Bogdanovic torched Denver for a career-high 48 points as the Utah Jazz remained in top spot in the Western Conference with a 127-120 victory over the Nuggets on Friday night. The under-manned Jazz were without their dynamic guard duo of Donovan Mitchell and Mike Conley, but throughout their injury absences other Utah players have been stepping up and Friday it was Bogdanovic's turn.

"I'm playing better. I'm shooting the ball better," Bogdanovic said.

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Wolves vs Brighton from 4.30 pm; Aston Villa vs Manchester United from 6.35 pm; West Ham United vs Everton from 9 pm; Arsenal vs West Brom from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1HD

Italian League: Genoa vs Sassuolo from 4 pm; Parma vs Atalanta 6.30 pm; Roma vs Crotone from 9.30 pm; Juventus vs Milan from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, 2HD

FORMULA ONE

Spanish GP: Main Race from 6.25 pm Star Sports Select 2, 2HD

ENGLISH SUMMER

Pietersen pitches for postponed IPL to be held in England

London, May 8: Former England captain Kevin Pietersen wants the remaining matches of this year's postponed Indian Premier League to be shifted to the United Kingdom in September, instead of the UAE.

Pietersen feels moving the IPL to UK would be the best decision as there is a window in September just after England host India in a five-match Test series that concludes on September 14.

"I have seen people talking about the UAE as a possible destination to finish the IPL in September, but I actually think the IPL should move to the UK.

"There is a window in September after the England vs India Test series has finished. All the best Indian players would already be there, and all of the best English players would be available as well," Pietersen wrote in a column for *Betway*.

The 40-year-old right-hander, who also served as England captain for a brief period, said the weather in September would be ideal to host cricket matches in England.

"Mid-to-late September is the most beautiful time in the UK. They could use Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and the two London grounds. There is also a good chance that crowds will be allowed in the grounds, and there will be great atmospheres.

"The IPL has been to the UAE; it's been to South Africa, and I think England would now be the perfect place to house the remaining fixtures," Pietersen said.



Kevin Pietersen poses in Maldives. — **Twitter**

● **Pietersen made the statement after four English counties — Middlesex, Surrey, Warwickshire and Lancashire — have expressed interest in hosting the remaining 31 games of the IPL.**

Pietersen made the statement after four English counties — Middlesex, Surrey, Warwickshire and Lancashire — have expressed interest in hosting the remaining 31 games of the IPL. — **PTI**

HAMILTON TAKES 100TH POLE IN SPAIN

Barcelona, May 8: World champion Lewis Hamilton celebrated his 100th pole on Saturday after setting the fastest time in qualifying for the Spanish Grand Prix and declared "It's like my first!"

The Mercedes driver's latest milestone puts him 32 clear of Michael Schumacher in the all-time pole chart and leaves him in prime position to secure a record-extending 98th win in Sunday's race. "I'll always remember that one," a beaming Hamilton said after reaching triple figures.

"I can't believe we are at 100 and it's down to the men and women back at the factory who are continuously raising the bar. The support I have, it's a dream to work with these guys. Who would have thought at the end of 2012 when we made the decision to partner, we'd be qualifying at 100. I feel humble and grateful — it's like my first!"

Alongside the Briton on the front row in Barcelona will be his Red Bull title rival Max Verstappen. Hamilton reached his century 14 years after securing his maiden pole in the Canadian GP in 2007, which he went on to win to take the first step on the road to becoming Formula One's most successful driver. — **AFP**

IOC says nothing can stop Games from going ahead

Sydney, May 8: International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates was adamant Saturday that nothing could stop the Tokyo Olympics from going ahead, despite ongoing risks from Covid-19.

Asked if there was any scenario in which the Games, which are due to start in July, could be cancelled or postponed again at this late stage, he replied: "No, there's not. "The prime minister of Japan said that to the president of the United States two or three weeks ago, he continues to say that to the IOC.

"We're working with him (Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga) on all of the safety measures. It's going ahead."

Suga held talks with US leader Joe Biden in April and stressed the Asian nation was doing everything possible to contain Covid-19 infections and hold a "safe and secure" Olympics.

But questions continue to be raised about the viability of the Games, given the ongoing pandemic and a virus state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of Japan being extended on Friday.

