

**THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA**  
**RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SUNDAY | 9 MAY 2021**

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SUNDAY | 9 MAY 2021





## IN BRIEF

AP SEEKS 4.08 CR  
DOSES OF COVAXIN  
FROM BHARAT BIODC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

The Andhra Pradesh government has written a letter to Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Limited for purchase of 4.08 crore doses of Covaxin to administer to 2.04 crore people aged between 18-45 years.

Principal Secretary (Health, medical and family welfare) M. Ravichandra, who looks after Covid management and vaccination, recently wrote a letter to the chairman and managing director, Dr Krishna Ella, CMD, Bharat Biotech International Limited, seeking supply of 4.08 crore doses of vaccine directly to the AP government and assured to make payment towards them as per norms.

Ravichandra said that the state government had made all arrangements to vaccinate the people in a phased manner and requested the firm to take part in the bold initiative of the state government in its commitment to vaccinate the entire population in the state by supplying 4.08 crore doses of vaccine as early as possible.

WAR ROOMS TO  
CHECK PRODUCTION,  
STORAGE OF O<sub>2</sub>

FROM PAGE 1

Accordingly, the state war room is responsible for monitoring the production, storage, transport, distribution, consumption and supply chain of LMO at the state level. It will have nodal officers from departments like industries, health, transport, revenue, disaster management, police and IT. Dedicated 24x7 helpline numbers will be set up to provide information to all the stakeholders and the public.

With regard to department-wise responsibilities, the industries department will coordinate the overall production and supply of LMO from source points as per the allocation order of the centre. It has also to ensure oxygen production capacity augmentation in the state. The health department has to compile and share information pertaining to oxygen beds, daily occupancy status, oxygen consumption and requirements from both government and private hospitals. The transport department will shoulder the responsibility of getting more cryogenic vehicles for oxygen supply chain. It should also take responsibility for taking measures for airlifting, transport by rail, using ISO cryogenic tankers by rail for faster movement of LMO from production points to the state. The revenue department should allocate LMO vehicles to the districts. The police department will ensure unrestricted transport of LMO vehicles within and outside the state. The IT department shall provide technical support for implementing an 'oxygen management module' to give seamless access to SOWR and DOWRs.

The DOWRs will also be having nodal officers and responsibilities similar to those at SOWR. Several standard operating procedures are also stipulated for proper oxygen management.

TD'S VIRTUAL  
PROTESTS FOR  
COVID JAB TO ALLDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Telugu Desam organised on Saturday organised virtual 'at-home' protests demanding that Jagan Mohan Reddy government provide Coronavirus vaccine to all people in the state.

In online streams, TD leaders could be seen holding placards and shouting slogans at their homes and offices expressing resentment against YSRC regime's inefficiency in rising to the occasion when all sections of people are facing a life and death situation throughout the state.

In accordance to the call given by TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, they raised slogans online demanding that AP government "administer vaccine and save lives".

TD AP president K. Atchannaidu, former ministers Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu, Nakka Anand Babu and K. S. Jawahar, senior leader K. K. Venkatrao, Telugu Yuvatha AP president Sriram Chinababu and scores of others participated in the online protests. They held placards online with slogan "Give Vaccine and Save Lives".



Traffic police are using drone cameras to better enforce the curfew at Poorna Market in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

ENC to maintain O<sub>2</sub>  
plants in govt hosps

Forms special teams for upkeep of storage plants

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Eastern Naval Command (ENC) will operate and maintain oxygen plants at all government and teaching hospitals across the state.

A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting Andhra Pradesh government's representative M. T. Krishna Babu had with Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Eastern Naval Command and Chief Managing Director of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) on supply, storage and maintenance of oxygen in the state.

Following the meeting, ENC and VSP have come forward to extend help in a host of ways to deal with the Coronavirus situation in AP.

NANI CHALLENGES  
NAIDU TO BRING  
COVID-19 VACCINESDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani refuted accusations that the state government is reluctant about spending ₹1,600 crore on buying Covid-19 vaccines for vaccinating people of the state.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, Nani challenged Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu to bring the Corona vaccines and the state government will pay the ₹1,600 crore on the spot.

He maintained that the government was already spending ₹1,900 crore towards Aarogya Sri services. It would spend another ₹1,600 crore for the vaccine too.

The minister asserted that the government is already geared up to vaccinate 10 lakh people per day and complete the entire vaccination programme in 40 days. But the vaccines are unavailable.

The civil supplies minister said the government has already consulted Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India. But the companies have informed that they cannot supply the vaccines in the current scenario and it would take time.

Nani pointed out that Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has already written twice to the centre seeking the vaccine.

