

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | WEDNESDAY | 12 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 38.0°C
Min: 18°C
RH: 41%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 38/18 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava; Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Padyami
till 3.05 am (Thursday)
Star: Kritika till 2.39 am (Thursday)
Variyam: 1.05 pm to 2.53 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.47 am to 12.38 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 29, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 06.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 06.33 PM
MOONSET 7.05 PM
MOONRISE 6.57 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR: 6.49 (Today)
SEHRI: 4.34 (Tomorrow)

COUNTER POINT



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

SHORT TAKES

Petrol, diesel price hiked for 6th time

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

Random aviation breath analyser

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

Docs warn over cowdung therapy

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

ED files case on Anil Deshmukh

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



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Germany bans data sharing by Facebook

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



SPORTS | 8

Osaka raises doubts over Olympics

TABLOID

Golden Globes 2022 dropped over diversity



Vol. 22 No. 261 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Patience tested



A relative carries a woman to the Government General Hospital in Anantapur on Tuesday for treatment. At least six patients had reportedly died at the out-patient ward of the hospital.

— DC

CM writes to PM for hike in oxygen supply to 910MT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention to increase the liquid medical oxygen (LMO) allocation to 910 tonnes and also allocate 20 LMO tankers to AP.

He stated that this would help AP ensure oxygen supply to all hospitals to meet the needs of patients for oxygen.

The Chief Minister wrote, "Let me express my sincere thanks to the Government of India for the support given to the State of Andhra Pradesh in the management of COVID-19. We have geared up to take up this challenge under the guidance of the Union Government. The allocation of Medical Oxygen to Andhra Pradesh as on 24th April

was 480 MT. On 24th April the caseload of the State was 81,471 active cases. On 8th May a revised allocation was made to Andhra Pradesh at 590 MT, however on this day our active case load was 1,87,392. Hence, the revised allocation is not at all commensurate with the increasing active cases."

Mentioning difficulties being faced by AP to get oxygen from Odisha state, the Chief Minister stated, "Out of this allocation, 210 MT is allotted from Odisha which is around 1,400 km from Rayalaseema region. Getting LMO from 1400 km is leading to delays as availability of LMO tankers for transporting the Oxygen is also a constraint. The four Rayalaseema Districts and SPS Nellore district are continuously drawing Liquid Oxygen from Bellary (Karnataka) and

Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and hospitals have binding contractual agreements with the suppliers from these locations."

Jagan Mohan Reddy explained that the Andhra Pradesh state government was at present drawing 35 MT from St. Gobain, Chennai, and 25 MT from INOX, Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu.

"This has to be maintained, otherwise our hospitals will face severe crises. On 10th May supplies from Chennai and Karnataka were delayed and led to the unfortunate incident of 11 persons dying due to lack of Oxygen in Tirupati. Further allocation from JSW, Bellary (Karnataka), has to be increased from 20 MT to 150 MT as this plant has enhanced its capacity recently."

■ Page 2: CM: Need more oxygen from Odisha



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, on Tuesday.

— AP

28 killed as Israel strikes Gaza city

Jerusalem, May 11 : Israel and the Hamas in Gaza exchanged heavy fire on Tuesday, killing at least 26 Palestinians and two Israelis, in an escalation sparked by violent unrest at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Nine children were among those killed in the blockaded Gaza Strip that is controlled by Hamas and 125 people there were wounded, local health authorities said.

Two Israeli women were killed by rockets in the heavily-targeted coastal city of Ashkelon, just north of Gaza, said the emergency service Magen David Adom.

The local Barzilai medical center said it was treating 70 injured. Hamas's armed wing Qassem Brigades had vowed to turn the town

"to hell" and rained down an intense volley, claiming to have fired 137 rockets towards Ashkelon and nearby Ashdod within just five minutes.

Loud booms again rocked the town on Tuesday, where a rocket had ripped a gaping hole into the side of an apartment block.

More than 300 rockets have been fired by Palestinian militants towards Israel since Monday, with over 90 per cent intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defence system, army spokesman Jonathan Conricus said earlier.

Israel fighter jets and attack helicopters carried out more than 130 strikes on military targets in the enclave, said Conricus.

They have killed 15 Hamas commanders, he added.

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

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

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

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

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

scarcity of oxygen supply in the state.

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

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

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

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

Rane said a three-member team of nodal officers set up by the state government to oversee Covid-19 treatment at GMCH should give its inputs about the issues to the CM. Earlier in the day, the CM donning a PPE kit visited Covid-19 wards in the GMCH where he met patients and their relatives. —PTI

DRUG | FACTORY

Similar incident last year in Chandrapadia killed 13 killed, 4 hurt in gas leak

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 11

Three persons died and 4 others took seriously ill following leakage of gas at Venkata Narayana Active Ingredients Private Limited, formerly Nutra Specialities Private Limited, at Chandrapadia village in Vinjamur mandal in the district in the early hours of Tuesday.

The deceased were employees at the unit and they were identified as Pathipati Tirupathaiah, 61, a junior technician hailing from Yerraballipalem in

● NUTRA SPECIALITIES which was started in 2006 was subsequently renamed Venkata Narayana Active Ingredients.

● THE COMPANY is at present making 19 varieties of drugs and employs over 350 workers.

Vinjamuru mandal, Velugoti Thirupathaiah, 64, a casual labour from Chouta Bhimavaram in AS Peta mandal, and Bellamkonda Srinu, 28, a senior executive belonging

to Vinjamur.

The injured are also employed at the factory and they have been identified as S.K. Sharifuddin, 43, M. Nagarjuna Reddy, 38, and Ulsa Sravan, 32, all senior staff. Another injured M. Balakrishna is working at the office. All of them are being treated at private hospitals in Nellore and Atmakur.

Incidentally, one person was killed and four others injured critically when a blast took place at the same plant in July last year.

After the blast in July

BJP asks Cong. to cut Covid criticism

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

■ Page 8: Nadda defends huge poll rallies

CRITICAL PATIENTS STILL STOPPED AT AP, TS BORDER

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, MAY 11

Ambulances taking critically ill patients from AP to Telangana were stopped at Pullur toll plaza for the second day. Following instructions from the TS government, police and medical officials were holding checks for 48 hours and registering particulars of the patients on the way to Hyderabad from AP.

