





## SHORT TAKES

## Panel formed for timely distribution of Tocilizumab

**New Delhi:** The Delhi government has set up a three-member technical expert committee (TEC) to prevent the indiscriminate use of Tocilizumab injection and to establish a transparent and efficient system of distribution of this drug to the needy and hospitalized Covid-19 patients. The expert committee will be headed by Pulmonologist Dr M K Daga, and include Dr Manisha Aggarwal and Dr S Anuradha from Maulana Azad Medical College. All Covid hospitals requiring Tocilizumab injection for treatment of patients will have to apply to the experts committee which will meet twice a day to scrutinize these applications and facilitate rapid decision-making "as time is of the essence in such cases", according to an order issued by the Health Department. "The guiding principles for TEC shall be evidence-based clinically approved parameters as well as principles of equity, distributive justice and transparency," the order read. The decision of daily meetings will be conveyed to all the stakeholders through e-mail. — PTI

## Bail denied to riot accused claiming to be 'schizophrenic'

**New Delhi:** A Delhi Court has refused to grant interim bail to a riot accused claiming to be suffering from 'paranoid schizophrenia', saying that the possibility that he is pretending to be suffering from a mental disorder to come out of the jail cannot be ruled out. Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav was hearing the application filed by Mohd Salman seeking interim bail on the ground that he has been suffering from paranoid schizophrenia which requires great care and needs to be admitted to a higher medical centre for further evaluation. The judge dismissed the application and stated, "The possibility cannot be ruled out that the applicant has been making conscious and persistent efforts to somehow come out of the jail by pretending to be suffering from mental disorder. The court said it cannot lose sight of the fact that Salman is an accused in the three heinous cases of riots-cum-murder and the allegations against the applicant are quite serious. — PTI

## Fire services &amp; civil defence chief dies of Covid-19

**New Delhi:** Senior IPS officer Mohammed Jawed Akhtar who headed the directorate general of fire services, civil defence and home guard under the home ministry died of Covid-19 on Friday, officials said. He was 59. Officials said he was admitted to a private hospital in Delhi following coronavirus infection and breathed his last early morning of Friday. The 1986-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre was appointed as the director general (DG) of fire services, civil defence and home guard in August last year. He was set to retire from service in July. The central police organisation that works under the command of the Union home ministry is headquartered in the national capital. Akhtar, before being appointed to the post, was serving as the Special DG with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here. — PTI

## Tihar inmate dies after scuffle with other inmates

**New Delhi:** An inmate of Tihar Jail died on Friday following a scuffle with other inmates inside the prison, officials said. The deceased has been identified as Srikant alias Appu, they said. A senior jail official said that one inmate got injured in a scuffle with some other inmates in jail number 2 on Friday. He was referred to Safdarjung Hospital where he was declared brought dead. He was jailed in 2015 and was involved in a case of murder and other cases of theft etc, the official added. — PTI

■ 'Upbringing and education of children orphaned by Covid govt's responsibility'

## Govt aid for families who lost bread-winners to Covid: Kejri

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the national capital has registered less than 10,000 Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours. "I want to share a good news with you all. In the last 24 hours, Delhi has registered less than 10K Covid-19 cases," he added. Adding a personal touch, he assured the young children of those who had died of Covid that his government would take care of them.

In a virtual press conference, Kejriwal also said that the Delhi government will extend financial help to families which have lost their earning members to the coronavirus and also bear the cost of education and upbringing of children orphaned by the pandemic. But the fight against the coronavirus has not ended and there is no room for leniency, the chief minister



Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and health minister Satyendra Jain at the Covid care centre at Ramlila Ground in New Delhi on Friday. — G.N. JHA

said in an online press conference. "I know many children who have lost both their parents. I want to tell them that I am still there. Do not consider yourself an orphan. The government will take care of their studies and upbringing," Kejriwal said.

Over the past month, children welfare bodies and helplines have come across

several cases where children have been left orphaned. In many other cases, the earning member of the family has died.

Kejriwal said, "We have seen very painful days recently. Many families saw more than one death. Many children lost both parents. I want to tell them that I understand their pain and am standing in

support. Every child who has lost their parents will be educated. The cost of their education and upbringing will be borne by the government. I ask neighbours and families to take care of them too. There are parents who have lost children, and families who have lost their earning member. We will take care of them."