Responding to TD leaders' demand of handing over Chief Minister's post to Chandrababu Naidu for a week to bring the Coronavirus situation in control, the minister said people had defeated Naidu-led Telugu Desam in 2019 elections as he had pushed the state into a pile of ₹3.6 lakh crore debts.

ENC will take the responsibility for examining the condition of oxygen plants, fixing leakages and taking precautions while running the plants.

Four special teams have been formed, with each team taking over responsibilities in three to four districts. Arrangements are being made to airlift these teams to the required locations, if necessary.

The Navy has agreed to transport 25 cryogenic oxygen cylinders, which are coming to the state from Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

It will provide special vehicles for transporting liquid medical oxygen containers and also to supply oxygen concentrators, D-type oxygen cylinders and other medical equipment required for treating

Coronavirus. It has also come forward to donate 200 D-type cylinders.

Further, the Eastern Naval Command has agreed to allot 10 oxygen beds, apart from 60 normal beds, for treating Covid patients in INS Kalinga Hospital.

In addition, it will develop infrastructure facilities for a temporary 150-bed Coronavirus hospital in Kancharapalem area of Visakhapatnam. The ENC has requested district administration to arrange for required doctors and medical staff.

Steel plant officials informed the state government that though VSP has two units that can produce 850 metric tonnes of medical liquid oxygen (MLO), they are currently producing only 100 metric tonnes.

A special committee will study the situation within a week, so that future needs of MLO could be met.

Vizag Steel Plant has also agreed to set up a 50-bed Covid hospital with oxygen facility at Gurajada Kalakshetram in Visakhapatnam. VSP chief managing director said the capacity will be increased to 150 beds by May 15, 250 beds by May 30 and 600 beds by June. Plant officials requested the district administration to accordingly ensure required doctors and medical staff.

Officials of the ENC and Visakhapatnam Steel Plant thanked the state government for providing 4,000 doses of Covid vaccine to their staff and their family members.

Naidu to get notices over  
'false alarm' on N440KD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC  
KURNOOL, MAY 8

Kurnool district SP K. Fakkeerappa said on Saturday that notices would be served in a day or two on the opposition leader, N. Chandrababu Naidu, on a FIR filed at I Town police station in the city.

Addressing a press conference, the SP informed that a case was registered under non-bailable Sections like 188, 505(1)(b)(2) of IPC and Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act-2005. He said Naidu should reply to the notices within seven days, failing which action would be taken as per the provisions of law.

The Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act says, "Whoever makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic, shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine.

The SP said the legal process would set in motion, based on the replies sent to the notices issued by the Kurnool police.

Is TD president N. Chandrababu Naidu the first Indian politician

## Investigator skips media briefing

Kurnool: One Town Circle Inspector Kala Venkata Raman has been appointed as the investigation officer to go into the details of the allegations levelled in the complaint lodged against Naidu. He is evading the media and even skipped the media interaction held by the SP on Saturday. When the SP

office asked him why he evaded the press meet, he reportedly informed them that the SP did not invite him. But the SP office said they had informed him, but he chose to stay away. One of his colleagues said he was under intense pressure ever since he booked a case against the TD chief.

against whom a 'false alarm' case has been filed under Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005? Political observers say that Kurnool police invoking the Section 54 of DMA is surprising as Naidu made his observations which were already known to the public about the detection of N440K which was said to be virulent. Naidu's remarks were misinterpreted and entertaining complaints against him was "vindictive" and beyond the scrutiny of law, they said.

It may be mentioned that based on a complaint given by Kurnool district BAR association president M. Subbaiah, Kurnool One Town police filed a case against the former chief minister for

spreading rumours that the new strain N440-K virus identified in Kurnool was deadly and causing infections across the state.

The SP also read out the complaint, which alleged that Naidu's unfounded claims had caused a disturbing trend in Kurnool and people were avoiding visiting the city.

The complaint also mentions the measures taken by the Delhi and the Odisha governments, asking the people from Andhra Pradesh not to come to their states. The complaint further mentions that Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) reports clarified that the N440-K virus found in samples sent from Kurnool in June 2020 was not virulent.

Techies assist Covid-19  
home isolated patientsNAGABHUSHANAM  
HOSKPOTE | DC  
ANANTAPUR, MAY 8

A group of techies and their friends have been on a mission to build confidence among the Covid-19 patients through various modes in Madakasira area in the district. The area is close to Bengaluru where a panic situation is prevailing with a large number of Covid-19 positive cases and deaths being reported every day.