Coates, who heads the IOC's Coordination

Bengaluru, May 8: Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Prasidh Krishna has tested positive for coronavirus and is in quarantine in his home town Bengaluru, a BCCI source said on Saturday.

Another KKR player New Zealand's wicket-keeper-batsman Tim Seifert has also tested positive and will not be on the charter flight back home with other players and support staff.

The 25-year-old Krishna, who was named in the

Indian squad for the England tour as a stand-by on Friday, is the fourth KKR player to have contracted the dreaded virus. Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier are the other KKR players, who tested positive earlier.

According to the BCCI source, both Krishna and Warrier contracted the virus from Chakravarthy during one of the training sessions. He said Krishna is Chakravarthy's close friend.

PANT DONATES TO PANDEMIC RELIEF FUND

New Delhi, May 8: India wicketkeeper batsman Rishabh Pant on Saturday joined the fight against the raging Covid-19 pandemic, pledging an undisclosed amount to procure oxygen cylinders with beds and kits for the affected patients.

The 23-year-old said he will donate the amount to Hemkunt Foundation, a Gurugram-based NGO.

"I am supporting the Hemkunt Foundation through a monetary donation that will help provide O2 cylinders with beds, Covid-relief kits and much more to those suffering across the country," Pant said.

Pant saluted the country's frontline workers, who have been working tirelessly to help the infected people. — **PTI**

Two KKR players test +ve

"Prasidh like all India players left bubble on May 3 after getting two negative results. However on reaching Bengaluru he tested positive," the source said.

The BCCI is hoping that by the time the UK-bound players enter the bio-bubble in India on May 25, Krishna will test negative. Seifert is also in isolation in Ahmedabad from where he will go to Chennai for treatment at a private hospital. — **PTI**

BIG 3 DEFEND SUPER LEAGUE, DENOUNCE UEFA

Rome, May 8: Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus on Saturday defended the aborted Super League project in the face of "threats" from UEFA.

The three clubs are the only ones from the original 12 yet to renounce the proposed competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify.

The nine clubs who have dropped out — Tottenham, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool, Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan — were on Friday given a financial penalty by UEFA for their involvement.

UEFA also said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still support the Super League project.

In response, Real, Barca and Juventus said in a joint statement "the founding clubs have suffered, and continue to suffer, unacceptable third-party pressures (and) threats. This is intolerable under the rule of law." They said the Super League had been launched "with the aim of providing solutions to the current unsustainable situation in the football industry". — **AFP**

Hockey stalwarts succumb to Covid

New Delhi, May 8: Former India hockey player and coach M. K. Kaushik on Saturday died after battling Covid-19 for the past three weeks. He was 66 and survived by his son and wife.

Kaushik, a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-medal winning Indian team, had tested positive for Covid-19 on April 17 and was admitted to a nursing home in New Delhi.

"He was shifted to ventilator this morning but passed away just now," Kaushik's son Ehsan said.

Another former India hockey player and a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics-winning side Ravinder Pal Singh also died on Saturday morning in Lucknow after battling Covid-19 for nearly two weeks. He was 60.

Kaushik had coached both the senior men and women's teams. Under his coaching, India men's team won a gold medal at the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok.

Also, Indian women team had won bronze medal at the Doha Asian Games in 2006 under his coaching.

He was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1998, before being bestowed with

● **M. K. Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, members of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-medal winning Indian hockey team, lost their battle to Covid on a sombre Saturday for sport.**

the Dronacharya award in 2002.

Singh was admitted at the Vivekananda Hospital on April 24 after contracting the deadly virus.

According to family sources, Singh had recovered from the virus and was shifted to non-Covid ward on Thursday after testing negative. But his condition suddenly deteriorated on Friday and he was put on a ventilator.

Singh, who also played at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, did not get married and is survived by a niece, Pragya Yadav.

Singh also played in the 1979 Junior World Cup and took voluntary retirement from State Bank of India after quitting hockey.

Born in Sitapur on September 6, 1960, Singh excelled as a centre-half from 1979 to 1984. — **PTI**

SUPER KINGS ARRANGE OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS FOR PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 8

IPL team Chennai Super Kings have extended support to the people of Tamil Nadu in their fight against Covid-19 by arranging for the delivery of 450 oxygen concentrators for the affected patients. Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd director R. Srinivasan handed over an Oxygen concentrator to Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin, on Saturday in the presence of TNCA president Rupa Gurunath.

