

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
NELLORE | MONDAY | 10 MAY 2021

## WEATHER

**Max:** 37.6°C  
**Min:** 28.1°C  
**RH:** 61%  
**Rainfall:** Nil

**Forecast:** clear.  
Max/Min temp. 37/28 °C

## ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Chaitra Bahula Chaturdasi till 9.56 pm  
**Star:** Ashwini till 8.25 pm  
**Variyam:** 3.56 pm to 5.44 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 12.38 pm to 1.29 pm; 3.11 pm to 4.02 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 7.30 am to 9 am  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
**Ramzan** 27,1442 AH  
**PRAYERS (SHAHI MASJID)**  
**Fajar:** 4:27 am  
**Zohar:** 12:06 pm  
**Asar:** 4:34 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6:29 pm  
**Isha:** 7:46 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6:29 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5:43 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 4:45 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 6:13 PM

## RAMZAN TIMINGS

**IFTAR:** 6:29 pm (Today)  
**SEHRI:** 4:18 am (Tomorrow)

## COUNTER POINT



**You are here for a bed in the hospital? But our MLA has gone for a berth in the Cabinet!**

## SHORT TAKES

### China probed weaponising CV

**London/Melbourne:** Chinese military scientists investigated weaponising Coronaviruses five years before the Covid-19 and may have predicted a World War III fought with biological weapons, according to reports referring to documents obtained by US State Department. The documents show the PLA commanders making the sinister prediction.

### Saudi calls for Indo-Pak talks

**Islamabad:** Saudi Arabia has emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding matters, including the Kashmir issue. Pakistan Foreign Office on Saturday night released a joint statement agreed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia after Prime Minister Imran Khan held high-level talks with Crown Prince

### Aussie borders to shut indefinitely

**Melbourne:** Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Sunday announced that the country's borders will remain closed indefinitely for the rest of the world to protect Australians from the deadly outbreaks of COVID-19 strains. Australia's borders were slammed shut in March last year as the coronavirus spread across the world. Only citizens and

### Nirav plea: UK judge to decide

**London:** Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, whose extradition to India was ordered last month by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, has filed an application for permission to appeal against the order in the High Court in London. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) confirmed an



## WORLD | 5

### Scotland renews independence call

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



## SPORTS | 8

### Hamilton wins Spanish GP

## TABLOID

### Film hosp. set given to Covid facility



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## Probe on to find culprits in Kadapa mine explosion

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, MAY 9

In the wake of a shocking mishap which claimed 10 lives and left many injured, public debate has turned to those responsible for the explosion of gelatin sticks at the white barytes quarry at Mamillapalle in Kasinayana mandal in Kadapa district on Saturday.

Police, revenue, mines and geology and pollution control departments are generally responsible for overseeing blasting operations in quarries and mines. The mines department officials were reportedly well aware that illegal mining was brazenly taking place at the quarry. Also, the police and the revenue departments turn blind eye to those running explosives businesses without any permits or licences. The pollution control board officials do not seem to know which quarries are operating without environmental permits.

First of all, prime responsibility rests with the department of mines. It is a common practice that those in possession of licence mineral extraction licences sell them away to the highest bidder illegally. Officials are said to be in cahoots with the illegal miners and look the other way even as ore worth crores of rupees is illegally extracted and sold. They also do not check if those mines have proper environmental permits.

While Mangampet is famous for gray barytes in Kadapa district, white

## Collector's probe faults YSRC leader

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KADAPA, MAY 9

A ruling YSR Congress leader, C. Nageshwar Reddy, the general power of attorney (GPA) holder of the white baryte mine in the district where 10 workers were killed in an explosives mishap on Saturday, is said to be enjoying official patronage despite gross violations in mining operations over the last few years.

Nageshwar Reddy is a follower of Mydukur MLA Raghurami Reddy and is a brother of Veera Narayana Reddy, who contested Brahmamgar Matham elections.

A report submitted by District Collector Ch.. Harikiran, a copy of which is available with *Deccan Chronicle*, is self-explanatory. It mentions that the GPA holder was a habitual offender, flouted all norms of mining, used

explosives without permission and transported ore in violation of mining rules. Inquiries revealed that the local mining officials visited the site at least twice in 2019 and last year again and recommended termination of the lease after finding the lives of workers at high risk.

But, senior officials at the Directorate of Mines and Geology, for reasons best known to them, slept over the recommendations, which contributed to the ghastly incident, though indirectly.

The officials noticed that the lives of workers were in grave danger as there were no separate inlet and outlet for entry and exit of workmen who were forced to use crane buckets to go into the mine and come out, "which is a highly dangerous condition."

**■ Page 2: Lease operations to remain suspended**

barytes are available in small quantities in areas including Vemula and Vempalle. This ore is usually mined underground.

The mines in Vemula and Vempalle areas have not been operational for few years due to water seepage in underground mines adjoining the Pullivendula branch canal. It is alleged that some miners are illegally extracting the ore and

using permits issued in the name of non-operative mines to sell it in market.

In the case of those selling explosives, dealers must have specialised vehicles to transport safely. Those engaged in illegal sale of explosives reportedly brought the gelatin in a normal vehicle unfit for the purpose.

**■ Page 2: Cops, revenue staff failed to keep check**

## E-passes for emergency travel in AP from today

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 9

AP DGP Gautam Sawang on Sunday said that a pass is mandatory even for emergency travel and informed that they would start issuing e-passes for emergency purposes from Monday. He stated that those needing the passes can apply through the Police Seva app on their mobiles.

Sawang said that the curbs on inter-state movements would continue until the government took a call on the matter. On Sunday, he made a surprise visit to Vijayawada and inspected the enforcement of partial curfew in the state. Pointing to the surge in Coronavirus cases in the state, he told the police not to brook any violations and let their guard down.

The DGP asked the people to follow Covid-19 safety measures without fail. Everyone should wear two masks and keep a



Task Force police checking the vehicles after lockdown violators on Eluru Road in Vijayawada on Sunday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

sanitiser handy. He advised people to come out of houses only in cases of any emergency. Those suffering from Covid-19 symptoms as well as those in home isolation should avail of the services of '104' and '108' and access the government, he said.

Sawang said any member of the public can complain against violators of Coronavirus protocol and

lockdown norms by calling up '100' and '112' toll-free numbers. They can also make use of the Police Seva app on their mobiles.

On the Section 144 CrPC restrictions brought in place, Sawang said they would remain in force until further orders from the state government.

**■ Page 2: Need prior permission for events: DGP**

## VIRUS | DEFENCE

## 10,000 sachets of 2 DG 2-deoxy-D-glucose to be released on May 11 or 12

**PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC**  
NELLORE, MAY 9

The Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) anti-Covid drug will be made available next week to those who are in need, bringing major relief to thousands of people who are struggling for breath in Covid hospitals and undergoing treatment in home isolation.

Dr G. Satheesh Reddy, secretary, department of defence research and development, and chair-

man, DRDO, said that 10,000 sachets of the new anti-Covid drug — 2 DG 2-deoxy-D-glucose — that was developed by a defence lab will be released either on May 11 or 12.

The Drugs Controller General of India had approved the anti-Covid drug developed by DR-DO's Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad, for emergency use. Against this backdrop, Dr Satheesh Reddy told this newspaper that the 2 DG



will be available in sizable numbers after three weeks while pointing to large-scale production in the offing.

Responding to a question on the effectiveness of 2-DG on the new Covid strains that emerged in the second wave as the trials were conducted in the first

● **THE DRUGS** Controller General of India had approved the anti-Covid drug developed by DR-DO's Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS)

phase, Dr Reddy asserted the drug can deal with any strain.

"2-DG accumulates in the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production. Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique,"

Dr Reddy maintained.

He said 51 per cent of the patients were cured within three days during the third phase of clinical trials and others within 5 to 7 days after administering the drug, which can be used for moderate to severe Covid patients.

It is a generic molecule and it can be produced in any country, he informed. On production plans, he said they have been discussing bulk production and they would come out with an action plan within the next two or three days. He praised the DRDO sci-

entists for their concern towards the people and country and their outstanding contribution through scientific solutions for Covid infected.

Dr Sateesh Reddy said they were coming out with light-weight oxygen gas cylinders with regulator and non-returnable valve with features to save oxygen and it would be very useful to those using it at home. He added that they were also developing software to detect Covid infection using artificial intelligence with the help of a Chest X-Ray.

## Himanta is Assam CM, Central job for Sonowal

### Sarma stakes claim, to take oath today; AJP backs choice

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, MAY 9

Senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, who was unanimously elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party here on Sunday, is all set to take the oath of office as Assam's next chief minister on Monday.

Union agriculture minister and BJP central observer Narendra Singh Tomar made this announcement in Guwahati on Sunday, after earlier asking his party's legislators to propose any other name if they wished.

"Mr J.P. Nadda has sent me and Arun Singh to felicitate and conduct this meeting to choose the next chief minister for Assam. Mr Sarbananda Sonowal and other leaders proposed a single name — Himanata Biswa Sarma. Mr Sarma will be the next chief minister of Assam," Mr Tomar said at the BJP legislature party meeting. Mr Sarma will take the



BJP's Chief Minister-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma (left) being greeted by former Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal after being elected the party's Legislature Party leader in Guwahati on Monday.

— PTI

oath on Monday as the 15th chief minister of Assam.

Earlier, Mr Sarma's

name was proposed by chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and seconded by BJP state party chief

Ranjeet Kumar Dass and newly elected Haflong MLA Nandita Garlosa. The AGP legislature party, which held a meeting Sunday, also announced that it would support the leader elected by the BJP legislature party.

On Sunday evening, Mr Sarma met Assam governor Jagdish Mukhi and formally staked claim to forming the new government. Earlier Sunday, outgoing chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal tendered his resignation to the governor, who as per tradition asked him to continue in office till the formation of the next government. While there is nothing known officially yet on what Mr Sonowal will be doing next, there is considerable speculation here that he may be elected to the Rajya Sabha soon, and sources say that he is tipped for a berth in the Union Cabinet. The state administration has started preparations for the oath taking ceremony at Sankardev Kalakshetra.