A few IT employees, medical and nursing professionals and their friends from Madakasira Assembly segment felt it was their social responsibility to render service to the society in such a pandemic time. Bhaskar Kantipuram, a techie presently working from home from his village in Kantipuram in Madakasira mandal,

brought others on board to serve the Covid-19 patients in the area.

Dr Yashwanth from Tumkur Hospital, software engineers Anand Kumar, Rena Prate, Vera Prasad, Nuveen, a nursing student, Rajesh Babe, an agriculture graduate, and Dhanunjay, hailing from various parts of Madakasira segment, are involved in establishing a Covid-19 care call centre, passing on crucial information to the patients. They are reaching out to even those in interior parts of the Assembly segment. The centre also appointed a few volunteers in all the five mandals in the Assembly segment.

"We are helping them by providing free medical advice, treatment regimen and even medical consultations in severe circumstances. We learnt that tens of hundreds of people

recovered from the Covid-19, staying at home without any hospitalisation," Bhaskar said. Alarmingly, Coronavirus was fast spreading in rural areas too and rendering advice to them on treatment and Covid-19 management had become crucial. Since the government medical infrastructure was stretched thin, they thought of doing their bit to alleviate the sufferings of people, he said. As Madakasira is close to Bengaluru, a large number of infected people were returning to villages and spreading infections. Bhaskar said the call centre and the volunteers were spreading awareness about the virus and advising the public on what to do and whom to reach out to in times of need. "We are ready to serve round-the-clock if the situation demands," added Bhaskar.

Doc: 6-week gap ideal  
for vax post recoveryMD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Medical professions say both Coronavirus infected patients as well as those who recovered from it observe at least four to six weeks of gap to take vaccines. They say the wait is essential as vaccine takes at least 15 days to help increase immunity levels in the body. They said in the wake of both categories of people rushing to vaccine centres to get jabs.

Dr Ch. Manoj Kumar, chief of clinical service, Manipal Hospital, said that the Coronavirus-infected and the recovered persons should not at all avoid taking vaccination shots. However, waiting for a few weeks before getting the jab was advisable.

Taking part in an awareness programme, Dr. Manoj Kumar answered various queries Covid-19 treatment, vaccines and other concerns among people. Excerpts:

Q Recently, RT-PCR tests are claimed to be inaccurate in their reports. What are the alternatives in such cases? What tests are available for Covid-19?

RT-PCR test is the most recommended test as it helps detect Covid more effectively than other available tests. One can also get an Antigen test done and also map it to the



history and the symptoms of Covid. CT scan is the least advised test. Many people are starting to take unnecessary typhoid tests and mistaking Covid for typhoid, they are not getting themselves treated until it is too late. One should always consult the doctor before taking any tests.

Q Can pregnant women receive the vaccine?

Many countries across the world have started administering vaccine to pregnant women but presently there are no such advisories provided by the Government of India. But, there are a few medical organizations which are requesting the government to allow vaccination for the pregnant women, too.

Q Should women avoid vaccine during periods?

It is completely safe to take the vaccine during their period. I request everyone not to believe in any rumours.

Q Do youngsters with good immunity need to take the vaccine?

All those above 18 years are strongly advised to get the vaccine irrespective of their immunity levels. It helps us fight the virus better by minimising the impact of the virus and by keeping us safe.

Q Why are people testing positive even after the first dose?

The vaccine takes at least 15 days to help increase your immunity. If one has contracted the virus then it must be during this time. If you are Covid +ve after taking the vaccination, please don't panic.

Take the necessary treatment and isolate for at least 2 weeks. Once you test negative, give at least a gap of 4-6 weeks before taking the second dose.

Q What are common side-effects after vaccination?

Patients generally experience body pains and fever for about 1 to 2 days. If the fever lasts for more than 3 days, then one should get tested for Covid, after consulting a doctor.

STATE OFFICIALS  
THANK JINDAL  
FOR SUPPLY OF O<sub>2</sub>DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

The state health authorities on Saturday thanked Jindal Steel and Power located in Angul in Odisha, on behalf of Andhra Pradesh government, for supply of 20 metric tonnes of medical O<sub>2</sub> to AP every day from April 24 onwards.

The health authorities in a statement said that the company officials assured to supply liquid medical O<sub>2</sub> to the state until it could overcome its shortage. They expressed gratitude to the firm for making timely supplies which were saving lives of several people infected with the Coronavirus.

Police book Lokesh for  
tweet against YSRC MLADC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, MAY 8

D. Hirehal police in Anantapur district have registered a case against Telugu Desam general secretary Nara Lokesh for his social media comment on Rayadurgam MLA K. Ramachandra Reddy.