■ Page 2: Only ambulance with permission allowed

■ Page 3: Human error may have caused leakage

IN BRIEF

NURSES BODY SEEKS ₹50L INSURANCE COVER, INCENTIVES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

The Andhra Pradesh Nurses Association has demanded protection to the lives of nurses in these tough times of Coronavirus and sought a provision of ₹50 lakh insurance facility to frontline Corona warriors i.e., nurses.

APGNA state president G. Manjula Devi said that Florence Nightingale was called “The Lady With The Lamp” for her immense services and sacrifices during Crimean War. She said every nurse was serving patients, taking Florence Nightingale as their role model. She stated that despite facing a lot of difficulties, nurses were rendering best services to save the lives of Covid-19 patients, by braving the high risk to their lives from infections.

Manjula Devi said the APGNA was demanding ₹50 lakh insurance facility to nurses rendering services to Covid patients, Covid nursing care incentives, sanctioning of Covid quarantine leaves, implementation of old pension scheme and regularisation of contract and outsourcing nurses. The APGNA leaders and nurses would remember Florence Nightingale on her 201st birth anniversary which was celebrated as International Nurses Day on Wednesday in all the 13 districts of the state.

POLICE ARRESTS EXPLOSIVES DEALER FROM PULIVENDULA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MAY 11

Yeduguri Sandinti Pratapa Reddy, an explosives dealer from Pulivendula, was arrested by the police in connection with the blast at Mamillapalli baryte quarry situated in Kalasapadu mandal in the district on Tuesday evening. He has been dealing in explosives for a long time.

DSP N. Sudhakar, who is investigating the case, took Pratapa Reddy into custody at Porumamilla police circle office on Tuesday evening.

Pratapa Reddy owns two explosives storage magazines in Pulivendula as well as transport vehicles. An agreement was reached with Yerragudi Raghunatha Reddy from Pulivendula for storing explosives in these two magazines. However, gelatin sticks and detonators were being illegally sold by Raghunath Reddy to unlicensed people for high profits. On May 8, he violated the Explosives Rules and sold a large quantity of explosives to Lakshmi Reddy, the quarry manager. Lakshmi Reddy was getting the explosives unloaded at the baryte quarry when a huge explosion took place, killing 10 workers and injuring many.

The police probe revealed that the accident took place due to the negligence of Pratapa Reddy, who sold explosives to those who had no licence. The Kalasapadu police registered a case under Cr. No. 58/2021 U / Sec 304 (ii) IPC and Sec 3, 5, and 6 of the Explosives Substances Act. On the directives of Kadapa Superintendent of Police Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan, the investigating officer, SC & ST Cell DSP N. Sudhakar arrested Pratapa Reddy. Pratapa Reddy is the paternal uncle of Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy. Meanwhile, mine operators Chilekampally Nageswara Reddy and Erragudi Raghunatha Reddy, were produced in the Badvel court and were remanded in 14-day custody.

ONLY AMBULANCE WITH PERMISSION ALLOWED

From Page 1

The police are checking every ambulance and allowing only those vehicles carrying hospital letters or permissions, said an attendant of a patient belonging to the Nandyal area.

If the checking is delayed for 20 to 30 minutes, serious patients would lose precious time in reaching hospitals, he expressed concern. However, the Sub-inspector of Alampur police station, Madhusudhan Reddy, said that they were not delaying ambulances and were seeking patients' details. There is a free flow of such vehicles between AP and TS, he said, adding that around 30 vehicles were checked on Tuesday.

German Hangars to serve Corona patients, says CM

CM announces ex gratia to kin of 11 dead at Ruia; officials told to monitor O2 supplies

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced ₹10 lakh as ex gratia to the kin of the deceased in the unfortunate incident at the Tirupati Ruia hospital, where 11 Corona patients have died due to the absence of oxygen.

The Chief Minister said he was deeply saddened by the deaths.

He held a review meeting with district collectors and SPs on tackling the Corona situation and directed them to be more vigilant and ensure such unfortunate incidents do not recur. “Initiate measures immediately for the smooth supply of oxygen and for availability of beds to Corona patients,” he told them.

The CM advised district collectors to oversee the functioning of the 104 call centres and ensure their effective functioning. “The number should be registered in the minds of the people as a one-stop solution for all issues related to Covid-19. Every day, some 16,000 to 17,000 calls are being received at the 104 call centre.”

Jagan Mohan Reddy said collectors have identified a total of 648 hospitals that were empaneled in the state list for Covid treatment with a total bed capacity of 47,947. Of these, 41,315 beds are occupied, he said, and added that treatment in these hospitals is completely free and medicines should also be given for free. He asked officials to arrange temporary German hangars on the hospital premises to help the people in waiting mode.

The CM said officials must focus attention on supply of oxygen concentrators at all Covid Care Centres. “Monitor oxygen pipelines in hospitals and hire technical staff, ensure that the oxygen flow is at correct pressure,” he said. He also asked officials to consider setting up pressure boosters in the ICU. Three officials were given the responsibility of fetching oxygen from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Odisha.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said, “We have to take the responsibility for things that are not in our hands. The oxygen tanker from Tamil Nadu did not arrive on time and 11 people died at the Ruia hospital. Instead, they sent six tankers in Indian Air Force aircraft to Odisha for refilling. We have airlifted oxygen to save transport time. We are in a situation where we have to live with Covid.”

During the Spandana video conference, the CM discussed with district collectors and SPs on the Covid situation. He said there arose a situation wherein everyone will have to live with Covid, and there would be tragic incidents. “To save transit time, six tankers were airlifted to Odisha and the government is also purchasing oxygen from abroad to overcome the shortage.”

The CM said the Opposition parties are spreading false stories for political reasons. The shortage of vaccines in Andhra Pradesh was nothing new and other states too were facing the same problem.

“Everyone knows the country has the capacity to produce only seven crore doses of vaccine per month. But the Opp-



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy being presented a cheque for ₹10 crore for the CM Relief Fund by minister for mines and panchayat raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy on Tuesday. Principal secretary (panchayat raj) Gopala Krishna Divedi and APMDC vice-chairman and MD V.G. Venkat Reddy are also seen. APMDC has contributed a total of ₹100 crore to the CMRF towards Covid-19 containment measures. District Mineral Fund contributed ₹90 crore and APMDC ₹10 crore.

CM unveils welfare calendar, tells officers to expedite works

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday discussed with district collectors and SPs a wide range of issues during the Spandana video conference.