## 7 DIE DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN AT KING KOTI HOSP IN HYDERABAD

**SANJAY SAMUEL**  
PAUL I DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 9

At least seven Covid-19 patients at the King Koti Hospital, a dedicated Covid facility of the state government, were feared to have lost their lives from lack of adequate oxygen supply on Sunday.

The oxygen tank at the hospital began showing low pressure starting 3 pm on Sunday. An oxygen tanker truck that was to arrive by then to refill the hospital tank was delayed as the driver reportedly lost his way near Jade-heria.

As panic spread over the non-arrival of the tanker, the Narayanguda police got into the act, traced the truck and guided the driver to the hospital. By then, the drop in the pressure in the oxygen lines at the hospital led to seven patients losing their lives. Narayanguda inspector G. Bhupatti said the tanker reached the hospital around 3.30 pm.

According to some hospital staff, four Covid-19 patients died in the ICU A ward, two in ICU B, while the seventh patient who was in the male isolation ward also succumbed as the pressure in the oxygen line dropped. The dead included four patients who were aged between 35 and 45 years, it was learnt. A policeman on duty at the hospital also said that seven people were believed to have lost their lives on account of poor oxygen supply. The parents of one such deceased patient, who managed to procure an oxygen cylinder, desperately implored the hospital staff to use the cylinder to provide oxygen to the patient, despite the hospital staff saying the person had passed away.

Attendants of patients rushed to get oxygen cylinders to save the lives of their loved ones being treated at the hospital. But the search for cylinders in the last minute meant that some of them managed to reach the hospital with one only late in the night.



## IN BRIEF

## POLICE FAIL TO CHECK ILLEGAL DEALERS

FROM PAGE 1

The failure of police and revenue officials to check the activities of such illegal dealers was a main reason for unfortunate incidents such as the one on Saturday. Political interference and corruption is cited for the officials turning wilful partners in the crime.

As for the alleged complicity of pollution control board officials, proper inspections of mining sites could have unearthed any illegal and unsafe activities. Though the regulations issued by the government in 2016 say the mines department should not issue any permits unless there are environmental permits, it is learnt hundreds of mines are operating in the district without any such permits.

## NEED PRIOR PERMISSION FOR EVENTS: DGP

FROM PAGE 1

Meetings and conferences of any political party would also not be permitted as long as the partial curfew was in force, he informed.

The DGP said that obtaining prior permission pertaining to any functions or celebrations from local authorities specified by the government was mandatory. He warned action would be taken against spreading false and unconfirmed news on social media. He urged the people to cooperate with the police in containing the Coronavirus spread in the state.

## LEASE OPERATIONS TO REMAIN SUSPENDED

FROM PAGE 1

It was also found during the inspection that the ventilation system was not provided by the lessee as specified in the Approved Scheme of Mining.

According to the Collector's report, the Assistant Director, Mines, Kadapa, submitted a report after visiting the mine on October 16 and 18, stating that the lessee had been conducting underground mining without trained personnel. He excavated excess quantities beyond the annual approved quantity from 2013-14 onwards and even violated the crucial Environmental Protection Act-1986 by carrying out mining without environmental clearance and consent for establishment.

Ruling YSRC MLC C. Ramachandraiah, whose wife is the original lease holder of the mines, told this correspondent that the GPA holder executed an agreement on a ₹100 non-judicial stamp paper, indemnifying the original lease holder in case of accidents. When contacted, Ramachandraiah said his family had already applied to the mines department for transfer of lease to the GPA holder.

Meanwhile, Director of Mines Venkata Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that the lease operations would be suspended and a criminal case would be booked against the persons involved in transporting the blasting material. Kadapa district mines assistant director Ravi Prasad said the families of the 10 workers killed in Saturday's blasts would be compensated at the rate of ₹10 lakh each.

## YSRC AGENDA TO ELIMINATE TD LEADERS: NAIDU

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 9

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday criticised the Jagan Mohan Reddy government for working with an "ulterior agenda to eliminate" the TD activists for questioning the unchecked corruption under the current regime. He strongly condemned the cold-blooded murder of a TD activist Srinivasulu at Nidjuru in the Kurnool district.

In a statement, he said the TD chief deplored that in the past two years of the Jagan Reddy rule, many false cases were filed against the party leaders for questioning the illegal activities and large-scale corruption by the ruling party leaders. He alleged, police were making false arrests of the TD activists.



People waiting in a queue for vaccination at Christurajapuram Urban Health Centre in Vijayawada on Sunday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

## Suspension of first dose a worry in AP

Priority now to vaccinate second dose beneficiaries

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 9

The suspension of the first dose Corona vaccination, due to shortage of the vials and the pressing need to first attend to the needs of those who already got the first jab, is a matter of worry among people amid the swift surge in Covid-19 infections.

The government made it clear that it will give priority to completion of the second dose to those who have already got the first dose. Some 53,58,712 people in the state got the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine and they were getting the second jab when the shortage for vaccines arose and the government stopped fresh vaccinations.

Those mainly above age

45 are fearful of a swift spread of Coronavirus infection due to the absence of vaccination and are seeking a government review of the decision.

According to reports, only 17,96,000 persons got the second dose vaccination against a total of 53,58,712 who earlier got their first dose of the vaccine. The rest are waiting for their turn.

Initially, people were hesitant to take the vaccine jab due to fear of side-effects, small or big. Now, in the second wave, they are rushing to vaccine centres to get the jabs. This increased the demand for both Covaxin and Covishield.

According to reports, some 78,22,769 people in the age-group of 45-60 in

13 districts of AP were in the line for vaccination, of which only 53,58,712 got the first dose and 24,64,057 have to get their first dose. The decision to vaccinate only those requiring the second dose has put some 24.50 lakh people to the risk of contracting the virus in the absence of vaccination.

Earlier the government had announced vaccination to people above 45 years and recently extended the vaccination to those between 18-45 years from May 1. This created hope among the youngsters and the middle-aged that they would get protection from the pandemic spread. But the state government made it clear that the vaccination will be provided to only second dose beneficiaries across the state on

a priority basis in the immediate term.

Quinquagenarians or those in the 50-59 age-group Md. Shafi and J Rakesh, said health experts are alerting about the possibility of a third wave that would be more severe than the second wave. "A majority of the people in the 45-60 age group would be suffering from comorbidities. Getting the vaccination done would increase their immunity level."

Health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said the priority now would be for the second dose beneficiaries. Else, their first dose jabs will go in vain. "People need not worry as the government will vaccinate all in due course of time."

## Neta's Natter



## It was Goud then, it's Etala now

There are a lot of commonalities between former minister Etala Rajendar, who was ousted from the K. Chandrashekar Rao-led Telangana state government, and T. Devender Goud, the once strong Telugu Desam leader and former home minister of combined Andhra Pradesh.

Both are intelligent, articulate, super-rich and even have an almost similar physique which reflects fitness and discipline. Both hail from the

politically strong Backward Classes community.

Devender Goud was considered a powerful and crucial leader in the N. Chandrababu Naidu Cabinet and had enormous influence on his boss. He faced difficult times while in the Opposition. There was an aura around him that he would be a formidable force in the region and could cause irreparable damage to the Telugu Desam the day he decided to quit the party. Finally,

● **ETALA MAY** even consider floating a new party which has its inherent risks, the political circles are curious to know if he would join the Bharatiya Janata Party.

when the moment came, he was along when he walked out of the TD. After a brief brush with a political outfit of his own that joined the bogey of separate Telangana forces, he merged the party with Chiranjeevi's Praja Rajyam. Finally, after the misadventure, he

went back to the TD fold and "managed" to become a Rajya Sabha member. He later went into political oblivion and his health did not permit him to play an active role in politics. Now the time has come for Etala to take the most calculated move post his ouster from the Cabinet. Amidst rumours that he may even consider floating a new party which has its inherent risks, the political circles are curious to know if he would join the Bharatiya Janata Party.

## Jagan lands in troll tsunami

It might be out of conviction or compulsion, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy landed himself in the troll tsunami with his tweet in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It all started with the Prime Minister calling CMs of a few States where the second wave is severe to review the preparedness of these States. Immediately after one such telephonic conversation Jarkhand Chief

Minister Hemant Soren took a dig at the Prime Minister for not listening to the Chief Ministers and understanding the ground realities but turning the event into a "mann ki baat", the PM's favourite talk show on All India Radio.

He tweeted at 9 pm on May 6 to which Jagan reacted at around 3 pm on May 7 and gave sermons to "his brother" Hemant Soren to not indulge in "such type of politics" as it would weaken the coun-

try. Jagan also called for unconditional support to the PM.

Hell broke loose and the twitter was flooded with trolls against Jagan and all those targeted him are not Telugu Desam brigade. Given the anger being shown at the PM on social media these days, there was no surprise that CM got brickbats from the general public too.

Finally came the retort from Jarkhand Mukti Morcha of Soren which tweeted that the entire

country knew of Jagan's compulsions and that they too pray for his well being. The JMM attached a newspaper clipping of CBI court adjourning the petition filed seeking cancellation of Jagan's bail.

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## STORIES OF HOPE

## Techie spends ₹85L for medical help to people

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, MAY 9

Much concerned over the perils of the raging Coronavirus in the district, a software engineer A.G. Anil Kumar Reddy has embarked on the 'Heal Anantapur' mission.

He is spending his own funds towards creating a widespread awareness in the public to take preventive measures to stave off the deadly virus. He has so far spent ₹85 lakh to carry out his mission, as part of which is donating quality medical kits to doctors, medical staff and others involved in duties at Covid-19 hospitals in Anantapur.

Further, Reddy started a 'one lakh meal' supply programme to provide food to the relatives of patients, workers and orphanage homes. "We've started meal distribution, considering the

plight of various sections of people unable to get food. Especially, attendants of patients and inmates of orphanages are in a pitiable condition," he said.

Earlier, the socially conscious engineer took up restoration and upkeep of heritage structures as part of 'paying back to the society.' He supported renovation of a five-centuries-old well at a temple on the outskirts of Anantapur. He has been carrying out his activities under the aegis of AGS organisation for the past one year. His Facebook page

'Discover Anantapur' is boosting efforts to highlight how Anantapur is facing in all walks of life.