The case has been booked after a YSRC activist V. Bojaraj Naik lodged a complaint with police on April 30 accusing Lokesh of defaming the Rayadurgam MLA. D. Hirehal police have registered the case under sections 153(A), 505 and 506. Police sources disclosed the issue on Saturday.

In the FIR, the complainant said through his tweet, Lokesh has pro-

TD POLITBURO member Kalava Srinivasulu lashes out at YSRC govt for harassing the TD leaders.

voked people against Ramachandra Reddy and damaged the latter's image. The TD general secretary put out the tweet after a TD worker G. V. S. Murthy was attacked by people of Rampuram village in Karnataka.

TD politburo member Kalava Srinivasulu lashed out at YSRC government for harassing TD leaders across the state. "Instead of taking action against illicit activities of YSRC leaders, why have D. Hirehal police registered a case against our party leader," he asked.

## COVID | NEED Hospitals were provided with 491 metric cones of medical oxygen in last 24 hrs

## Centre enhances oxygen supply to 590 MT to AP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said that the Centre had enhanced medical oxygen allocation to 590 metric tonnes per day based on a request from the state government.

He told media persons here on Saturday that they

had sought allocation of enhanced MO quota from plants located in Chennai and Bellary so that it could help save transportation time.

Maintaining that Isro in Nellore district was having 90 to 100 tonnes of medical oxygen storage capacity, he said that they had requested it to allocate MO to Andhra Pradesh so

that it could be of immense benefit at least to Covid patients from Nellore district.

He said that they had enhanced supply of medical oxygen to hospitals and accordingly 491 metric cones of medical oxygen were supplied to them in the last 24 hours.

The health principal secretary announced that the

state government had decided to purchase liquid medical oxygen from abroad, which naval officials have assured to bring to the state. He said that 25 cryogenic oxygen tankers meant for transport of LMO were to reach in about three weeks. He appreciated Indian Navy for coming forward to bring them by sea.

He said that the delivery of Covid-19 vaccine doses purchased by the state government had started. He said that the state government was committed to use them for people aged above 45 years as a second dose to ensure that those all those who have taken the first dose should not miss the stipulated time-period.

He said that they had urged Centre to make changes in the CoWIN portal. He said that the Centre was also informed about going ahead with the vaccination programme based on the software application developed by the state government in case the Centre was unwilling to make changes in CoWIN portal.



## SHORT TAKES

## 500-BED GOVT HOSPITAL NEAR ARZA FACTORY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, MAY 8

A temporary 500-bed hospital will soon be set up near Arjas Steel Plant in Tadipathri mandal to meet the emergency needs of Covid-19 patients from Rayalaseema region. The beds would have oxygen supply and ventilators and the plant with an active oxygen plant can meet oxygen demand considerably in these critical times.

Patients from Anantapur, Kadapa and Kurnool districts and also from nearby areas in Karnataka can make use of the medical facility.

The decision to set up the temporary hospital was taken in view of difficulties in transport of oxygen to hospitals located far away. District collector Gandham Chandrudu said the hospital would be set up in 5 acres of land. The oxygen being produced in the steel plant would help save many lives as it can be swiftly supplied to the hospital.

## RARE SURGERY ON AP STUDENT UNDER CMRF

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

A rare haploidentical bone marrow transplant surgery was performed on a 20-year-old B.Com student Koya Eswar Sai Ganesh at the Manipal Hospital in Vijayawada.

The operation was free for the student as it was brought under the CM's Relief Fund.

Manipal Hospital became the first institution to perform this transplant in the divided state of Andhra Pradesh.

Hospital director Dr Sudhakar Kantipudi thanked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for supporting Sai Ganesh through CM's Relief Fund in performing the operation.

Patient's father Srinivas Rao said being a daily wage labourer, it was very difficult for them to afford such a surgery.

## LAB EXPERIMENTS DONE WITH CCMB HELP

FROM PAGE 1

In April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, INMAS scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. They found that this molecule works effectively against SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, and inhibits viral growth.

Based on these results, DCGI Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) permitted Phase-II clinical trial of 2-DG in Covid-19 patients in May 2020.

DRDO along with its industry partner DRL started the clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of the drug in Covid-19 patients.

In Phase-II trials (including dose ranging) conducted during May to October 2020, the drug was found to be safe, and showed significant improvement in their recovery. Phase IIa was conducted in six hospitals and Phase IIb (dose ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country.

Phase-II trial was conducted on 110 patients. In efficacy trends, the patients treated with 2-DG showed faster symptomatic cure than Standard of Care (SoC) on various end-points.

A significantly favourable trend (2.5 days difference) was seen in terms of the median time to achieving normalisation of specific vital signs parameters when compared to SOC.