He announced the schemes to be implemented in May, viz., Rythu Bharosa, would be implemented on May 13, benefitting 52.5 lakh farmers. An amount of ₹7,500 would be credited in the accounts of farmers for Kharif crop investment. The crop insurance for Kharif 2020 would be credited on May 25, benefitting 38 lakh farmers. Matyakara Bharosa would be implemented on May 18.

Regarding MGNREGS works, the Chief Minister said 20 crore work days were allotted to Andhra Pradesh and a target was set to complete 16 crore work days by the end of next month. To achieve the target, every district must complete one crore work days, he said and added that only 4.57 crore work days were completed till now and directed the officials to complete one crore work days by the end of June.

Speaking of YSR Urban Clinics, the CM said there were a total of 560 urban clinics in the state, of which 205 buildings were being revamped and 355 new buildings would be constructed. In respect of the construction of village secretariats, He said that although a target was set to build all of them by the end of next month, work were completed on only a few buildings and the Collectors should expedite them. He also noted that the construction of many buildings of 8,585 village health clinics was pending. Of the total 10,408 RBK buildings under construction, only about half were set to be completed, he said and added that the Collectors should pay special attention to them.

The Chief Minister said Anganwadi centers were being converted into YSR Pre Primary Schools

osition leaders are making a hue and cry as they are not ruling the state.

Of the seven crore doses, almost six crore doses are being produced by Covishield while Bharat Biotech is producing one crore doses of Covaxin.

There are 1.48 crore people in the state who are over 45 years old. There are the health workers

From Page 1

“This shall ensure that IPRs/Patents etc., if any, are not a hindrance. Anyone who can manufacture or is interested to manufacture the vaccine should be encouraged to do so in the larger public interest. Entire manufacturing capacity should be mobilized and put to use in these testing times.

“I, therefore, request your consideration and intervention and if implemented will go a long way in encouraging the manufacturers and accelerate the supply of vaccines to be made available to the population at large. I look forward to your favorable orders on this matter,” pleaded thus the CM with the PM.

Centre may not allow other vax

From Page 1

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

In the meantime, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to allow manufacture of Covaxin by all

those companies capable of producing vaccines, along with Bharat Biotech. At present, the Centre has allowed only Bharat Biotech to produce the vaccine though it was developed with the assistance of the Indian Council for Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

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

under Nadu-Nedu programme and land was still to be identified at 1,230 locations in urban areas and at 404 locations in rural areas. He said the state government was constructing 8,634 new buildings and revamping 3,341 existing building in the first phase of Nadu-Nedu in Anganwadi centres. He said there were still 3,928 unfinished Anganwadi centers to be completed and directed

the Collectors to sanction technical and administrative approvals and ensure their completion soon.

About the issue of house plots in 90 days, the CM said distribution of pattas (agreement letters) of 4,220 TIDCO houses was still pending and there were also 17,000 new beneficiaries (in case of deaths, migrations, unwillingness to take up houses, ineligible) need to be identified.

COLLECTORS, J-Cs TOLD TO FOCUS FULLY ON COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has claimed that better medical services are being provided in AP compared to other states, though we are not having “very big cities” with strings of super speciality hospitals.

Even the death rate in AP is much low compared to most states.

He said the state has spent over ₹87,000 crore in the last 22 months by crediting amounts directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries of welfare schemes without any corruption or discrimination. “Would such a government be reluctant to give vaccines by spending ₹1,600 crore if it is available,” he asked.

The CM said the joint collectors (village/ward secretariats, development) should completely focus their attention on tackling the Covid situation in districts. The JCs should ensure good sanitation facilities, quality food supply, availability of doctors and paramedical staff, setting up of help desks etc. They should monitor the performance of Arogya Mitras through CCTV cameras. They should coordinate with call centres and ensure all works are done on time,” he said.

The CM instructed district collectors to take more responsibilities and set up oxygen war rooms in districts along with SOS service. Immediate action should be taken when an emergency message arrives.

He said 50 per cent of the beds should be allocated to Aarogya Sri patients in temporary empaneled hospitals and also at non-empaneled hospitals notified by district authorities. Officials should monitor whether the medicines are being received regularly and if Remdesivir Injections available and see that there are no lapses or shortage.

CM: NEED MORE OXYGEN FROM ODISHA

From page 1

Stressing the need for oxygen supply augmentation from Odisha, the CM said, “Further allocation from Odisha suppliers also need to be enhanced substantially from current 210 MT to at least 400 MT. In addition, 20 LMO Tankers may also be allotted to the state to transport this extra allocation from Odisha using the oxygen express methodology duly tying up with the Indian Railways.”

The CM, appealing to the PM, said, “I request your intervention to increase the Liquid Medical Oxygen allocation to 910 MT and also allocate 20 LMO Tankers, so as to ensure that the oxygen supplies are ensured for all hospitals to take care of current patient load requiring Oxygen. Looking forward to your favourable orders in this regard to enable the State Government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic effectively.”

Navy dockyard team inspects O2 distribution system at Ruia hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 11

In backdrop of 11 Covid deaths following shortage of oxygen at SVR Ruia Government General Hospital in Tirupati on Monday night, a team of experts from Naval Dockyard, Visakapatnam, inspected the oxygen tank and distribution lines at the hospital.

A team led by Dr Bhansodi questioned hospital authorities on Tuesday morning in great detail. Sources said the team will submit its report to union government.

Senior officials at Ruia said the situation is now normal. They conceded that oxygen pressure had fallen for a short while in ICU equipped with 170 beds, leading to 11 deaths. However, the situation was quickly brought back to normal and any further casualties were avoided. An oxygen tanker that

● **SENIOR OFFICIALS** at Ruia said the situation is now normal.

● **THEY CONCEDED** that oxygen pressure had fallen for a short while in ICU equipped with 170 beds, leading to 11 deaths.

reached on Monday night had replenished the hospital's 10 kilolitre storage tank. In addition, another oxygen tanker reached the hospital on Tuesday morning from Sriperambadur in Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, hospital authorities have handed over bodies of patients who died on Monday night to their relatives on Tuesday.

District administration has, as a precautionary measure, started monitoring oxygen levels and supply in State Covid Hospitals attached to SVIMS-Sri Padmavati Medical College.

TD panel to probe cause of deaths at Ruia

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

The Opposition Telugu Desam has constituted a fact-finding committee with seven members to probe the tragic deaths of many Covid patients due to lack of proper oxygen supply at SVR Ruia Hospital in Tirupati.