Referring to the 'Heal Anantapur' campaign, Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that around ₹85 lakh was spent on sourcing medical kits

from South Korea. A campaign was launched a week ago to better the conditions at the government general hospital, cancer hospital and super specialty hospitals which are thronged by huge crowds of Covid-19 patients and their attendants.

"Around one lakh N-95 masks and surgical masks, one lakh surgical caps and one lakh hand gloves are being supplied to the medical staff, patients and police, Reddy informed. He said he was happy to be doing his bit to the society in such a serious situation as a denizen of Anantapur.

As part of the campaign, a big mask covers the historic 'Clock Tower' in the city.

His innovative awareness campaign on Covid safety has caught the attention of people who are praising his selfless services.

## Man killed in group rivalry in Kurnool

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, MAY 9

A 42-year-old man was killed by his political rivals at Nidjuru village in Kurnool mandal on Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Kuruvu Sreenivasulu, an active worker of Telugu Desam. His sister-in-law was also seriously injured in the clashes that occurred between YSRC and TDP workers over the recent MPCT election disputes.

Tension prevailed in the village after the murderous clash. It was learnt that at least 10 families of the accused locked their houses and left the village on Sunday.

The relatives of the deceased protested in front of the houses and demanded immediate arrest of all the accused.

It is learnt that the sister-in-law of the deceased contested as an MPCT candidate in Nidjuru. Counting of votes is yet to be taken up. Meanwhile,

disputes arose between her family and rivals belonging to YSRC.

On Saturday night heated arguments ensued between the two groups, which led to the killing of Sreenivasulu.

The YSRC men allegedly attacked their rivals with chilli powder and sticks.

Kurnool taluka police station sub-inspector Lakshmi Narayana said a case was registered against 18 persons for taking part in the attack and killing the TD worker.

## Rajendar made to eat humble pie

Municipal and IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao had the last laugh in the infamous ouster of Health Minister and senior TRS leader Etala Rajendar from KCR-led Telangana cabinet.

First it gave clear signals that the leaders, how big and powerful they might be, will not be spared if they covertly or overtly oppose the eventual appointment of KTR, if not today tomorrow. Etala, who is known for his proximity to another Minister and CM's nephew T. Harish Rao, has been ill at ease ever since the KTR camp stepped up the : "KTR

CM" campaign and made his discomfort known to public with controversial statements.

However, pushed to the wall, Etala came out openly in support of dynastic politics in regional parties. Referring to experiences of regional parties across the country, Etala said son or daughter of the regional party founder would be a natural heir and in case of TRS also he never objected to KTR taking over as CM. The theory was so convincing among the rank and file of the TRS that those murmur under their breath about KTR's rise will fall in line.

## Cricket pitches AP babu into trouble

The new-found love of Praveen Prakash, principal secretary to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, for the 'status' feature in WhatsApp landed him in an embarrassing situation the other day. Praveen of late has been sharing his photos with comments on WhatsApp. On Sunday last week, he put two pictures of him watching the Indian Premier League match between Mumbai and Chennai the previous day. He commented that it was a memorable moment because there were just 150 people at the Arun Jaitley stadium at Feroze Shah Kotla, Delhi, the original seating capacity of which is 30,000. It was also meant to establish how privileged Praveen was to be

among the limited number of VVIPs. Within no time, people started sharing his photo in various groups including the ones operated by government employees. There were comments that the top official has been enjoying a cricket match when the state is reeling under the worst-ever pandemic. Some even pointed out that the government has been treating his week-end stay in Delhi as 'on duty' and paying him travel expenses to the national capital. Apparently coming to know of the criticism, the senior b a b u changed his status.

Even as the state government is going ahead with setting up oxygen plants at various medical facilities in the state by sanctioning ₹230 crore on Saturday, the situation at Kurnool Government General Hospital is quite different.

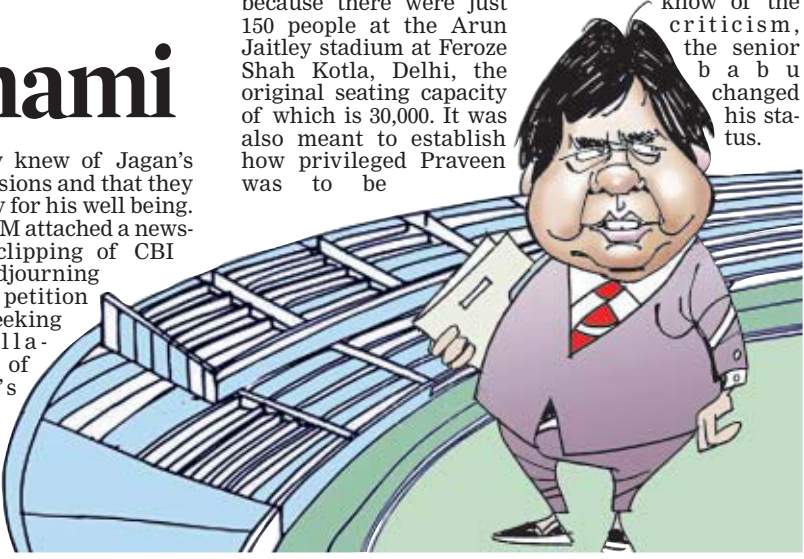
Though a pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plant was readied a fortnight ago, it is yet to be made operational. An engineer said they had laid a pipeline to supply oxygen to the surgical ward which has 200 beds.

Yet, oxygen cannot be supplied due to the fact that there are patients undergoing treatment. Fixing of oxygen pipes to beds may cause disruption of treatment to the patients, which may cost lives and, hence, the delay, he explained.

Kurnool Government General Hospital Superintendent Dr G. Narendranath Reddy said the hospital has a sufficient supply of oxygen. "We have two tanks with a capacity of 21,500 litres capacity. As such, we don't have any constraint of O2. The new plant which is ready will be put to use if patient numbers swell at the hospital," he said.

The PSA plant was sanctioned under the PM Cares project. It is one of the five plants sanctioned to Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation (APMIDC) is the implementing agency in the state.

Kurnool PSA plant has a capacity to generate 1,000 litres of gas per minute. It picks up natural air from the atmosphere, separates carbon dioxide and nitrogen and captures O2 which will be directly pumped into the supply channel to reach the oxygenated beds in the hospital.





## SHORT TAKES

ANAM SLAMS  
YSRC FOR CASE  
AGAINST TD CHIEFDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 9

TDP state spokesperson Anam Venkata Ramana Reddy blamed YSRC leader and advisor to the government Sajjala Ramkrishna Reddy for a case filed against TDP Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu in Kurnool over N440K Covid strain.

He reminded that leading English dailies and media channels across the country had aired and published news on Covid-19 variants playing havoc based on reports from scientific sources.

He challenged Ramakrishna Reddy to file cases against all of them if he was so confident that the strain N440K is non-existent in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking to media on Sunday, Anam Venkata Ramana Reddy rebuked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for trying to project himself as the best CM in the country.

Taking a dig at the government for painting a rosy picture of the Covid-19 situation on the dashboard, he alleged that fudged statistics are displayed on the dashboard, especially regarding the number of deaths.

The TDP leader demanded to know why so many bodies were piling up at the crematoriums across the state when the situation is under control.

He said that the time has come for the YSR Congress to come clean on the actual figures and educate everyone.

● **SPEAKING TO** media on Sunday, Anam Venkata Ramana Reddy rebuked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for trying to project himself as the best CM in the country.

WATCHMAN KILLED  
IN ATTACK BY  
WILD ELEPHANTDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 9

A 65-year-old man was killed in an attack by a lone elephant in the Kalyanapuram forest area near Puttur in Chittoor district during the early hours of Saturday.

The incident took place when the deceased, identified as T. Chinnabba, was guarding a mango garden located in the forest. The loan elephant entered the garden around 1 am and hit the old man with its trunk killing him on the spot when he attempted to prevent its entry.

Chinnabba is a resident of ST Colony in Kalyanapuram in Puttur town. Family members lamented the absence of any reaction from the forest officials on the incident.

● **THE LOAN** elephant entered the garden around 1 am and hit the old man with its trunk killing him on the spot when he attempted to prevent its entry.

LORRY DRIVER  
MURDERED IN EAST  
GODAVARI DISTDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, MAY 9

A lorry driver, Bonthu Venkanna (42), was murdered last night near Vemagiri village in Kadiam Mandal of East Godavari District. According to Kaduam Circle Inspector K. Sridhar Kumar, a married woman who has two children returned to her parents' house a few months back, leaving her husband after a quarrel between them. It is suspected that she had an extra marital relationship with a lorry driver. On Saturday night, the driver and the woman went to a mango garden near Vemagiri village.

Her husband, under suspicion, came to the spot and hacked the lorry driver with a knife. The lorry driver died on the spot. The circle inspector said that she was also attacked and injured and was admitted in a private hospital for treatment. The woman's brother lodged a complaint with the Kadiam Police. Sridhar Kumar is investigating the case. He said that search is going on for the accused.

● **ON SATURDAY** night, the driver and the woman went to a mango garden near Vemagiri village. Her husband, under suspicion, came to the spot and hacked the lorry driver with a knife.



People flock Poorna Market in the morning due to curfew from noon, in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

22,164 Covid-19 infections,  
92 deaths registered in AP

Single day highest number of 2,844 +ve cases was registered in EG

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 9

The surge in Coronavirus cases continues in AP. Official bulletin says 22,164 new Covid-19 infections and 92 new deaths were registered in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the state created a new record by testing 1,05,494 samples, which is the highest till date. The cumulative total of Corona cases reached 12,87,603, of which 1,90,632 are active cases and 10,88,264 are recoveries. The recovery rate in AP is 84.52%. Total death toll due to Covid-19 touched 8,707.

The single day highest number of 2,844 positive cases was registered in East Godavari district, followed by 2,206 in Visakhapatnam, 2,169 in Chittoor, 2,099 in Guntur, 2,039 in Anantapur. West Godavari reported 1,748 cases, Nellore 1,574, Kurnool 1,568, Srikakulam 1,432, Kadapa 1,267, Krishna 1,240, Vizianagaram 998 and Prakasam 980 infections.