Based on successful results, DCGI further permitted the Phase-III clinical trials in November 2020. This was conducted on 220 patients from December 2020 to March 2021 on a large number of patients at 27 Covid hospitals in Delhi, UP, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The detailed data of Phase-III clinical trial was presented to DCGI. It was found that a significantly higher proportion of patients improved symptomatically and became free from supplemental oxygen dependence (42 per cent vs 31 per cent) by Day-3, indicating an early relief from oxygen therapy/dependence. A similar trend was observed in patients more than 65 years.

On May 1, DCGI granted permission for emergency use of this drug as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe Covid patients.



People wait in a long queue for Covid vaccination at Regional Eye Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## Mad rush, chaos at UPHCs for second jab

## Elderly scared of jostling crowds, go back sans vaccination

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, MAY 8

Chaotic scenes were witnessed at vaccination centres in the district on Saturday as people turned out in large numbers to get their second dose of Covaxin. Several had to return without getting the jab.

Serpentine queues formed outside urban primary health care (UPHC) centres in Kurnool, Nandyal, and Adoni as people had been eagerly waiting to get their second jab.

Caring a hoot for Covid-19 safety protocols, people jostled to get the vaccination. A large number of people jumped queue and

mobbed a small room functioning as a UPHC at Weaker Sections Colony. As the crowds swelled and surged ahead, elbowing one another, senior citizens and women were forced to make a retreat as they could not get through to the medical staff administering the vaccines. Many weak and elderly returned disappointed, said Nagendranath, a resident of Venkataramana Colony. He deplored that there was no orderly maintenance of queues and it seemed like a free-for-all situation.

Similar was the scene at Regional Eyecare vaccine centre. The facility was closed by noon as the med-

ical staff exhausted the stocks.

When contacted, the District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO), Dr Rama Giddaiah, said they had a stock of 6,000 doses of Covaxin. "As a one-day event, we identified six urban primary health care centres in Kurnool city, three in Nandyal urban, and one at Atmakur Vadlapeta. Besides, seven PHCs were also provided with Covaxin."

On the poor planning of vaccination at UPHCs, the DMHO said Apollo Hospital was running the UPHCs in a joint venture with the state government. Most of the Apollo-run UPHCs were running

out of rented houses and they could not handle the long queues, he said. He said for the second dose vaccination, there was no need to schedule an appointment. That was people in large numbers turned out. He, however, said Covaxin stocks would arrive in next couple of days and all people would get the jab.

Kurnool GGH Superintendent, Dr G. Narendranath Reddy, observed that Regional Eye Care Institute should not have been used for vaccination. As it was KGGH doing the job, people were unnecessarily put to hardships. Only 200 people were catered to on Saturday at this facility, he added.

## 'INFORM HEALTH CONDITION OF PATIENTS TO KIN'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 8

Health minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani) asked the health staff to inform the condition of the Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the hospitals to their attendants and relatives on daily basis.

Taking part in a review meeting with senior officials on Covid situation in Chittoor district in Tirupati on Saturday, he said that they are going to deliver 200 oxygen concentrators to Chittoor district to meet the oxygen needs of Covid-19 patients.

Health minister directed the district administration to increase the number of beds in all Covid-19 hospitals and care centres in view of sharp increase in Covid-19 cases.



A patient inside an ambulance waits for admission to Covid block at King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— DC

## Oxygen scarcity hits hospital admissions

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, MAY 8

Faced with shortage of oxygen supply, government as well as private hospitals are denying admission to patients arriving with breathlessness issues and gasping for the life-saving gas.

Though the district administration is striving to create more beds should there be a need, arranging adequate oxygen supply to the needy has become a grueling task for officials.

As against the requirements of around 26 kiloliters of oxygen, the district is allotted only 20 kiloliters by the state government. Even the fully allotted quota is not being fulfilled as the two agencies engaged to supply oxygen are hardly supplying 17.5 kiloliters a day. They are hard-pressed to cater to the demands of not only the four major government Covid hospitals in the district but also 17 private hospitals treating coro-

## NAIDU WANTS CASE AGAINST CM FOR BLAST

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 8

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed deep shock and grief over death of 10 workers in a blast on Saturday at a limestone mine in Mamillapalle village of Kalasapadu mandal in Kadapa district. Many others got injured in the explosion.

Naidu demanded that the government announce ex gratia for kin of the deceased on par with LG Polymers gas leak case in Visakhapatnam.

The TD national president wanted to know under which rules the government had allowed people to work in the mines when there was an 18-hour curfew all over the AP because of deadly Coronavirus. He demanded that a criminal case be booked against Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for his government's failure, instead of against TD leaders, who were helping miners and their families in their hour of suffering.