TD leaders have alleged that AP government is not taking sufficient measures to save lives of people. The unfolding of human tragedy at Ruia is an example, they maintain.

TD AP president K. Atchannaidu said the government has abdicated its responsibility at a very critical time when Coronavirus second wave has shaken up lakhs of people all over the state. He charged that no proper treatment is being provided to infected patients.

Atchannaidu said the fact-

finding committee, constituted on orders of TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, will comprise Tirupati parliamentary constituency party president G. Narasimha Yadav, former minister N. Amarnath Reddy, party national general secretary Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy, former MLA M. Sugunamma, Chittoor parliamentary constituency party president Pulivarthy Nani, Bathala Chenga-layudu and Mabbu Devanarayana Reddy.

The TD state president said already, many Covid patients have died due to lack of oxygen at different hospitals in all parts of AP. He accused the government of not revealing actual details of deaths, including at the Ruia hospital. He said TD's fact-finding committee will go into all these aspects to find the factual reasons behind the human tragedy.

YSRC GOVT INEFFICIENCY HAS LED TO TRAGEDY AT RUIA HOSPITAL: LOKESH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Telugu Desam national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Tuesday held the YSR Congress government responsible for the deaths of Coronavirus patients at SVR Ruia Government Hospital in Tirupati because of lack of timely supply of oxygen.

He demanded that the government conceded the demand of protesters and relatives to reveal the real causes behind the tragedy. He claimed that over 76 Covid patients died so far due to oxygen shortage all over Andhra Pradesh.

He recalled that prior to the Ruia tragedy, many such incidents took place in different parts of the State, but, the government continued its slumber without making necessary arrangements.

Decrying the incident, Lokesh said: “Those patients did die due to natural causes. It was the government that killed them. Not 11 patients but over 30 of them died. The relatives and protesters are saying this with anguish in their hearts.

The TD leader accused the

● **DECRYING THE incident**, Lokesh said: “Those patients did die due to natural causes. It was the government that killed them. Not 11 patients but over 30 of them died. The relatives and protesters are saying this with anguish in their hearts.

Jagan Mohan Reddy regime of coming out with all sorts of lies to escape from its responsibility for the ghastly tragedy. He claimed that it was a big lie that the oxygen supply was disrupted only for five minutes.

He further claimed that another and even bigger lie was that only 11 patients died due to disruption in oxygen supply. He alleged that the government was trying to suppress the truth but it was failing to do so.

The MLC demanded that the government at least rise to the occasion now and provide necessary medical facilities for Covid patients at hospitals. He also demanded suitable compensation to kin of all those who lost lives due to the negligence and complacency of the YSRC regime. He described them as “the government murders.”

Involve Oppn in Covid fight: Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday slammed the YSR Congress government for ‘causing’ Andhra Pradesh to figure at the 28th place in the country in Covid vaccination by not having prior planning or proper strategy. He said that while all other states were competing with one another to administer vaccines to all their people, the AP CM was com-

peting with himself to file false cases and make illegal arrests of the opposition leaders. He lamented that the YSRC leaders were still blind to the fact that total vaccination was the only solution in the protracted battle against the dreaded virus.

Addressing a meeting of party senior leaders and mandal-level presidents, Naidu said that any government would have extensive powers and abundant resources to extend help to allevi-

ate the sufferings of the people in times of calamities, but Jagan Mohan Reddy was not in a position to listen to the advice of the opposition.

He deplored that the CM's adamant mindset, absence of awareness and incapacity for planning were hanging like a sword of Damocles over the heads of AP people. Naidu stressed the need for the ruling party to take along the opposition leaders with it to efficiently fight this battle with the virus.

SHORT TAKES

BENGALURU
SPECIAL
TRAINDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 11

The Railways has decided to continue the running of 02516/02515 Agartala-Bengaluru-Agartala Special Express train from May 15, said a release on Tuesday.

The train No. 02516 Agartala-Bengaluru Cant. will leave Agartala every Saturday and Tuesday at 5.35 am from May 15 to June 15, will reach Visakhapatnam on the third day of its journey at 1.45 am and depart at 2.05 am and will reach Bengaluru Cant. at 8.15 pm on the third day.

In the return direction, the train No. 02515 Bengaluru Cant-Agartala special will leave Bengaluru Cant every Tuesday and Friday at 10.15 am from May 18 to June 18, which will reach Visakhapatnam on the next day at 4.20 am and depart at 4.40 am and reach Agartala at 3.00 am, on the third day.

THUNDERSTORMS
LASH NORTH
ANDHRADC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 11

Thunderstorm, accompanied by winds and lightning, lashed many north coastal Andhra on Tuesday evening. The storm was more severe in Agency areas of the region. An IMD report said that the storm was due to mainly low level Southerlies and South-Easterlies that prevailed over the state.

The report added that thunderstorms would continue to lash north coastal Andhra, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema region till May 15.

Meanwhile, horticulture department sources said that the thunderstorm partially damaged the mango orchards in north coastal Andhra where the farmers were in the process of harvesting the crop. Mango is grown to an extent of 1.5 lakh hectares in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam. In addition to meeting the demand in the local markets, Vizianagaram district exports mangoes to New Delhi. Recently, three mango express trains were sent to New Delhi.

CPM DEMANDS
TAKEOVER OF
BURIAL GROUNDSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 11

The Rajamahendravaram unit of Communist Party of India (Marxist) demanded that Municipal Commissioner Abhishikh Kishore bring all the burial grounds in the city under his control until the Covid-19 pandemic wave decreased. Rajamahendravaram District CPM secretary T. Arun said that Covid deaths were increasing for the past one month and the burial ground organisers were collecting heavy charges from the relatives of the dead.

Meanwhile, ambulance charges also shot up. He said that the Mumbai Municipal Corporation already took over all the burial grounds in Mumbai and the RMC too should take control of burial grounds and fix reasonable rates for its use. He suggested that a committee be formed with representatives from all political parties to probe allegations against Rotary Kailasa Bhoomi.

● Ambulance charges also shot up. He said that the Mumbai Municipal Corporation already took over all the burial grounds in Mumbai.

Shelters for children if
parents are Covid-hit

31 centres to care for kids if both parents hospitalised

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 11

The women and child welfare department has identified 31 centres in the state for looking after the children whose parents are in quarantine centres.