Bhoomika Trust, an NGO involved in COVID-19 relief operations, helped CSKCL in arranging the supply of the Oxygen concentrators and will also coordinate in the distribution.

The first consignment of Oxygen concentrators has arrived and the remaining is expected to reach early next week.

CSKCL is delivering the Oxygen concentrators for the benefit of patients being treated in Government hospitals and the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)-run COVID care centres.



(from left) TNCA president Rupa Gurunath, CSKCL director R. Srinivasan with TN chief minister MK Stalin.

Croatia is safer to train for Moudgil

New Delhi, May 8: Olympic-bound rifle shooter Anjum Moudgil does not mind being away from home till the end of the Tokyo Games as she feels training in Croatia will be safer than in a coronavirus-ravaged India.

The Olympic-bound 15-member Indian team will depart for Zagreb on May 11 for a training-cum-competition tour in that country and from there it will directly fly to Tokyo for the Olympics, which opens on July 23.

"It is not all right for us to train here in India. I don't have a private training range for 50m rifle three positions. I have to either travel to Delhi or Pune

which is not safe under this pandemic conditions," she said at a virtual press conference arranged by the Sports Authority of India. "I think Croatia must be better than India currently (in terms of Covid-19 situation) and being with the team also gives you confidence. I don't see any problem from being away from home for three months."

She said the Indian team will undergo a seven-day quarantine after reaching Croatia. They will fly to Tokyo on July 17.

"SAI has arranged a chartered flight for us and making a sort of bio-bubble also there in Croatia," said the 25-year-old from Chandigarh. — **PTI**



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The most important office bearers of the BCCI — President Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah and treasurer Arun Dhimal — have shrugged off responsibility for the IPL fiasco by claiming that nobody could have known the intensity of the second wave of the Covid pandemic

ic that hit the country from the first week of April. I'm afraid, this does not wash.

While cricket administrators are not experts in virology and epidemics, the Corona virus tsunami was being widely discussed by experts from January onwards. Only it was obfuscated by a gloat-

ing government, and a cricket administration that preferred to toe the populist line rather assess the looming threat indefinitely.

The previous IPL season played in the UAE had gone off without hitch. Since there were to be no spectators allowed at the ground even in India, the 'atmosphere' of IPL such as it was, was hardly going to be affected.

This was foolish disregard for the Corona threat, and the BCCI compounded the problem by shocking complacency, as was revealed from breaches in

the 'bubble' that came to light last week, forcing the tournament to be suspended indefinitely.

Infringements in the healthy safety protocol, if one goes by reports, includes teams based in being exposed to staff of a private club where the players had gone for practice, food being brought in from the outside, as well as two impostors — ostensibly working for bookies — who were arrested with fake accreditations for matches!

What happens to the truncated IPL 2021 season from here is subject to sev-

eral imponderables. The BCCI is looking at a 15-20-day window later in the year to complete the tournament, which may not be easy to find in a packed international calendar.

On the face of it, it is possible to squeeze in the completion of the IPL after the England tour finishes and the T20WC begins. But this means foregoing a confirmed tour by South Africa to India for white ball series in late September-early October.

Given the BCCI's clout, the Proteas can be cajoled to scrap this assignment with promise of a bigger

tour later. However, whether overseas players from other countries will be available for completion of the IPL is moot. Their countries may want them for preparatory camps for the T20 WC, rather than be fatigued. To resume the IPL post T20 WC may be even more unkind on the players, who may in any case have other international assignments.

However, the biggest challenge for the BCCI now is to show it has learnt from the present disaster and is capable of handling mega tournaments in times of Covid.

There is talk of a third wave hitting India in end-August or September. Everybody prays it doesn't, but nothing can be left to chance or propaganda. Preparations for the tournaments to be played at home or putting in place Plan Bs in case the situation is serious have to be done with commitment, diligence and based on domain expertise, not in an airy-fairy manner as was done this IPL season.

Money lost because of the IPL being suspended will be easy for the BCCI to recover, not so the massive loss of credibility.

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**