Naidu underlined that best medical care be provided to all those injured in the blast. He said it is unfortunate that the tragic incident took place claiming so many lives in Chief Minister's own native district.

Meanwhile Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan expressed grief over the death of 10 labourers and injuries to several others in Mamillapalle quarry mishap. In a statement issued here, he instructed officials to provide best medical care to all injured persons and conveyed his heartfelt condolences to bereaved family members.

Officials informed the Governor that the blast took place when the workers were drilling.

## Refillers wary of detection

FROM PAGE 1

A medical oxygen refiller in Vijayawada is charging ₹65 per cubic meter, while another is demanding ₹95 per cubic meter. Apart from it, they are also charging for transport of filled-in cylinders to hospitals and for return of empty cylinders. Adding to it is an additional levy of GST at 12 per cent. The refillers are taking every precaution to avoid detection by the law enforcement agencies by mentioning only statutory price in the invoices and nominal amount for handling and transportation charges.

A refiller took ₹7,000 as an advance deposit for the issue of a portable medical oxygen cylinder of one cubic meter capacity and charged a rental of ₹300 per day in the city. A maternity hospital in Patamata is said to have stocked several medical oxygen cylinders. Some people staying in home quarantine are also keeping medical oxygen cylinders at their houses for future use by paying whatever is demanded from the refillers. It is the case in several parts of the state, which is creating huge demand and supply gaps.

Andhra Pradesh is allotted medical oxygen to the tune of 480 tonnes per day

by the centre. The cryogenic tankers carrying liquid medical oxygen procured from Angul in Odisha, Sriperumbudur, Bellary and parts in Visakhapatnam, reach the in-built filling plants in the hospitals directly. The liquid oxygen turns into gaseous form during supply into pipelines connected to the beds as the hospital authorities fix specific equipment for the purpose and pressure is monitored through valves and gauges.

A doctor at Vijayawada government hospital, B. Nirmal Kumar, said, "If oxygen saturation level falls down below 94 per cent for any patient, we start providing medical oxygen from the level of two litres and it goes on as per requirement until the patient improves his levels. It may take even days to provide oxygen supply to the patient based on his health condition."

A senior official of Drugs Control Administration (DCA) said, "We are keeping close tabs on supply of medical oxygen at statutory price and people are advised not to hoard cylinders for future use as it is resulting in some refillers charging more. We will initiate action against such refillers as per norms."

## COPS CHECK IF MINE OWNER HAD ORE EXTRACTION PERMIT

FROM PAGE 1

Police registered a case and took up an investigation. They are verifying if the mine owner had necessary permits for ore extraction.

The wreckage of the vehicle, which was completely destroyed in the blast, was also examined.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the death of labourers in the blast and ordered all medical care to the injured. He made enquiries about the possible reasons behind the accident.

He conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families.

## POLICE RESCUE OCTOGENARIAN FROM WELL

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 8

A police team from in Chittoor district along with locals rescued Subbamma, an 80-year-old woman, who had accidentally fallen into an agricultural well near Athuru village in Renigunta mandal on Saturday.

Police said Subbamma had gone to relieve herself when she slipped inside. She managed to hold on to a water pipe connected to the motor, which saved her life. Subbamma hung on for five hours while shouting for help.

She got lucky when villagers heard her screams and alerted the police. A team of police led by Gajulamandam sub-inspector M. Sriniva-sulu rushed to the spot and launched rescue operations. The team lowered a cot into the well, asked the octogenarian to sit on the cot and pulled her out with the help of locals.



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

TN announces 'total lockdown'

**Chennai, May 8:** With Tamil Nadu witnessing a sharp increase in the Covid-19 cases, the government on Saturday announced clamping a two-week "total lockdown" across the state to curb the spread of the pandemic, starting May 10.

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin said in a statement that the lockdown was being enforced due to "unavoidable reasons" and pointed out that the decision was taken based on inputs received at a review meeting he had with district collectors on Friday, besides consultations with medical experts.

The recommendations made by the Union Home and Health ministries had also been factored in.

"The total lockdown will be enforced from 4 am on May 10 to 4 am on May 24 to further intensify the efforts to curb the spread of the disease," he said.

Stalin announced relaxing existing restrictions on business hours for shops on Saturday and Sunday, when a full day-long lockdown is supposed to be in effect, allowing them to remain open till 9 pm to aid people since stricter curbs would kick in from May 10.