As the Covid-19 virus is fast spreading, many people are having to go to Covid Care Centres or hospitals, leaving behind their children. In these Covid times, few relatives or neighbours are coming forward to look after them for a period of two weeks or more. Coming to know of the children's plight, the state government is setting up child care centres for the children of Covid-stricken patients. The centre, if necessary, will also provide any treatment.

After the parents recover and are discharged from hospitals or care centres, the children are handed over to them. Should both parents succumb to the deadly virus, the government would take a call on entrusting their care to anyone or keep them under the shelter of child care centres.

Women and child welfare department project director G.V. Satyavani said that since the Covid-19 second wave started, they took an initiative for taking care of the children and she appealed to people to make use of the facility to keep their children there if they need to move to care centres or get admitted in hospitals. They can avail of the centre's services by calling up toll-free numbers '181' or '1098.' Separate children homes for boys and girls were being provided, added the official.

Despite assertions by the officials, some centres are

LIST OF SHELTERS

SRIKAKULAM

DISTRICT: 1) Santakalyana Anuraganilayam for boys and girls separately in Srikakulam (Contact Number: s 9959688876 and 6302044307)

VIZAINAGARAM

DISTRICT: Bright Future-Rainbow Children Home for Boys, Vizainagaram town (9849195178) 2) Sun Rise Children Home in Karada village of Bobbili Mandal in Vizianagaram District (8008750246)

VISAKHAPATNAM

DISTRICT: 1) SOS Children village of India, Children Home for Girls in Nerellavalasa in Bheemunipatnam (9963400600) 2) Arunodaya-2 Children Home for Boys, Port Colony, Nagarapalem Road in Madhurawada (9963400600)

EAST GODAVARI

DISTRICT: Bala Sadanam, opposite SKVT Women's College Rajamahendravaram 2) Ekalavya Children Home for Boys, near Railway Station in Rajamahendravaram (7675980142)

WEST GODAVARI

DISTRICT: Bethesta Children Home (Boys and Girls) at Rustumbada in Narasapuram (8008176716) 2) 3F Swabhimani Children Home for Boys in

Recherla Vilalge in Pentapadu mandal near Tadepalligudem (9951824777) 3) Mother Theresa Shelter Home for Boys in Kovvuru (9440886992)

KRISHNA DISTRICT:

Heal Paradise Children Home for Boys and Girls at Thotapalli (9100024438), 2) Beeraka Children Home for Boys and Girls at Machilipatnam (9290935000) 3) Mango Children Home for Boys, Autonagar, Vijawayada (7893853344).

GUNTURU DISTRICT:

CARDS, for Girls in Phirangipuram (6305540634) 2) Venkateswara Mahila Mandali Open Shelter for Boys, Gunturu (9700763638) 3) Chiguru, for Boys and Girls in Venkatayapalem in Tadepalli (8985618195) 4) Swamy Vivekananda Students Home for Boys in Macharla (9440006813)

PRAKASAM

DISTRICT: Premananda Orphanage Centre for Boys in K.Pallepalem of Kaothapatnam in Ongole (08592-245473 and 9441379221) 2) Forever Found India Children Home for Girls, Pothurajukatta, Balajinagar near Agharaham Gate, Ongole

NELLORE DISTRICT:

not able to admit such children. The organiser of Mission of Grace for Girls at Prakashnagar in Rajamahendravaram, Anand, said that their institute was not able to provide shelter to the children as some of their staff had become sick and there

was no support facility to them. When contacted, Satyavani said that alternative arrangements would be made in the place of the institute.

S. Siva Ramakrishna, the superintendent of Bethesta Children's Home in Rustumbada in

Merla Rafols Home for Boys and also Girls, Leprosy Colony in Amancherla, Nellore (8688393054)

CHITTOOR DISTRICT:

1) Navajeevan Blind poor Home for Girls in Tiruchanuru (990537528) 2) Matrusya Children Home for Boys, Bairagipatteda (9700440415) 3) SOS, Erpedu for Boys and Girls (9346555420) 4) Mary Children Home for Boys, Tenabanda in Chittoor district (9440931218)

KADAPA DISTRICT:

Regional Children Home for Gils at Akkaipalli (contact number 8919013094) 2) Ma Amma Odi Children Home for Boys, near Central Prison, Chinnachowk in Kadapa District (8897923294)

KURNOOL DISTRICT:

1) Keerthana Anadhasaranayalam for Boys and Government Children Home for Girls, Santhoshnagar, Kurnool (9014752637) 2) Government Children Home for Girls, Pedapadu, Kurnool (9000385900)

ANANTAPUR

DISTRICT: RDT Children Home for Boys and Girls in Bukkarayasamudram, Anantapuram District (9912992154 for boys, 9652497193 for girls).

Narasapuram mandal in West Godavari District, and Ekalavya Children Home director Vighnesh said that their homes have all facilities to provide shelter to the children till their parents recover and come back to take them home.

STORIES OF HOPE

Throwing a lifeline to
critical Covid patientsDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 11

The Rural Development Trust (RDT) has spent approximately ₹39.50 crore towards Covid-related activities between April 2020 and April 2021. It enabled around 7,000 Covid-19 patients to get treatment during the first wave.

A clarion call to the public by the RDT director Vishala Ferrer to support their 'Spandhinchu - Oxygen Andinchu,' saw donations worth about ₹1.07 crore pouring in from political, traders, police and common people in just two weeks.

The RDT has been engaged for five decades in poverty alleviation and social uplift of the people in Anantapur district and a few other parts of Rayalaseema region. It runs three hospitals at Bathalapalli, Kalyanadurgam and Kanekal mandal headquarters. Father Vincent Ferrer, a Spanish, started the non-governmental organisation which has been sup-

● An NGO, RDT, comes forward, spends ₹39.5 crore against Covid

porting development activities including healthcare services in the district. It has set up Rural Sports Village at Anantapur with world-class facilities for cricket, Judo, football, tennis, hockey and other sports and games.

The 290-bed Bathalapalli RDT hospital, close Anantapur, was declared as Covid hospital last year. Its director Manchu Ferrer told *DC* that the hospital was efficiently providing all services for Covid patients and that Kalyanadurgam hospital also would soon be turned into a full Covid hospital.