The number of recoveries reached 10,88,264 as 18,832 patients recovered

DC IMPACT: Vax centres  
moved to spacious locationsDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, MAY 9

A report in *Deccan Chronicle* on the chaotic conditions prevalent at vaccination centres in Kurnool has awakened the district administration, which has now decided to conduct vaccination programmes only at spacious buildings like function halls and college premises.

Consequently, Primary and Urban Health Centres will not dispense

in the past 24 hours and the recovery rate remains at 84.52 per cent. The daily positivity rate was 21.01 per cent with 1,05,494 samples turning positive. The overall positivity rate of 1.73 crore samples tested was 7.41 per cent.

Guntur district saw 12 Covid deaths in the past 24 hours, whereas

Covid vaccination to the public, said district collector G. Veera Pandian.

Stating that the changes were being brought about from Monday following the May 9 report in *Deccan Chronicle*, DMHO Dr Rama Giddaiah said in a statement that there shall be no vaccination on Monday. It would be resumed on Tuesday and continue till May 31. He also asserted that only the second dose will be administered and no registrations for the first

dose would be accepted till then. All scheduled slots for the first dose have been cancelled, he said.

Dr Giddaiah said the vaccination centre at Kurnool Government General Hospital has been closed based on complaints of huge queues.

He further said that only 20 people will be allowed inside the vaccine centre at a time and an orderly token system is to be followed to avoid the rush and jostling.

CALL CENTRE  
OPENED FOR  
ASYMPTOMATICDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 9

District administration has opened a call centre exclusively for asymptomatic Covid positive patients in home isolation in Nellore. The centre will function round the clock and 24 employees have been deputed to man the centre in three shifts.

According to the SPSR Nellore district collector K.V.N. Chakradhara Babu, the staff should elicit information on the condition of patients in home isolation in periodical intervals and shift them to hospitals in case of any complications after consulting medical officers and phone numbers 104 and 1077.

The call centre contacted 26,325 patients so far. Those in home isolation can call the numbers 7207337780, 81, 82, 7036-747605, 608 for guidance.

## All set for Nakshatrasatra Maha Yagam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 9

The spiritual crusade of the TTD for the well-being of humanity and protection from the Covid-19 pandemic reached a new high on Sunday morning with the beginning of Nakshatra Satra Maha Yagam at the Dharmagiri Veda Pathashala. Principal of the Dharmagiri Veda Vijnan Peetham

K.S.S. Avadhani said, as part of the Maha Yagam the Shrutaya yagas of purvangabhutas will be performed from May 9 to 11.

Speaking on the occasion Avadhani said that the Maha yagam performed for well-being of global humanity will last till June 15.

From May 12 onwards, the Shrutaya yagas of all devatas of 28

● **SPEAKING ON** the occasion Avadhani said that the Maha yagam performed for well-being of global humanity will last till June 15.

nakshatras from Kruthika nakshatram to Bharani Nakshatram and Abhijeet nakshatram will be performed.

Later, Shrutaya yagas will

also be performed for Chandra, Ahoratriamulu, Usha Kala, and Nakshatra samanyamu, Surya Bhagavan, Aditi and Vishnu etc.

Legends say that since every person is born in any of 27 nakshatram in the world, the yagas will protect every one of them. The yagas commenced on Vaisakha Shudda Padyam day (today), during the conflu-

ence of Rohini and Kritika nakshatras. Sri Avadhani appealed to devotees to beget the divine fruits of the yagas by witnessing the sacred rituals live telecast on SVBC.

Meanwhile on Sunday from 11 am to 2 pm the rituals of Vichinnadanam, Agnihotram will be observed and the Yaga programmes will continue 6 to 8 pm in the evening.

<b>RENTALS</b> <b>INDEPENDENT HOUSE</b> <b>1100SQR.FT OFFICE space, ground floor with compound, at 79 P&amp;T cty. behind Navajeevan hospital, Kharkhana. Secunderabad- 500009, available for long term lease. Contact:- 9849562361. (HYMM/2122/C01092)</b>	<b>LEASE</b> <b>COMMERCIAL</b> <b>TIRUMALA ARCADE, Ground Floor, below Oriental Bank of Commerce, Main Road, Asilmetta Junction, Visakhapatnam, 1000 sq.ft Commercial Space available for Lease. 100% Vastu, Good Elevation suitable for Medical Labs, Poly Clinics &amp; Medical Agencies/ Distributors. Rent 45,000/- per month and one year advance. Contact: 9849360061 (Hyderabad). (HYCL/2122/C00334)</b>
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## SHORT TAKES

## U.P.: 67 NEW VENTILATORS LYING UNUSED

Firozabad (UP), May 9: A total of 67 new ventilators are lying unused at the 100-bedded Covid-19 isolation ward set up at a medical college here, a senior doctor has said.

When contacted, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr Alok Kumar Sharma said that last year, the medical college had got 96 ventilators under the PM-CARES Fund, and in all there are 114 ventilators available at the medical college. Of these, 25-30 ventilators are being used to provide treatment to patients.

He added that of the 67 ventilators, which are kept in a store room of the hospital, around 60-62 are in working condition.

Kumar, however, did not elaborate on the rest of the ventilators.

Principal of the medical college, Dr Sangeeta Aneja said, that the state medical department has been informed that 67 ventilators are there in the hospital.

In a letter to the state health department, it was also requested that if there is a need of a ventilator in any nearby district, then it could be sent there.

“Currently, we have ventilators, and they will be used when required. For operation of ventilators, technicians are needed, which we do not have in adequate numbers,” she said.

## KOTA COPS GET 75 WEDDINGS PUT OFF IN A DAY

Kota, May 9: Over 75 weddings were postponed in a day in Kota Rural district after police reached out to families as part of a campaign to comply with the lockdown which has been enforced in the state to contain rising Covid cases.

During a field visit of DIG Ravidutt Gaur, two beat constables of Kota Rural Police, Asharam of Digidig police station and Navneet of Kaithun police station, informed him that they had persuaded three families to call off weddings scheduled for this month, DSP and CO (Itawa) Vijayshankar Sharma said.

The beat constables were given a reward of Rs 1,100 each, he said.

The DIG then directed officials to conduct meetings at gram panchayat level in presence of influential locals and public representatives to persuade families to cancel upcoming weddings, Sharma said.

Under the supervision of Kota Rural SP Sharad Choudhary, the campaign was launched at gram panchayat level on Saturday morning with beat constables and SHO's interacting with families, resulting in postponement of more than 75 weddings in a single day, the DSP said.

“My sister Manisha was supposed to get married on Friday but a beat constable came early morning and convinced us to call off the wedding. It has now been postponed to after the coronavirus pandemic,” said Rinkesh Kumar.

## TEN STATES ACCOUNT FOR OVER 71% OF CASES

New Delhi: Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 71.75 per cent of the 4,03,738 new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The other states in the list of 10 are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 56,578. It is followed by Karnataka with 47,563 while Kerala reported 41,971 new cases.

A total of more than 30.22 crore tests have been conducted so far across the country while the daily Covid-19 positivity rate stands at 21.64 per cent, the ministry said.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh cumulatively account for 82.94 per cent of India's total active cases, the ministry stated. “The National Mortality Rate has been falling and currently stands at 1.09 per cent,” the ministry said.

Besides, 4,092 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours.

Ten states account for 74.93 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (864). Karnataka follows with 482 daily deaths.

## Delhi extends lockdown by another week, tightens curbs

Kejriwal says extension is to ensure that Capital does not let guard down

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 9

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has extended the lockdown in the national capital by another week, making the restrictions stricter. Even Delhi Metro services have been suspended this time. The lockdown will be on till 5 am on Monday, May 17. Mr Kejriwal said the extension was meant to ensure that the city does not let its guard down even though the Covid-19 numbers have dropped marginally. “The positivity rate has gone down but still we can't afford leniency. We need to extend to lockdown,” the CM said.

There will be a total prohibition of wedding ceremonies at public places. Marriages can be held at homes or in the courts with not more than 20 people, under an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). “There will be a complete prohibition on marriage ceremonies at public places, banquet halls, hotels and similar places during this period,” it said.

The service providers or owners of hotels, banquets, marriage halls, sound systems, DJs, and catering services will have to return the advance payments for marriages during the lockdown or have to mutually agree on a later date for the ceremonies, the order said.

Mr Kejriwal had also written to the Union health minister, urging him to direct the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to increase their monthly supplies to Delhi to 60 lakh doses from May to July.

While the positivity rate, which stood at 35 per cent in mid-April, has dropped to 23 per cent, doctors say even this is very high and there is a need to completely break the chain of transmission.

Delhi's cumulative Covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeded 38 lakh doses, the Delhi government said on Sunday.

The Delhi health department says it has vaccinated 2,75,540 people of the 18-44 age group so far and has a stock of 2,74,460 vaccine doses for this age group.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has, meanwhile, ordered an inquiry into reports that 23 Covid-19 patients had gone missing from Hindu Rao Hospital; and has instructed the health department to submit its report by Monday.

AAP MLA Atishi said, meanwhile, that Delhi has so far received 5.5 lakh doses for 1the 8-44 category, over 43 lakh for the 45-plus, and healthcare and frontline workers. “We have now 4.65 lakh doses available for 45-plus people, and healthcare and frontline workers; and 2.74 lakh doses for the 18-44 group,” she said. The total number of cases in Delhi has reached 13,10,231 — of which 87,907 are active cases. The total number of fatalities is 19,071. The city recorded a positivity rate of 23.34 per cent and a case fatality rate of 1.46 per cent. This will be the fourth week of the lockdown imposed as the Covid-19 numbers in the national capital skyrocketed.

## PM speaks to CMs of 4 states on Covid

New Delhi, May 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the chief ministers of Punjab, Karnataka, Bihar and Uttarakhand on the Covid-19 situation in their states, official sources said.

Modi has been speaking to state chief ministers and lieutenant governors of union territories for the last few days to assess the pandemic situation there and offer suggestions.

Chief ministers have also briefed him on the measures being taken by them to deal with the raging second wave of the pandemic.



Patients on oxygen support wait outside the Covid-19 facility of the Chest Disease Hospital in Jammu, on Sunday.

— PTI



Relatives mourn after the death of family member due to Covid-19, as Coronavirus cases surge in the national capital, at LNJP Hospital in New Delhi.