Around 3,000 beds for coronavirus patients have become available in the last 10 days. However, ICU beds remain almost full, Kejriwal said.

Mr Kejriwal cautioned against laxity. "If we become careless again and stop following social distancing norms and guidelines, cases can increase again. We are making arrangements for more oxygen beds, are buying oxygen cylinders and are setting up new ICU beds. If cases increase again, we should be prepared," he said.

## Over 43.67 lakh vaccinated in Delhi so far: AAP MLA

**New Delhi, May 14:** Delhi has administered over 43.67 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccine, out of which 10 lakh people have received both the doses, AAP MLA Atishi said on Friday.

While issuing the vaccination bulletin, she said about 1,23,188 doses were administered on May 13, out of which 51,091 doses were given to the 18-44 age group and 72,097 doses to those aged above 45.

"Until yesterday evening, Delhi has administered a total of 43,67,243 doses. Nearly 10 lakh people out of these have received both their shots and are fully vaccinated. "Thus, evidently, Delhi is ramping up its vaccination programme at a very high speed. The

reason behind the decreased inoculations of those between 18-44 is the shortage of vaccines, especially Covaxin, said AAP MLA Atishi

reason behind the decreased inoculations of those between 18-44 is the shortage of vaccines, especially Covaxin, the stock of which has ended. Hence, the 140 centres administering Covaxin have been temporarily closed down," she said.

For 45-plus and healthcare or frontline workers, Covaxin stock is left for three days and Covishield stock only for two days.

She added that for the 18-44 age group, Covaxin stock has finished, and

Covishield's stock is available for only eight days. Atishi said that people who had already taken their first dose of Covaxin and are ready to take the second shot cannot get jabbed due to unavailability of vaccines.

"We are hoping that the Centre will supply a sufficient stock of vaccines at the earliest. We all are aware of the fact that Delhi has been one of the most severely affected states and is still grappling with the virus. A sigh of relief is that the second wave is witnessing a declining trend. However, an impending third wave can be stopped only through mass vaccination," she said.

— PTI



Jama Masjid was closed on Friday to prevent gatherings in New Delhi on Friday. — G. N. JHA

## Low-key Id celebrated amid Covid-19 restrictions in Delhi

**New Delhi, May 14:** The vast expanse of Jama Masjid's courtyard wore a deserted look and families stayed home on Friday as Id-ul-Fitr celebrations remained a low-key affair in the city.

The celebrations, marking the end of the holy month of Ramzan, was limited to a timid affair due to the unrelenting scare of the coronavirus infection. Shahi Imam of Jama

Masjid Ahmed Bukhari said the celebrations were affected because of the pandemic. "People were troubled this year. The happiness that comes with Ramzan and Id was also missing. Some were sick, there were so many deaths," Bukhari told PTI.

He said usually people come to his house throughout the day on Id, but "today we only talked on phone or con-

ference calls".

Delhi-based student Kulsum Jaha said: "Usually there are guests throughout the day. The number of dishes also reduced so much. It's just not the same this year. And the Covid situation is just so scary," she said.

This was the third time in a row that Id was celebrated in a subdued manner in the national capital. — PTI



Pushpa Sharma

(67) and daughter-in-law Meena (64) in Naveen Shahdara, tested positive for the infection on April 18. She was under treatment at home and doctors confirmed her recovery on May 9 following tests, her grandson Kunal (35)

said. The wheelchair-bound nonagenarian's grandson, a pilot with a commercial airline, and his wife were also indisposed because of coronavirus.

"She (Sharma) was not much aware of the severity of her condition but would moan because of pain, fever, and weakness. But my father made sure that we had a positive ambience at home along with medicines," he added.

The recovery of Ms Sharma, who had moved to Delhi from Gujranwala town in pre-Partition

Punjab in the 1930s, has not only brought her family relief but also hope and motivation to the locals. "We were shocked and had almost lost hope as other family members were also Covid positive and feeling quite low. But Chai ji has fought the virus wonderfully," Shahdara resident Nandini said.

Another Shahdara resident, Gaurav Mahesh Gupta, said Ms Sharma's recovery is a blessing of God and has motivated many who are struggling with the pandemic. — PTI

## Delhi seeks to store oxygen 'excess stocks' in other states

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

After demanding adequate supply of oxygen from the Centre last week, Delhi now seeks help to store excess stock of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), from other states. Owing to the logistical hurdle which supposedly resulted into the increased turnaround time for the tankers and paucity of space to store the liquid medical oxygen, Delhi is now seeking help for storage facilities from neighbouring states.