In the wake of Covid patients suffering from respiratory-related problems and the situation turning serious in the second wave, the Bathalapalli hospital is focussing all its resources on providing oxygen. "We have set up an oxygen generator worth ₹73.7 lakh on the

hospital premises and spent ₹51.92 lakh towards purchasing 200 oxygen cylinders. An average of ₹20 lakh needs to be spent on supply of oxygen to meet needs of patients," said Manchu Ferrer. Further, ₹36.65 lakh is being spent monthly on quality diet for patients.

In addition, about ₹60 lakh was spent for procurement of hand gloves, PPE kits and masks as part of protective measures for staff in the hospital.

Meanwhile, the 'Spandhinchu - Oxygen Andinchu' programme is receiving a good response from the public. The district police contributed ₹10.16 lakh. Industrialists, organisations and even self-help groups are coming forward to support it.

Around ₹1,500 is needed to refill three oxygen cylinders, ₹3,000 to provide safety gear for medical staff, ₹7,000 contribution to buy oxygen cylinders, RDT director Vishala Ferrer said and expressed gratitude to the people for backing their campaign.

Rush for vaccination



People in large numbers turned up to get vaccinated at Bheemnagar Health Centre at Allipuram in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Rlys sets up care centre
to ease burden on GGHDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 11

For the first time in the state, a Covid Step Down Centre was started in Guntur by the railway department on Tuesday, in coordination with Guntur district administration to aid the Corona patients.

Guntur divisional railway manager (DRM) Mohan Raja, along with Guntur district collector Vivek Yadav, inaugurated the Covid Step Down Centre and Covid Care Centre with oxygen facility which would work round-the-clock.

Yadav said on the occasion that out of 70 beds, 16 were equipped with oxygen pipeline supply and 9 beds were connected to oxygen concentrators. He informed that 40 per cent of the beds would be reserved for serving/retired railway employees and their family members. He noted this was the first-of-its-kind Covid centre which would function as a step down facility for the Government General Hospital (GGH), Guntur. He said patients with mild conditions would be admitted at the centre and those in serious condition would be sent to the GGH.

The DRM said that the patients showing improvement at GGH

Navy sets up care
centre at BheemiliDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 11

As part of the Indian Navy's efforts to assist the general population in dealing with the devastating second wave of Covid-19, a 60-bed Covid Care Centre has been set up at INS Kalinga, Bheemunipatnam. The Centre was opened by tourism minister and local MLA Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao on Tuesday.

The Commanding Officer INS Kalinga, who was also present on the occasion, stated that the Covid Care Centre has adequate facilities to provide treatment to Covid-19 positive patients with moderate symptoms from

Bheemili mandal and adjoining areas. Administrative, logistic support food conservancy services and medical equipment is being provided by the Indian Navy. The Covid Centre will be manned by three doctors and 10 nursing staff provided by the Community Health Centre.

Towards the maintenance and the running of the Covid Care Centre, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the Commanding Officer INS Kalinga and the Superintendent of the Community Health Centre Bheemili in the presence of the tourism minister and the DMHO Dr G. Suryanarayana.

would be taken to the centre established at Rail Mahal so that the GGH beds could be freed. Similarly, if the condition of any patients at Rail Mahal deteriorated, they would be shifted to GGH.

Guntur West MLA Maddali Giridhar said the state government under the leadership of Chief

Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was offering all types of medical services to help people cope with Coronavirus, thus saving lives of people. He stated that the Covid Step Down Centre and Covid Care Centre would be of great serve to the railway personnel, retirees and their families.

Fire mishap at SBI
branch in KurnoolDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MAY 11

In a fire mishap that broke out at an SBI branch in the old town area, Materials worth ₹10 lakh including furniture, air conditioners, printing machinery reduced to ashes. However, the arrival of fire services to the spot controlled the fire flames before spreading into a strong room that is the cash and gold storage room in the bank. An electrical short circuit may be the cause of the incident, district fire officer Sreenivasa Reddy said.

On getting information from locals, the Kurnool fire state unit led by its officer Prabhakar with three fire tenders to the bank and saved the cash chest of the bank. He further said that the Kurnool unit minimised loss to the bank as well as surrounding property with timely reaction. The district fire officer however said that the said bank has not got any NOC and even there are no fire safety measures and equipment in the branch. They will send notices to the bank officials in this issue, he added.

COVID CARE

Daily +ve case load is one of the lowest in district

Maharaja hosp hikes O2 capacity

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIZIANAGARAM, MAY 11

The Maharaja district headquarters hospital in Vizianagaram increased its oxygen storage capacity from the present 2kl to 10kl keeping in view the increase in the demand for oxygen beds and avoiding oxygen shortage incidents that were being reported from various hospitals in the state.

Resident medical officer of the hospital Dr B. Gowri Shanker said the 2kl capacity storage facility, set up last year, was

● Resident medical officer of the hospital Dr B. Gowri Shanker said the 2kl capacity storage facility, set up last year, was

● Now the increased capacity will last three days giving enough time for refilling. The oxygen is sourced from Visakhapatnam and Pydibhivaram in Srikakulam district.

lasting only 12 hours making the personnel refill the oxygen frequently.

Now the increased capacity will last three days giving enough time for refilling. The oxygen is sourced from

Visakhapatnam and Pydibhivaram in Srikakulam district.

The hospital has 300-bed capacity of which 70 are oxygen beds and 115 ICU. In addition, many beds were fitted in temporary

facilities.

The hospital admits around 60 patients every day and of them 40 are discharged on an average, the RMO said and added that even non-Covid patients were being treated that include deliveries.

The district has 28 Covid-19 designated hospitals having a total of 2,598 beds and of them 193 are Covid-19 beds.

The daily positive case load is one of the lowest in the state with 768 reported positive on Tuesday. The district has around 59,654 active cases.

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SHORT TAKES

CIVIC WORKER
SEIZES MOTHER'S
VEGETABLE CART

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

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

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

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

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

UDDHAV URGES
RESERVATION
FOR MARATHAS

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ED lodges money laundering
case against Anil Deshmukh

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The ED will soon con-

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

NCP spokesman Nawab Malik said.

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

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

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

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

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

BJP CHIEF
DEFENDS HUGE
POLL RALLIES

From page 1

Mr Nadda also accused Congress leaders, including a chief minister, of trying to actively create vaccine hesitancy during the "once-in-a-century" pandemic.

Mr Nadda accused the Congress of "misleading people, creating false panic and even contradicting their stands just based on political considerations".