— PTI



Family members along with medical workers shift a COVID19 patient to Level-3 ward of Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in Prayagraj, on Sunday.

— PTI

## India gets 6.7K O2 concentrators, 16 generation plants as aid from abroad

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 9

The Union Government on Sunday said a whopping 6,738 Oxygen Concentrators, 3,856 Oxygen Cylinders, 16 Oxygen Generation Plants, 4,668 ventilators and about three lakh vials of anti-Covid drug Remdesivir have been delivered to the country so far from abroad, adding that it was promptly allocating and distributing the supplies. This comes even as foreign aid continued to pour in from Britain, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Kuwait, China and other nations.

Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong tweeted on Sunday evening, “The first batch of 100 Oxygen concentrators, 40 ventilators, and other anti-epidemic supplies donated by the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) arrived in India today by a Chinese cargo flight from Chengdu. RCSC also decided to provide US\$ one million in cash assistance to the Indian Red Cross Society through the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help India fight against Covid-19.”

Meanwhile, SpiceXpress, the air cargo arm of airline SpiceJet, said it had airlifted 9,600 oxygen concentrators from Beijing, Wuhan, Nanjing and Hong Kong to Kolkata and Delhi on Sunday. The airline said it has airlifted more than 27,000 oxygen concentrators from the USA, Hong Kong, Singapore and China so far.

On British support, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted, “Taking forward our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Consignment of 3 O2 generators & 1,000 ventilators arrives from UK. Each generator can produce 500 litres of oxygen per minute, enough to treat 50 people at a time.”

Earlier on Saturday, 100 oxygen concentrators were sent by Japan as a part of the first batch of the emergency assistance to India. Japan is providing India with 300 oxygen concentrators and 300 ventilators and announced it will continue to extend further support.

Canada also announced that it is sending up to 25,000 vials of the antiviral drug remdesivir

(brand name Veklury) and up to 350 ventilators from its National Emergency Strategic Stockpile to help respond to the critical situation across India. Canada is also providing support through UNICEF's response to the pandemic in India with the urgent provision of 1,450 oxygen concentrators. This support is in “addition to Canada's \$10-million support to the Canadian Red Cross Society, which is supporting the Indian Red Cross Society's procurement of essential supplies and medicines.”

The Canadian Armed Forces are airlifting these supplies to India. On South Korean support, the MEA tweeted, “A valued partner in our extended neighbourhood. First consignment of 30 oxygen concentrators & 200 oxygen cylinders with regulators arrives from the Republic of Korea. Welcome this support from our Special Strategic Partner.”

A total of 282 Oxygen cylinders and 60 Oxygen concentrators also reached India from Kuwait and another 60 MT of liquid oxygen, 800 oxygen cylinders and two concentrators is also on its way from the Gulf nation.



A consignment of three oxygen generators and 1,000 ventilators arrives from the UK. Each generator can produce 500 litres of oxygen per minute, enough to treat 50 people at a time.

— PTI

On British support, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted, “Taking forward our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Consignment of 3 O2 generators & 1,000 ventilators arrives from UK. Each generator has capacity to produce 500 litres of O2/min, enough to treat 50 people at a time. Deeply value the contribution from our close friend.”

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The four categories of people created in the proposed revised vaccination policy are BPL, above poverty line (APL), Antyodaya and frontline workforce, sources said.

Sources revealed BPL has been given a share of 52 percent in the vaccination drive, while APL,

Antyodaya and frontline workforce have been given quotas of 12 percent, 16 percent and 20 percent respectively. Chhattisgarh is the first state to fix quotas for people in the third phase of vaccination in the state.

In a related development, Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday announced to include journalists and lawyers in the frontline workforce.

“Journalists, lawyers and their families will also get priority in vaccination like frontline workers,” Mr Baghel announced.

People with comorbidities, food providers, vegetable vendors, anganwadi workers, mitanis (health workers), panchayat secretaries, ‘Kotwar-Patel’ and public distribution system managers and vendors have also been included in the list of frontline workers.

The Chhattisgarh high court has earlier directed the state government to come out with a fresh adult vaccination policy after setting aside the existing policy which gave priority to Antyodaya card holders in the vaccination drive.

## Centre advises on fungal infection management

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 9

India recorded 3,66,317 fresh cases on Sunday. The numbers have declined marginally over the past three days after hitting a peak of 4,14,554 on Thursday. Deaths continued to surge with 3,747 fatalities reported on Sunday. However there were early signs in the data that the second wave in the country could be reaching its peak. Several states too imposed lockdown or strict curbs as Coronavirus catastrophe continues.

Maharashtra reported 56,578 cases while Karnataka had 47,563. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh were the other top contributors.

Rajasthan recorded 159 deaths and 17,921 coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the death toll to 5,665 and the infection tally to 7,56,707.

Haryana reported 13,548 new coronavirus cases, taking the case tally to 6,15,897 while 12,639 recoveries brought the active number of cases in the state to 1,16,867. Haryana recorded 151 Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to the health bulletin.

In Uttar Pradesh the number of new cases of Covid-19 continued to decline while recoveries went up in the state on Saturday, health officials said. At least 26,847 fresh cases were reported while 34,721 people were declared free of coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours. During

this period, total 2,23,656 Covid tests were conducted in the state.

In a first of its kind data released by the government, on Covid patients requiring critical care, shows that nearly 50,000 people are currently in ICUs while over 14,000 on ventilator support.

Meanwhile, Centre issues advisory on management of Mucormycosis fungal infection in Covid-19 patients

Mucormycosis, a fungal infection being found in Covid-19 patients with uncontrolled diabetes and prolonged intensive care unit (ICU) stay, may turn fatal if uncared.

Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana extended their ongoing lockdowns till May 17 to curb the unprecedented surge of Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Puducherry will also have a two-week shutdown starting Monday, while in Karnataka's stringent lockdown will come into effect on Monday till May 24. On Saturday, Kerala came under a nine-day complete lockdown. This means that from Monday, a majority of the country will be under either a strict lockdown or lockdown-like curbs.

M a h a r a s h t r a . Karnataka and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 71.75 per cent of new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the Union health ministry said in its Sunday morning update.

The revised adult vaccination policy set to be announced by Chhattisgarh government very soon has proposed to give a major share to members of below poverty line (BPL) families in the third phase of inoculation launched in the state on May one, sources said on Sunday.

The proposed policy has divided people in the age group of 18-44 to be inoculated in the third phase of vaccination into four categories and quotas for each category of these people have been fixed, a senior officer in the Chhattisgarh health department told this newspaper unwilling to be quoted since he was not authorised to speak to media.

The four categories of people created in the proposed revised vaccination policy are BPL, above poverty line (APL), Antyodaya and frontline workforce, sources said.

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The Chhattisgarh high court has earlier directed the state government to come out with a fresh adult vaccination policy after setting aside the existing policy which gave priority to Antyodaya card holders in the vaccination drive.

While the sudden surge in the number of cases during the second wave has led to panic among people, what is adding to their fear is the constant threat of new mutants of the virus and how these mutants could potentially harm them.

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI

## COVID | BLUES

## Experts say only Covid-appropriate behaviour can fight disease

## Vaccination a shield against virus

New Delhi, May 9: With the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic ravaging the country and concerns being raised about a possible third wave, experts caution that the next wave could be less severe if people keep following Covid-appropriate behaviour and a large portion of the population is vaccinated.

According to the Union Health Ministry data released on Sunday morning, India recorded 4,03,738 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the country's cumulative tally to 2,22,96,414, while the death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths.

There has been a sharp surge in infections over the past couple of months, making the second wave much worse than the first one that began in early 2020 and peaked in the last quarter of that year before the tally hit a trough in the first quarter of 2021.

Several experts believe that a casual approach that followed the trough of the first wave could be a possible reason for the pandemic raising its head again, though others are also putting the blame on the new mutants and variants of the virus being more virulent.

K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser,

had said on Wednesday last week that the third wave was inevitable and it was necessary to be prepared for new waves, but clarified two days later that the “insidious asymptomatic transmission” can be stopped if prescribed guidelines about precautions, surveillance, containment, treatment and testing are followed.

“If we take strong measures, the third wave may not happen in all places or indeed anywhere at all. It depends on much how effectively guidance is implemented at the local level in the states, districts and cities everywhere,” he said. According to experts,

in a few months when the immunity people have developed naturally or with the help of vaccination fades, the virus strikes again and the only thing that can stop the virus from bouncing back is how people are guarding themselves.

“Early this year, as the new cases receded, people started interacting as if there was no virus. The immunity had already started declining. They organised mass gatherings, they stopped wearing masks, giving the opportunity to the virus to strike again,” said Dr Anurag Agarwal, director, Institute of Genomics and Int-

egral Biology, New Delhi.

“While we anticipate a third wave, we cannot say when exactly it will come or how severe it will be. But if people keep following Covid-appropriate behaviour in coming months and we are able to vaccinate a large number of people, the third wave could be less severe,” Dr Agarwal added.

While the sudden surge in the number of cases during the second wave has led to panic among people, what is adding to their fear is the constant threat of new mutants of the virus and how these mutants could potentially harm them.

— PTI

— PTI

— PTI







DECCAN  
Chronicle

10 MAY 2021

No more bickering, enable  
new anti-Covid task force

The Supreme Court order constituting a National Task Force (NTF) for, among others, making an assessment and recommendations on the availability and distribution of medical oxygen and essential drugs and medicines for the entire country gives the Union government an opportunity to make quick amends to the lapses it committed in preparing the nation for the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19.

The cabinet secretary is the convenor of the NTF which has 12 members drawn from the bureaucracy, academics and the healthcare industry. The court would want the NTF to commence its work immediately and determine the modalities for oxygen supply within a week, reflecting the desperation of thousands of people suffering from the lack of healthcare facilities felt across the country. The court has also tasked them with anticipating the requirements of the nation to face a third wave of the pandemic, which the principal scientific adviser to the government has already warned is on its way. The Union and state governments

**The government must take the court's intervention as a call to assume the power and responsibility in a decisive manner and act. It must ensure that the NTF gets the best help from all concerned...**

complete and real time data for facilitating the NTF's work while all private hospitals and other healthcare institutions have been asked to co-operate with it.