— PTI



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

Puri: No trees uprooted for Central Vista

**New Delhi, May 8:** Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said that no jamun trees have been uprooted as part of the ongoing Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project stretching from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, and asserted that defining elements of built heritage like lamp posts will be restored.

The Union housing and urban affairs minister said that only a few trees will be transplanted as part of the project, claiming that the overall green cover will increase.

This comes a day after reports said that several jamun trees could be uprooted as part of the Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project.

"Do not believe in fake photos & canards about ongoing work at Central Vista Avenue. No Jamun trees have been removed. Only few trees will be transplanted in entire project. Overall green cover will increase. Defining elements of built heritage like lamp posts etc will be restored," Puri tweeted.

In another tweet, the minister said the new Central Vista Avenue will have more public space with refurbished lawns, paved walkways along Rajpath, improved landscape, clean canals, adequate public amenities, vending areas, public performance facilities, safe road crossings, non-disruptive facilities for public events etc.

The project will be ready in time to host the Republic Day parade in 2022, the 75th year of India's independence, he said.

● **THE UNION HOUSING and urban affairs minister said that only a few trees will be transplanted as part of the project, claiming that the overall green cover will increase.**

● **THE PROJECT will be ready in time to host the Republic Day parade in 2022, the 75th year of India's independence, he said.**

● **The government has been facing criticism from the Opposition for executing the Central Vista redevelopment project amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.**

The project is being executed by Shapoorji Pallonji and Co Pvt Ltd.

The redevelopment of the Central Vista, the nation's power corridor, envisages a new Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the 3-km Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, new Prime Minister's residence and office, and a new Vice President Enclave.

The government has been facing criticism from the Opposition for executing the Central Vista redevelopment project amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

Attacking the government on Friday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi termed the project a "criminal wastage" and asked the dispensation to focus on people's lives during the pandemic.

— 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 Annour 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

**Poro 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

9 MAY 2021



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 public-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-Worl 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 Führer. The political ontology portrayed by the overpowering impact of this architectonic setting is of B e i n g - a s - O n e . 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 Führer, the Reich Chancellery, and a gargantuan Grand Hall. Mark the Palace for the Führer.

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 TECH

It’s good that the US agreed to waive patent protection on Covid vaccine taking a cue from the UK, France and some other developed nations. India and South Africa had proposed the waiver and got support from many countries at the WTO to ramp up vaccine production and fight the pandemic globally. However, majority of developed nations resisted. Now it’s a good sign that they are changing their minds. As no one is protected until everyone is protected, there must be equitable distribution of vaccine. .

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao  
Vizianagaram

### GOOD LEADERSHIP

AP CM is right in supporting PM’s action on Covid (Jagan objects to Soren’s sarcasm on Modi’s call, DC, May 8). The integrity of a real leader is assessed while he is supporting heartfully the state/Central leadership but not criticism in critical times. Let us support our CM and PM to fight the war together on Covid-19.

Jagannadham Chowdari  
Srikakulam

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s comments were appropriate. All leaders including former CM Naidu should co-operate with government to fight Coronavirus instead of indulging in cheap politics. Each day thousands of peoples are dying before their time. Hope that leaders will come out and help arrange basic needs to save their helpless dying citizens.

Mahesh Kumar Kachhawah  
Anantapur

There is definitely something more than meets the eye. Much significance could be attached to Jagan’s reaction. A change of guard at the apex court and long pending cases against Jagan should be or could be linked to this “spontaneous” reaction of Jagan as his tweet was only meant to placate the top echelons in New Delhi in order to save himself from all those cases. Already am YSRC MP had approached the court seeking cancellation of bail granted to Jagan. Whoever is behind that MP could be anybody’s guess.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Probe begins into rare gold coins

HYDERABAD, MAY 8.

The City Crime Branch officials probing Yelliah, the waddar (stone-cutter), who found 200 rare gold coins suspected him to have committed some robbery. They interrogated him. The waddar denied of any knowledge of crime and maintained that he had struck the gold in a field while digging his earth.

The City Crime Branch officials decided to verify and waddar’s story. Mr. Jaipal Rao, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crims II) with a team of Inspectors proceeded to the village late last night along with the waddar to the Vijaynagar empire at Mubarakpur village, about 35 miles from here in Vikarabad taluk, where he had found the gold coins of the 14th century A.D. belonging the Vijayanagar empire.