Hitting back over the criticism of his party for holding huge poll rallies in April even as Covid-19 cases surged across the nation and also over the construction of the Central Vista project, Mr Nadda said the Congress leaders too held massive election rallies in Kerala, causing a spike in the Covid cases and were now "grandstanding" about poll rallies elsewhere.

Responding to the CWC's charge of the Modi government abdicating its responsibilities on vaccinations, Mr Nadda alleged there seemed to be a "communication gap between the Congress Party and the states it shared power" as in April, the Congress top brass were seeking decentralisation of vaccinations.

"Even when the second wave was on the rise, your party's leaders were happier being seen at super-spreader political events in North India where there was no regard for masks or social distancing. This is not the era when such information can be erased from public memory," wrote Mr Nadda.

The BJP leader said the Centre had so far distributed 16 crore vaccines to the states and 50 per cent of them were being provided even now free of cost, and asked Mrs Gandhi if the states where her party was in power would also give free jabs to people as those ruled by the BJP and its allies have done. He also said the poor had been provided with food and DBT (direct benefit transfer) distribution.

Rain struggles



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

— PTI

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

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

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

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

The court rejected a plea by an NGO, Citizens for Green Doon, which is opposing the widening of the highway on environ-

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

mental grounds, for a three-week adjournment, saying it will decide the matter after hearing all the sides.

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

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

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

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

The matter relates to the Char Dham project to improve access to four

Hindu pilgrim sites in Uttarakhand, but NGOs, including Citizens for Green Doon, are up in arms over the possible landslides and floods as cutting the mountains for the highway may cause devastation and heavy loss of lives.

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

X-CATEGORY
SECURITY GIVEN
TO 77 BJP MLAS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

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

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



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

New Assam
Cabinet reviews
Covid situation

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, MAY 11

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

Informing that the cabinet discussed the Covid situation at length, Industry and transport minister Chandra Mohan Patowary told reporters that the chief minister has also formed another high-power committee headed by the minister Ashok Singhal to prepare the plan for waving the loan taken by women from microfinance companies.

Pointing out that the cabinet has also resolved to ensure strict enforcement of restrictions to bring down the positivity rate, newly appointed health minister Keshab Mahanta ruled out the ongoing rumour of complete lockdown.

"Assam Chief Secretary and Director general of Police will be announcing the Covid Action Plan that the cabinet has approved, in a press conference on Wednesday. We are going to enforce the restrictions to contain the Covid situation from Thursday," said Mr Mahanta after the first cabinet meeting.

He said that the government was also planning to announce an economic package that could be

announced in case further strict steps would be required to take to contain the spread of Covid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 BJP MLA-elects
to remain MPs

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

STRUGGLE | IS REAL

3 LeT militants
killed in encounter

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Petrol in several districts of Madhya Pradesh,

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

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

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

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

After raising petrol price

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

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

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

UZBEKISTAN JAILS ANTI-CORRUPTION BLOGGER

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

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

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

THAILAND SEEKS HUMANITARIAN FIX FOR JAILED SCRIBES

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

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

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

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

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

TEXAS COPS SHOOT MAN FOR FIRING GUN IN HOME

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

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

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

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

OZ PLANS BIG DEFENCE, SECURITY INVESTMENTS

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

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

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

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

US accepts Pfizer shot for 12-15 year olds

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

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

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

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

Pfizer’s testing in adolescents “met our rigorous standards,” FDA vaccine chief Dr Peter Marks said.



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

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

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

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

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

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

“Having a vaccine authorised for a younger population is a critical step in continuing to lessen the immense public health burden caused by the Covid-19 pandemic,” Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech recently requested similar authorisation in the European Union, with other countries to follow.

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

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

W.H.O DENIES ‘LYING’ TO ITALY OVER UN REPORT

Rome, May 11: A top World Health Organisation official has strongly denied making false statements to Italian prosecutors about a spiked UN report into Italy’s Covid response, doubling down on his assertions in court documents.

Dr Ranieri Guerra, a WHO special adviser, outlined his position in a 40-page response, with a 495-page annex, to prosecutors who placed him under investigation last month for having allegedly made false statements to them when he was questioned November 5.

The prosecutors’ claims create a picture that is quite different from the reality of the facts and above all, are imprecise and don’t adhere to the reconstruction of events that Dr Guerra provided, said the response signed by his Rome-based attorney. — AP

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

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

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

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

Nine killed, 10 injured in high school shooting in Russia

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

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

Spokespersons for police and the emergencies ministry refused to comment. News agencies reported that two unidentified people had carried out the shooting and one, a 17-year-old, had been detained.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov had

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

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

CHANGING CURVE

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

Chinese population rises at slow pace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECCAN Chronicle

12 MAY 2021

Get moving on vaccines as Indian lives do matter

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

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

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

health workers in the first phase as it is a safeguard against the threat they face at their workplace. A couple of months later, the Election Commission of India ensured that all those officials who were part of the election process in four states and one Union territory were administered two doses of the vaccine. It is more than evident that being vaccinated is a precondition in these times of a devastating pandemic for the people to stay alive and go about earning their daily bread. It is a right available to every person, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The court's efforts must be seen as an attempt to hold the government accountable to the Constitution, which is its mandate, and not as interference.

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

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

Uncertainty looms in Nepal

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

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

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

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

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

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Printer & Publisher

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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Amid pandemic, Britain, EU eye India trade deals



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

trade barriers, and double bilateral trade by 2030.

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

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

RESPOND QUICKLY

The intensity of the Covid-19 pandemic has increased and it is spreading faster now though the states have imposed strict restrictions to break the raging second wave. Due to shortage of oxygen, drugs, vaccine and beds, the patients are bearing the brunt this summer. Medical infrastructure should have been improved in the past couple of months. The political war and debates on elections are being given priority than saving lives. Different welfare schemes are being introduced without taking people into account. It is essential to meet hospitalisation requirements of people.