While repeatedly assuring all stakeholders that it has no plans to enter into the executive domain of the government, the apex court has said the constitution of the NTF will facilitate a public health response to the pandemic based on scientific and specialised domain knowledge and "enable the decision makers to have inputs which go beyond finding ad-hoc solutions to the present problems".

The ball is now in the government's court, contrary to a section of the cheerleaders of the NDA dispensation screaming themselves hoarse, saying the court's directive goes against the constitutional scheme of things. True, the court has stepped in to fill a vacuum people have felt but it has made it clear that it is for the government to take "appropriate decisions" on the task force's recommendations though it said the body shall submit its recommendations to the court also. True also that the Constitution vests all the executive power with the Union council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister, who also heads the National Disaster Management Authority, constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

The court must, however, have been disappointed with the response of the government when it asked for a plan to address the pressing issues people face during the pandemic, and hence the decision. That several high courts were also forced to intervene to ensure supply of oxygen and life-saving drugs may have also prompted the Supreme Court into taking a pro-active position.

The government must take the court's intervention as a call to assume the power and responsibility in a decisive manner and act. It must ensure that the NTF gets the best help from all concerned so that it comes up with readily actionable plan which will help address the mess the nation finds itself in now. Quibbling over constitutional niceties can wait till the pandemic is over.

## Israel mars own peace gains

In a series of severe policing moves, Israel did not endear itself to its new allies in the region like the UAE and Bahrain, both signatories to normalisation agreements with Israel last year, besides old enemy Hamas, which rules in the Gaza Strip. Israeli police appeared to block the right to worship for Muslims in the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, their religion's third holiest site. The Israel police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at stone-throwing Palestinian youth on Friday injuring about 205 Palestinians and 18 policemen and also clashed with protesters outside Jerusalem's Old City on Saturday which, as the "Night of Destiny", is also the holiest night in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Weeks of unrest followed by two days of high tension from police action described as "security moves" by the police chief may be traced back not only to competing historic claims to east Jerusalem, which houses holy shrines of Judaism, Islam and Christianity but also to rising anger over the possible eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarra as their land is being claimed by Jewish settlers. This relates to an old phenomenon in Israel's planned demographic change of territories occupied since the 1967 war. Israel's supreme court is to hold a hearing on the case pertaining to East Jerusalem on Monday.

There were also claims of a rocket from Hamas falling in an open area on Sunday and a retaliatory aerial Israeli strike at a Hamas military post. The incidents does no credit to Israel even as Benjamin Netanyahu's government is still in place though Yair Lapid of the centrist Yesh Atid party has been asked to explore forming a new coalition government. The US, Europe and UN are calling for calm even as Israel's Arab allies are condemning the latest moves which, naturally enough, are seen as obstructing Muslims when they are going for Ramadan prayers. In oppressive policing action, Israel may be blithely blowing away the gains made in its peace moves that helped alleviate old enmities in the region.

Subhani

NAMES OF  
THE PEOPLE WHO  
DIED DUE TO  
COVIDIndia, world in middle  
of a 'Third World War'Abhijit  
Bhattacharyya

It's now a "Third World War". In the nineteenth century, Prussia's Maj. Gen. Carl von Clausewitz had said: "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means". That is what the People's Republic of China is now engaged in — waging war in order to dominate the world.

We have now entered the third year of this epic campaign, which began in 2019 on a low key. The Chinese strategy was simple — to subdue without shooting — and to bring India to its knees. This has now turned into a conflagration. New Delhi was totally unprepared and last year, as the threat of the pandemic rose, it got caught up in health issues and couldn't put adequate infrastructure in place. This monumental misjudgment led to vast numbers of Indians shivering down their spine, failing as usual to read Chinese malice.

It's not just India. The world is in the midst of a long-drawn, protracted "Third World War", the first salvo of which was fired by Beijing's dictator-for-life Xi Jinping from Wuhan in 2019, to fulfil the Communist Party of China's twenty-first century ambition of becoming the planet's numero uno power.

The seeds were sown at Wuhan, President Xi's favourite venue to showcase his country's new global ambitions. Remember the "Wuhan spirit" of 2018 — when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Chinese strongman in the aftermath of the Dokalam standoff earlier that year? The prime target was, of the West, and specifically the United States; but Beijing then changed course towards the secondary target, India; decimating Delhi's health and resources through a second-wave warhead that pene-

trated through the fragile firewall of Lutyens' Delhi's diplomatic gullibility, political vulnerability and strategic inability to retaliate against the CPC's malice. This not only brought Delhi down, forcing it to kowtow to the world for aid and help, but now threatens the very existence of India's demography.

As fatalities rise across the land and corpses pile up, the killer epicentre of the war has ferociously revived across the whole of India, wreaking havoc of the kind not seen by Indians before. Without a bullet fire or a bomb dropped, the flames of war are about to send India's economy and its health systems into the ICU. India's defence and diplomacy are on a psychological ventilator, with the polity embarrassed and bruised for going into an avoidable and premature celebration to declare victory over the China-origin virus pandemic.

New Delhi's enormous misjudgment in assessing the incendiary punch of the conflagration has sunk a nation of 1.3 billion into an unprecedented state of pessimism and panic, dejection and depression. India also miscalculated the swift course change of the "Third World War", because unlike all belligerents in previous conflicts in human history, its mass killing spree without military mobilisation doesn't have any visible or definite contours.

The deathly blow of the Chinese-origin virus (Covid-19) is far worse than the physical devastation and destruction that India faced in either the First or the Second World War. The outreach of this virus has been more devastating than the poison gas in the First World War (used by Britain, Germany and Austria-Hungary in the trenches adjacent to the Franco-

German border and beyond) and the subsequent reduced use by combatants in the Second World War following the public revulsion caused after the 1914-1918 war.

In the twenty-first century, however, the Chinese-origin virus has already affected around 320 million people globally and is now on an uncontrollable overdrive. Having afflicted 20 million-plus Indians and killing over 200,000 of them, this silent chemical-biological killer is infecting around 400,000 people in India every single day, with around 3,500-4,000 succumbing every day. The funeral pyres are everywhere, not just in crematoria; ambulances, alleys, parks, car parks, riversides are seeing corpses lit before the last rites.

Compared to the two world wars of the twentieth century, which were largely fought in Europe and other parts of the planet, this is the first "world war" in which India is one of the principal battlegrounds. Make no mistake. Even at the height of the bloodshed between the belligerents, the First World War was a European war, leading to 30 million deaths. It happened mostly on the European heartland, Russia, Turkey, Mesopotamia and East Asia, in which a maximum of 40 nations were directly involved or affected.

The 1939-1945 Second World War, however, killed 60 million people, double that of the First World War, with the devastation centred mostly in Europe, the Soviet Union, North Africa, Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific islands. Mainland India survived a direct assault, along with most

**Compared to the two world wars of the twentieth century, which were largely fought in Europe and other parts of the planet, this is the first 'world war' in which India is one of the principal battlegrounds**

of the African continent, Australia, plus North and South America.

Compare these with the Chinese-virus killer of the Third World War! It has spared no one, except perhaps the country of its origin, as is being claimed by the CPC in its centenary year. Hence, of the 223 countries (sovereign, semi-independent, autonomous, dependents) in the world, all are under attack except one! Isn't it a World War of one (among 223) against 222?

In the midst of this calamity comes the "offer" of proposed assistance to India from Mr Xi, who is also the CPC's general secretary! Should India accept it? As far as Beijing is concerned, we can emulate what then PM Manmohan Singh had done in 2004, in the aftermath of the tsunami, to politely refuse any assistance, at least from the CPC. India can seek or accept aid or help from any of the remaining 222, but not from the one that is actively trying to turn this country into a vassal state at a time of its distress. China has already proved that it is an existential threat to a large number of countries. Now the "Third World War" looms large, with the threat of the airborne "Made in China" germ/virus hovering over the planet.

You don't have to look very far for evidence of the Hans' mischievous thought and intent. On Weibo, see the image of a Chinese rocket launch positioned next to a photo of Covid-19 victims being cremated in India. The text read: "Lighting a fire in China versus lighting a fire in India". This nasty, nefarious image was published by an account of the official Chinese law enforcement agency — CPC Central Political, Legal Affairs Commission — that has millions of Weibo followers. It shows the Chinese rejoicing at the sight of funeral pyres of Indian victims of the "Third World War". Will nemesis catch up one day?

*The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.*

## LETTERS

## DRDO DRUG

It is great to hear DRDO's progress (DRDO's Covid drug gets DGCI nod, DC, May 9). It is a significant development. All the scientists involved in this endeavour must be congratulated for developing this drug indigenously after elaborate trials started as early as March 2020. Clinical trials found that patients condition improved significantly and became free from supplemental oxygen dependence. With the green signal from DGCI, it is hoped 2-DG will be available in hospitals soon and save lives of Covid-19 patients.

**Parthasarathy Mandadi**  
*Tirupati*

## HOSPITAL ADMISSION

The decision by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that the requirement of a positive test for Coronavirus is not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility is welcome and a big relief to patients and their kin and kin (*No need for +ve test for hosp. admission, DC, May 9*). Further, authorities concerned are required to keep tabs on the extortion and fleecing of medication and other paraphernalia.

**Dr C. Ghanshyam**  
*Visakhapatnam*

## 50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN  
ChronicleValue of  
rare coins

HYDERABAD, MAY 9. The City Crime Branch officials investigating the discovery of rare gold coins, dug out earth in the house of the waddar in Mubarakpur village, in Vikarabad, and found the vessel in which the remaining gold coins were preserved. On examining the gold coins, the officials realised the value and importance of their recovery.

The officials informed the State and Centre Archaeological departments about their findings. Mr. V.V. Krishna Sastry, Assistant Director, Archaeology and Museums, A.P. examined the coins and determined the period at 14th centre A.D. The coins in the denominations of 'pagodas' and 'half pagodas' bore the images of Shiva-Parvathi, Gandabherunda (a bird with two necks) and some floral designs on one side and inscriptions in Devanagari script on the other.