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

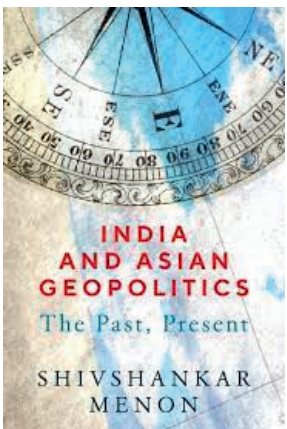
The writer is a professor of medicine at Stanford University



INDIAN TOP 10  
BESTSELLERS

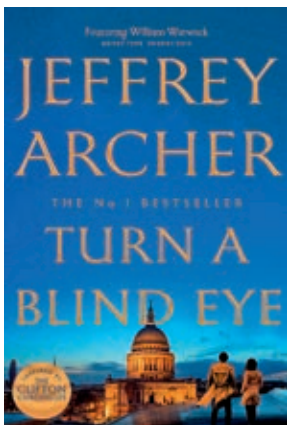
## NON-FICTION

- 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**  
Sanjaya Baru  
Penguin, ₹699
- 4 **BORN A MUSLIM: SOME TRUTHS ABOUT ISLAM IN INDIA**  
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 gossiping tinge to it. Baru places himself as an outsider/insider in Delhi's dress circle and with tongue-firmly-in-cheek pronounces the rather unalighted 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 vigilante 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

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 enrichment of 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Hakaawati* by Rabih Alameddine published in 2009, which opens thus: "Listen. 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

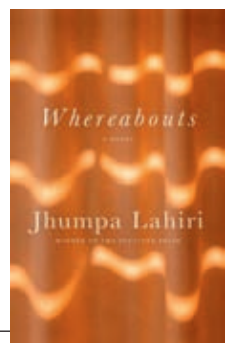
the office, at the register, on the street — and paints an exquisite picture of a single soul moving thoughtfully about her city.

"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

WHEREABOUTS  
By JHUMPA LAHIRI  
Penguin, ₹499

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 law-makers than actual wild creatures along the way.

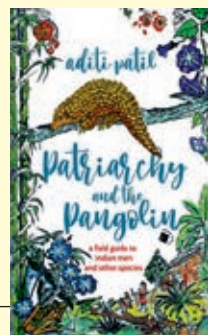
The book has no plot of course. It's the diary of a field researcher, funny, eye-opening and cynical in turns, written in the style of a person who often laughs to stop herself from crying.

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 law-makers, 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 seaPATRIARCHY 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. — **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. "So I'm getting in the right shape in the right moment right before the playoffs."

Mitchell has missed the last 11 games with a right ankle sprain and Conley has missed six straight games with a hamstring injury. — **AFP**

## 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

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2021-23

Printed and Published by **K. Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208. **RNI Registration No. 3081/1957.** Editor: **Kaushik Mitter**

## 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.



● **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



A Japanese rhythmic gymnast performs during a test event in Tokyo on Saturday to prepare for the Olympic Games.

— **AP**

Commission for the Tokyo Games, said a huge amount of work had been done to ensure the safety of athletes and the Japanese public.

"We spent the first half of last year identifying all the worst-case scenarios," he said in Sydney on the sidelines of the Australian Olympic Committee's annual general meeting.

"We spent the next six months looking at the countermeasures that are necessary. We're implementing those countermeasures, predicated on there being no vaccine, so that situation has improved. The Games will go ahead."

US drugs giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech on Thursday announced a deal with the IOC to provide vaccines to competitors and staff at the Games, which Coates said it was a major step.

"All of the precautions that we have been taking are aimed at the health of the athletes and the health of the people of Japan," he said.

"We've put an amazing amount of work into the procedures that ensure the safety of the athletes through testing ... Boosted now by all athletes around the world now having access to the vaccine." — **AFP**

## 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

**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.

"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**

## WOMEN HOCKEY PLAYERS RECOVER FROM COVID-19

**New Delhi, May 8:** Indian women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, her six team-mates and two support staff members have recovered from Covid-19 infection after spending two weeks in quarantine at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru.

The six other India players are Savita Punia, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur and Sushila while the two support staff are video analyst Amrutaprakash and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard.

All seven tested positive following the Indian women's hockey core group's return to the national camp in Bengaluru on April 24 after a 10-day break. All of them were asymptomatic.

"Thank you everyone for the love and mental support through messages/calls during the last two weeks. Me and my teammates and support staff are fully recovered from the Covid now," Rani said in a statement on her Twitter handle. — **PTI**

## 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



Anjum Moudgil

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.

Moudgil was picked in the Indian team for the 50m rifle three positions and 10m air rifle mixed team but missed out on 10m air rifle in which she won a silver in the 2018 World Championships.

She said she has taken it in her stride. Moudgil won a gold in 50m rifle 3 positions in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

"I respect the decision of NRAI. I still have two events in the Olympics. I am ready for the 50m 3 positions." — **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.