M. Vinesh
Visakhapatnam

OXYGEN MISHAP

It's heart wrenching to learn that 11 patients in ICU are dead at Ruia Hospital, Tirupati, due to failure of oxygen supply. It is not a case of human error, but criminal negligence. There should be an alternative arrangement for filling oxygen cylinders for every ventilator that is working on pipeline in order to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply. Otherwise, disruption of oxygen supply even for a few minutes can be asphyxiating and lethal to a patient on ventilator. The government should probe the incident and fix the loopholes.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

High level meet on Telangana

NEW DELHI, May 11. The "fair" share for Telangana in the Plan funds of State is one of the issues expected to be resolved at the Prime Minister's half-yearly review here tomorrow. The Chief Minister Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. J.V. Narsing Rao, and the Telangana Regional Committee Chairman, Mr. J. Chokka Rao, have arrived in the capital for the meeting. The issue to be resolved is between the claim of Mr. Chokka Rao for a 40 per cent share to Telangana of the State Plan funds and allocation by Mr. Brahmananda Reddi of a 35 per cent share on the basis of population plus 40 per cent of the funds earmarked for backward regions.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAMATA BRINGS BACK COPS TRANSFERRED BY EC

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

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

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

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

EC SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE

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

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

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

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

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

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	49161.81	-0.69
Nifty 50	14850.80	-0.61
S&P 500*	4,144.59	-1.05
Dollar (₹)	73.34	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.65	-0.28
Euro (₹)	89.22	-0.003
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,308.212	0.44
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.32	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.008	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.616	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Moody's cuts India growth forecast to 9.3%

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

Ruchi Soya to acquire biscuits biz from Patanjali



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

HUL to provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators

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

3 private telcos add new users in February

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



■ New dividend rules for top 1,000 firms

Sebi makes policy on dividend a must

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

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

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

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

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

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



a web-link in their annual reports.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROMOTERS PLEDGED STAKE DIPS TO 1.64% FROM 2.09%

Mumbai, May 11:

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

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

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

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

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

French auto major Citroen begins C5 Aircross delivery

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

To make the Citroën ownership extremely com-



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

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

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

assured future value on the new Citroën C5 Aircross SUV.

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

Markets tumble on inflation fears

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

up 0.60 per cent and BSE Small-cap index up 0.80 per cent. PSU stocks were in big demand as BSE PSU index gained 2.44 per cent

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

Amitabh Bachchan can't resist Malkist

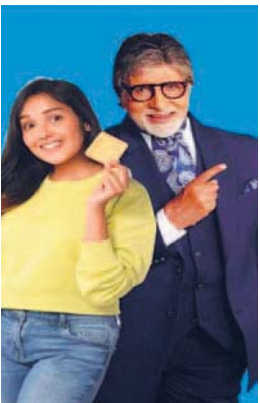
May 11: INBISCO India, a subsidiary of global food and beverage giant Mayora, has roped in film industry legend and icon Amitabh Bachchan as its brand ambassador for its flagship brand Malkist.

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

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

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

On his association with the brand Mr. Bachchan



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

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

FLIPKART TO ADD 5 WAREHOUSES FOR GROCERY BIZ

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

HUL's Sudhir to join Godrej as MD

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

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

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

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



Sudhir Sitapati

effect from October 18, 2021, subject to the approval of the shareholders in the ensuing Annual General Meeting," it said.

On Monday, HUL had informed that Sitapati is stepping down. Srinandan Sundaram was named as his replacement.

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

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

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

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

MFIs send SOS to RBI on Covid

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

Sa-Dhan an association of the microfinance sec-

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

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

has descended on us with a vengeance.

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

BAD TIMES

Infection among staff halves Apple phone's production in India

Covid hits Foxconn's iPhone output in India

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

we have been working closely with local government and public health authorities in India to address the challenges that we and all companies are facing in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis," it said in a statement to Reuters.

Foxconn's shares fell as much as 6.2 per cent after the Reuters report. The stock closed down 5.31 per cent, outpacing a 3.8 per cent fall in the broader market on concerns about rising Covid-19 cases in Taiwan.

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

MF INVESTORS TURN CAUTIOUS IN APRIL, BET ON HYBRID FUNDS



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Anand to feature in Covid fundraiser

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

Pacer Bumrah gets vaccinated

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

Don't break Covid protocols: Rijiju

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

Fulham relegated from top flight

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

Westbrook sets record in NBA

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

TWO-HORSE RACE

Dhawan, Pandya in contention to lead second-string team

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

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

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

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

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

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either. "Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer," the official said. — PTI



A file photo of Hardik Pandya and Shikhar Dhawan.

A FEW INDIANS DIDN'T LIKE RESTRICTIONS: PAMMENT

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

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

suspended on May 4.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*. "But we did feel safe, at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge," he said.

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

was halted.

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

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

mindset had changed.

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

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

JUVENTUS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING RONALDO

Rome, May 11: With their nine-year reign in Serie A ended and club president Andrea Agnelli roundly criticised for his role in the aborted European Super League, Juventus now risk missing out on next season's Champions League.

Juventus were knocked out of Italy's top four last weekend following a 3-0 home defeat by AC Milan, leaving coach Andrea Pirlo's position increasingly under threat entering the final three games.

Juventus last missed out on the Champions League in 2011 while Cristiano Ronaldo, the competition's all-time leading scorer with 134 goals, has featured in every edition since 2003. Failing to qualify would see Juventus lose out on roughly 80 million euros, jeopardising their ability to retain Ronaldo and afford his reported pre-tax annual salary of 54 million euros. It would likely spell the end of Ronaldo's Turin spell, who despite turning 36 in February is the leading scorer in Serie A this term with 27 goals. That could though free up opportunities for others to emerge. — AFP

No England stars for IPL phase 2

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

MCC says bamboo bats will be illegal

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

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

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

are economically sustainable and are also stronger than the ones made from willow, which is traditionally used.

"Currently, law 5.3.2 states that the blade of the bat must consist solely of wood, so for bamboo (which is a grass) to be considered as a realistic alternative to willow would require a law change," MCC said in a statement on Monday.

"Importantly, the law would need to be altered to allow bamboo specifically, as even if it were to



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

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

the blade, except in junior bats."

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

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

MCC, however, said it

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

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

COVID | SCARE

Doubts raised over Olympics

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

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

A top politician also warned that Japan still had to make a "careful decision" about whether to hold the Games, which have scant public support, according to opinion polls. Scrapping the 2020 Olympics, postponed last year as the pandemic advanced, is an idea that has never quite gone away, despite repeated assertions from officials that they will proceed.

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

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

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

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



Naomi Osaka

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

— NAOMI OSAKA
Japanese tennis star

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

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

NADAL 'NOT SURE'

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

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

TORCH RELAY PULLED OFF STREETS IN JAPAN

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

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

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



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

— Twitter

Indian shooters leave for Croatia

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

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

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

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

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