Kishwar Desai  
London DiaryIndian summer  
on UK's red list;  
royal duchesses in  
duel of creativity

April may be a cruel month but May heralds the beginning of the holiday season. For some reason, the English prefer to go abroad at the only time the weather is tolerable — in the summer months. It was in the late nineteenth century that Parliament decided to have a summer break. The issue was the pollution of Thames. It stank. Members wanted the windows open due to the heat but that brought in the stink. So they decided to abandon the Westminster Palace for the summer. That brought summer holidays all around.

And now the traffic lights are back again — to guide you whether you can travel to a particular country or not. Australia and New Zealand have made it to the "green" traffic lights, including others like Iceland, along with very few other countries. Which means that the Brits can travel there without having to quarantine for 10 days at a hotel chosen by the government when they return. But countries like India — and some of its neighbours like Nepal and Pakistan fall into the "red" list. Thus while we

know that right now there is a travel ban between the two countries — if any British citizen wants to travel to India, they need to quarantine for ten days in a hotel upon their return, plus all the tests they have to undergo. Some people are deeply unhappy that these restrictions are still in place, despite the vaccine. But that is our "Brave New World" — perfect only for armchair travellers!

So we still have rules of how many others you can meet and how closely they must be related. For instance, six members of two families can meet, etc. But it is only around the third week of June that many of these restrictions are going to be removed — we hope that we can last that long! But of course getting back to "normal" will come with fresh caution as undoubtedly a life free of Covid and its many mutations is still far away. So while the "traffic lights" may turn green, many of us will still hang on to our masks.

Even so, it is not all pleasure and no work. May is also the month when local elections take place. Plus this year, vote to the Scottish Parliament. Municipal

elections in England were cancelled last year due to our first (of many but we did not know it then) lockdowns.

Mind you, despite all the difficulties the country has been through, the Prime Minister is still riding high. Perhaps it is the optimism that he exudes — with the tousled hair and Houdini-like escape mechanisms. Throughout his career, he has got away with much, much more than any one else, and he carries no guilt for any wrong or fault he has committed. He apologises and carries on, a formula that has worked wonderfully.

Normally, the government party does not do well in the four yearly local elections as they are out of sync with general elections. But "lucky" Boris is emerging triumphant all over the English regions. The Labour Party under its leader Sir Keir Starmer (a rare Knighted MP) was hoping to reverse their losses in the North where they were supposed to have a "Red Wall". It had crumbled in the last general election. Alas, it cannot be rebuilt by Sir Keir, and Boris has once again managed to convince voters that he is

their best good news guy.

In London though things are different, the mayor of London has a four-year term. Boris was twice the mayor of London. But in 2016, Sadiq Khan, the Labour candidate, captured London. He has already had a bonus extra year due to the postponement of the election. Now he has won, and extended his stay for three more years. Thus he becomes not only the first minority ethnic candidate to continue to head one of the biggest cities in the world but now will establish the enviable distinction of having been mayor for a eight years. So come 2025 - prepare for Sadiq to turn his mind to leadership of the Labour Party and take a gamble on becoming the first minority ethnic Prime Minister of UK. Of course he may be running against Rishi Sunak or Priti Patel as the Conservatives' prime ministerial candidate. Who could have thought even 10 years ago, such a thing could happen?

And meanwhile a quick note on the publicity outreach of the two duchesses. Both Kate and

Meghan are doing their best to stay in the limelight. Who would have thought the ever productive Meghan Markle even had a book in her, and this time it seems to be a cute little children's book. She has come up with one called *The Bench*, dedicated to her husband Harry — but written for her son. Undoubtedly a money spinner — good or bad — it means that now we all know what gift to buy a toddler.

One person who may not buy it will be the Duchess of Cambridge for reasons which are far too well known, especially after Oprah. But the competition is heating up — as William and Kate have their own "YouTube" channel now. While the two duchesses continue their duel at dawn, from safely across the pond... one wonders, what next?

*Kishwar Desai's latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, has just been published and she is the Chair of the Trust that set up the world's first Partition Museum in Amritsar*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49206.47 0.52
Nifty 50	14823.20 0.67
S&P 500*	4,232.60 0.74
Dollar (₹)	73.51 0.36
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.30 0.33
Euro (₹)	88.76 0.11
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,185,474 1.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.29 0.29
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.015 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.545 -0.016

\* As of Friday/Saturday

## Hero MotoCorp extends plants' shutdown to 16th

Hero MotoCorp said it is extending the shutdown of its plants across India by another week till May 16 in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation. The shutdown also includes the Global Parts Center in Neemrana and R&D facility the Centre of Innovation and Technology in Jaipur, Hero MotoCorp said. Last month, the company had announced temporary stopping of operations at all its six manufacturing units in India.

## Over 2,100 PSB branches closed or merged in FY21



As many as 2,118 branches of 10 public sector banks have either been closed or merged with other banks in the last fiscal, according to an RTI reply. The highest number of 1,283 branches of Bank of Baroda were either closed or merged, according to information provided to an RTI query filed by Neemuch-based activist Chandrashekhar Gaud. No branch of Bank of India and Uco Bank was closed last fiscal.

## Amara Raja resumes ops at Andhra plants

Amara Raja Batteries Ltd said it has resumed operations at its plants at Nunegundlapalli and Karkambadi in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. The resumption of production was done after the Andhra Pradesh High Court suspended the orders passed by the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board. The firm said the recent temporary disruption will not have any material impact on its operations or order book.

## FPIs pull out over ₹5,900 crore from equities last week

Foreign portfolio investors have pulled out Rs 5,936 crore from equities in the first week of May amid worries over the Covid second wave and its fall-out on the economy. FPIs had pulled out Rs 9,659 crore in April after infusing money in the preceding six months. If fears of Covid-19 persist among investors, then further redemptions cannot be ruled out, Himanshu Srivastava of Morningstar India, stated.



## NCLT starts proceedings on creditor plea Ahluwalia Contracts in insolvency soup

New Delhi, May 9: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has initiated insolvency proceedings against construction firm Ahluwalia Contracts India Ltd for defaulting on payments to an operational creditor.

The New Delhi-based NCLT bench allowed the insolvency plea filed by A2 Interiors Products Pvt Ltd against Ahluwalia Contracts, claiming default of Rs 14.10 crore, and appointed an interim resolution professional.

Ahluwalia Contracts had engaged A2 Interiors Products for interior, furnishing and allied civil and electrical works at various project sites. It had supplied materials to Ahluwalia Contracts as part of various work orders issued for six projects at different locations in the country, according to the NCLT order.

It had raised invoices against each work order, which were duly received by Ahluwalia Contracts, however, it failed to release the full payment.

Later, in May 2019, A2 Interiors had issued a notice to Ahluwalia Contracts under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) demanding Rs 12.54 crore along with interest, which was rejected by Ahluwalia Contracts in its reply and raised disputes.

Following this, A2 Interiors approached the NCLT under section 9 of IBC, which allows operational creditors to file an insolvency plea, claiming



a total outstanding debt of Rs 14.10 crore against Ahluwalia Contracts.

This was opposed by Ahluwalia Contracts, contending it as not maintainable, on the grounds that it is arising out of different work orders, which cannot be claimed under one single application and of different service in nature and each contract gives rise to separate alleged debt.

It also alleged that the applicant has concealed certain facts and documents and not disclosed all work orders executed between the parties.

However, the operational creditor said that though it was for work order for six different projects but the corporate debtor is a Principal Contractor. It also submitted that no notice of dispute was raised by Ahluwalia Contracts prior to the notice of demand issued by it.

An NCLT bench comprising members

Sumitapurkayastha and Deepthi Mukesh said: "Considering the documents on records and submissions made, it is observed that there exists an operational debt which is due and payable by the corporate debtor."

It further observed that once the work is complete and the final bill is raised, the retention money becomes due and payable.

Though the corporate debtor has raised dispute prior to the issue of the demand notice with regards to non-completion of work on time, defective work and invoices raised but has itself admitted that retention money is payable.

While admitting A2 Interiors' plea, the NCLT observed that the corporate debtor had admitted to the debt and the said has become due as per their own statement in their email, leaving no scope for any further adjudication.

— PTI

## GOVT RELEASES ₹8,900 CR FOR PANCHAYATS

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MAY 9

Amid the rampant spread of Covid19, the finance ministry, on Sunday, released over Rs 8,900 crore as grants a month in advance for panchayats. Though the payment was scheduled for June, the ministry decided to release it in May in view of the prevailing Covid19 situation. The amount s will be distributed among 25 states, in which the highest share of over Rs 1,441 crore has been granted to Uttar Pradesh, followed by over Rs 861 crore to Maharashtra.

"The Department of Expenditure in finance ministry released an amount of Rs 8,923.8 crore to 25 states for providing grants to the Rural Local Bodies. The grants of Rs 8,923.8 crore are meant for all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions - village, block and district," a finance ministry statement said.

## Jewellers get HC reprieve on hallmarking

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MAY 9



The Bombay High Court has directed the government not to take any coercive action against jewellers till June 14, 2021 for storing or selling non-hallmarked gold jewellery. The government had made hallmarking mandatory from June 1.

The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court was hearing the appeal filed by the All-India Gems and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) and others. The court stayed "coercive action" till it further heard the matter on June 14.

The GJC had contended that the new regulation with effect from June 1 is likely to result in great hardships to around 5 lakh jewellers in India. There are at least 488 districts which do not have hallmarking centres and the Covid restrictions prevent a person from travelling from one dis-

trict to another for hallmarking purposes.

Further, there are 6,000 crore jewellery pieces which need to be hallmarked. Within the time available it is not possible to get all these pieces hallmarked. Any breach of the regulation is punishable with maximum imprisonment of one year.

"The court has in the meanwhile, directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the jewellers under Section 29(2) of the BIS Act, 2016, till the next date of hearing on 14th June 2021. This is

a big relief to the jewellers who shall now be fully protected from any actions from BIS even though they may wish to still go ahead with mandatory hallmarking," said Saiyam Mehra, vice-chairman, GJC.

According to Ashish Pethe, chairman, GJC, court has seen the hardship of jewellers and has taken note of the contention that in proportion to the large number of jewellers in India, the percentage of hallmarking centres available in India is just about 34 per cent.

## Cadila eyes nod for Covid vaccine by June

RAHUL SATIJA  
MAY 9



Cadila Healthcare Ltd plans to submit trial data for its Covid-19 vaccine by end of May and is looking for an approval in June, a newspaper reported citing Sharvil Patel, managing director of Cadila.

The Phase-III clinical trials of the ZyCoV-D vaccine will be representative of its efficacy against

many known variants, as different ones have surfaced in this wave, Patel told the Financial Express. It is by far the largest trial being done in

the country right now and the company has recruited more than 28,000 volunteers, he said.

Cadila is also working toward getting approval to administer the vaccine to children above the age of 12 years, the report said, citing one person it didn't identify. The Ahmedabad-based firm has tested the ZyCoV-D vaccine on more than 1,500 children as part of its ongoing Phase-III

trials. No other vaccine has been tested for children, according to the report.

Once the company gets approval, Cadila plans to make up to 240 million doses per annum at its facilities at Ahmedabad and Vadodara, the report said. Initially, it plans to supply vaccines to India, and eventually, export them to other countries.

— Bloomberg

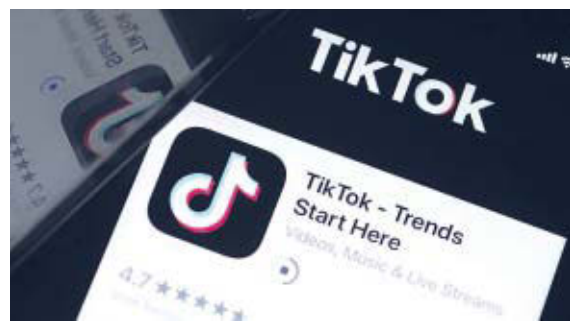
## ByteDance aims to challenge Alibaba

COCO LIU & ZHEPING HUANG  
MAY 9

Zhang Yiming built ByteDance Ltd into the world's most valuable private company via a string of blockbuster apps like TikTok that challenged Facebook and other incumbents on their own turf. His latest target: Alibaba.

The 38-year-old AI coding genius, searching for ByteDance's next big act, has set his sights on China's \$1.7 trillion e-commerce arena. The co-founder has hired thousands of staff and roped in big-name sponsors like Xiaomi Corp impresario Lei Jun to drive what he calls his next "major breakthrough" into global business-selling stuff to consumers via its addictive short videos and livestreams. That endeavor will test not just Zhang's magic touch with app creation and ByteDance's AI wizardry, but also investor reception ahead of one of the tech world's most hotly anticipated IPOs.

His startup is already starting to make waves in an industry long controlled by Jack Ma's



Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and JD.com Inc. It sold about \$26 billion worth of make-up, clothing and other merchandise in 2020, achieving in its maiden year what Alibaba's Taobao took six years to accomplish. It's shooting for more than \$185 billion by 2022. Douyin, TikTok's Chinese twin, is expected to contribute more than half of the firm's \$40 billion domestic ad sales this year, driven in part by e-commerce.

"Short video platforms have so much traffic that they can basically do any business," said Shawn Yang, managing director of Blue Lotus Capital Advisors. "Douyin is not only in ads, but also live-streaming, e-commerce, local life services and

search. This has a lot of room for imagination."

A burgeoning e-commerce business could help the firm surpass its \$250 billion valuation when it goes public, countering concerns around Beijing's crackdown on the country's internet behemoths. Preparations are said to be underway for a listing that would be one of the world's most anticipated debuts. While ByteDance won't handle sales or merchandise itself, it hopes to sell more ads to merchants, boost traffic and take a cut of business.

The internet giant is a late entrant to China's social commerce scene, where influencers tout products to fans like a Gen-Z version of the Home Shopping Network.

The format, pioneered by Alibaba as a marketing tool in 2016, developed a life of its own last year when Covid-19 spurred demand for at-home entertainment. Last year, Alibaba's Taobao Live generated over 400 billion yuan (\$62 billion) of gross merchandise value.

ByteDance is counting on its artificial intelligence-driven, interest-based recommendations to help its e-commerce business catch up.

ByteDance's ambitions aren't limited to Alibaba. The firm has also started to let users book hotels and restaurants through Douyin, offering lifestyle services similar to super-apps like Meituan and Tencent's WeChat.

Douyin's e-commerce foray in China may offer a road map for TikTok, which has begun testing the waters in online shopping through tie-ups with Walmart Inc and Canadian e-commerce firm Shopify Inc. In December, Zhang told global employees that e-commerce, when combined with live-streaming and short videos, offers an even bigger opportunity outside China.

— Bloomberg

## Industry backs up efforts to contain second wave

New Delhi, May 9: As India suffers the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 cases, global and domestic corporate giants are pitching in resources, from airlifting medical equipment, making medical oxygen and setting up hospitals to supplement a public health system buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths.

Amazon and Google as well as Indian firms Tata Sons, Reliance Industries Ltd and Adani Group have set up Covid hospitals, airlifted cryogenic tankers from abroad for transporting medical oxygen and contributed funds to aid the Covid battle, going by company announcements and industry sources.

While Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month announced \$18 million donation, Amazon said 1,000 Medtronic ventilators will be delivered to India. Microsoft said it would work to provide India with 1,000 ventilators and 25,000 oxygen concentration devices.

Mukesh Ambani-led

Reliance Industries tweaked manufacturing at its oil refineries to produce over 1,000 tonnes of medical grade liquid oxygen per day. It has also set up 1,875 hospital beds for free treatment of Covid patients in Jamnagar in Gujarat and in Mumbai.

India's largest steel maker JSW has stopped making some steel products to produce hundreds of tonnes of oxygen for hard-hit areas. It said it was building large Covid care centres around its plants, so that they can be serviced via a pipeline.

While Wipro and Azim Premji Foundation converted one IT facility in Pune into a 430-bed intermediary care Covid hospital, Infosys has set up a 100-room Covid hospital in Bangalore in association with Narayana Health, providing free care to the poor.

Cipla supported Maharashtra government in setting up Covid isolation ward, Vedanta is setting up a field hospital in Delhi NCR and Adani Foundation set up hospi-

tals in Gujarat and even converted the Adani Vidya Mandir school in Ahmedabad into an emergency Covid Care Centre with oxygen support and catered food.

Tata Group made about 5,000 beds available to Covid patients through its group companies and ITC set up a 200-bed makeshift hospital in Kishore Bharati Stadium for Covid patients in a record 72 hours.

State Bank of India set up 1,000-bed makeshift hospitals, 250-bed ICU facilities and 1,000-bed isolation facilities across the country, while Coal India Ltd set up the largest number of Covid beds totalling 2,000, including 750 oxygen and 70 ICU beds.

Tata Group also imported 1,000 cryogenic containers to transport liquid oxygen, supplying 900 tonnes of oxygen per day to state hospitals.

Tech Mahindra supplied medical equipment to over 20 hospitals and L&T Group committed 22 oxygen generators to needy hospitals.

— PTI

## Copper just smashed past a record. Here's what you need to know

MARK BURTON  
MAY 9

Copper soared last week to an all-time high, continuing a sizzling rally that's seen prices double in the past year.

The previous copper record was set in 2011, around the peak of the commodities supercycle sparked by China's rise. This time, investors are betting that copper's vital role in the world's shift to green energy will mean surging demand and even higher prices. Copper futures rose as high as \$10,440 a tonne in London on Friday.

What's the big deal about copper?

Through human history, copper has played a critical role in many of civilization's greatest advances:

from early monetary systems to municipal plumbing, from the rise of trains, planes and cars to the devices and networks that underpin the information age.

The reddish brown metal is mostly unrivaled as an electrical and thermal conductor, while also being durable and easy to work with. Today, a vast array of uses in all corners of heavy industry, construction and manufacturing mean it's a famously reliable indicator for trends in the global economy.

The copper market was one of the first to react as the Covid-19 coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, with prices slumping by more than a quarter between January and March last year. Then as China's unprecedented steps to control the domestic

spread of the virus started to yield results, copper rapidly rebounded—and it hasn't looked back since.

But it's not just China driving the rally. While the country accounts for half of the world's copper consumption and has played an integral part in copper's surge, demand there has actually softened this year. Yet prices continue to drive higher.

Why is copper surging?

It's partly due to evidence of recoveries in other major industrial economies, with manufacturing output surging in places like the US, Germany and Japan.

But investors have also been piling into copper on a bet that global efforts to cut carbon emissions are going to mean the world needs a lot more of the



## Explainer

metal, putting a strain on supply. New mine production may be slow to arrive, as mines are hard to find and expensive to develop.

Electric vehicles contain about four times as much copper as a conventional car, and vast amounts of copper wiring will be needed

in roadside chargers to keep them running. Bringing electricity from offshore wind farms to national power grids is also a copper-intensive exercise.

What does it mean for the economy?

There are mounting concerns that the broad rally in everything from lumber to steel will force central bankers to step in to stop inflation in raw-materials markets spiralling out of control.

In turn, the stellar economic rebound that's driving the commodities rally may start to stall as businesses are hit by higher interest rates, compressed margins, and waning demand from consumers.

Could the rally fizzle out?

In the case of copper, there are some signs that spot demand is starting to cool, particularly in China, and some analysts and traders say the record prices aren't justified by today's fundamentals.

The view among policy-makers is that the rise in commodities prices will prove short-lived, as consumers will focus their spending on services and experiences as economies open up, easing the strain on demand for commodities-intensive items such as second homes, electronics and appliances seen during lockdown.

For copper though, it's not just about strong demand today. In fact, a lot of expected spending on renewables and electric-vehicle infrastructure is yet to really materialise. When it does, it could

transform the outlook for copper usage in developed countries.

How high could copper go?

Trafigura Group, the world's top copper trader, and Goldman Sachs Group both say prices could hit \$15,000 a tonne in the coming years, on the back of a global surge in demand due to the shift to green energy. Bank of America says \$20,000 could even be possible if drastic issues arise on the supply side.

The copper market itself may also be facing a big shift. Trafigura predicts that demand growth in China will be eclipsed by rising consumption in the rest of the world over the coming decade, in a dramatic reversal of the recent trend. That could help underpin a new