On May 11, the Indian government's Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) had written to the additional secretary at the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIT) under the commerce ministry, said that excess LMO was available with Delhi, but authorities there could not ensure smooth supply from manufacturers as well as availability of tankers. As per the findings conducted by PESO,

## Delhi reports 8,506 Covid cases, 289 more deaths

**New Delhi, May 14:** Delhi reported 8,506 new coronavirus cases, the lowest in over a month, with a positivity rate of 12.40 per cent, while 289 more people succumbed to the infection, the Health Department said on Friday. The less number of fresh cases can also be attributed to a smaller number of tests — 68,575 — conducted on Thursday.

At 12.40 per cent, the positivity rate is the lowest since April 11 when it

stood at 9.4 per cent. The number of new infections is the lowest since April 10 when 7,897 people were diagnosed with the disease, according to government data.

Delhi had reported 10,489 cases on Thursday, 13,287 cases on Wednesday, 12,481 on Tuesday, 12,651 on Monday, 13,336 on Sunday, 17,364 on Saturday, 19,832 on last Friday, 19,133 on last Thursday, 20,960 on last Wednesday and 19,953 last Tuesday. — PTI

Since May 9, the Delhi government has been trying to get alternate storage space in nearby states, especially at the LMO manufacturers' premises, to store excess LMO in their storage tanks.

It is also revealed that on May 10, the Delhi government lifted had lifted only 150 MT of LMO on from their plants at Panipat

and Roorkee against the allocated quota of 190 MT and then returned the remaining back to the plant due to non-availability of storage space or less demand in Delhi and requested not to release 42 MT of LMO from Panipat and Roorkee Plant and rather store the remaining amounts in their storage tanks.

## Minister reviews progress of free distribution of ration to cardholders

**New Delhi, May 14:** Delhi Food and civil supplies minister Imran Hussain on Friday reviewed the progress of free distribution of ration to public distribution system (PDS) cardholders in the national capital.

According to a government statement, Hussain held a high-level meeting to review the distribution progress under the National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna (PMGKAY) for the two months of May and June.

Earlier this month, the Delhi government had announced to provide free ration to 72 lakh ration card holders in the city for the next two months and financial assistance of

₹5,000 to auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers to help people tide over the COVID-19 crisis.

"He also directed the officers to ensure that Fair Price Shop dealers adopt Covid-appropriate behaviour at all times in ration distribution. The officers of the F&S Department informed that field officers i.e. Assistant Commissioners, Food and Supplies Officers (FSOs) and Food and Supplies Inspectors (FSIs) have been deputed to regularly supervise and check FPSs for ensuring smooth, easy and hassle-free ration distribution," the government said in the statement.

It said that the NFS beneficiaries under the PR and PRS category, who are provided with 5 kg of food-

grain every month under regular entitlement, will be given an additional 5 kg of foodgrain, including 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice, in May and June.

The beneficiaries of the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) will also receive the additional 5 kg of foodgrain for the two months.

"Each AAY household, in addition to a regular entitlement of 25 kg wheat and 10 kg rice per month, is additionally entitled for 4 kg wheat and 1 kg rice per member of the AAY household, free of cost per month for May 2021 and June 2021," it said.

The minister added that the fair price shops will remain open on throughout the week from 9 am to 1 pm and from 3 pm to 7 pm. — PTI

## Covid-19: Over 4,500 arrested, 5.1K FIRs filed

**New Delhi, May 14:** The Delhi Police has registered over 5,100 FIRs and arrested more than 4,500 people from April 19 till May 13 for not adhering to DDMA guidelines in connection with Covid-19, officials said on Friday. According to data shared by police, a total of 5,174 FIRs have been registered and 4,536 people were arrested.

Police said that 51,878 people were challaned for not wearing face masks in the public place, 8,223 people were challaned for not maintaining social distancing norm, 391 for large public gathering or congregations, 57 for spitting and 65 for consumption of liquor, paan, tobacco etc. in public places. — PTI

## EX-AAP MLA dies due to Covid-related complications

**New Delhi, May 14:** Former AAP MLA Jarnail Singh passed away here on Friday due to Covid-related complications, his family said. He was 48.

Singh was admitted in the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital for the past 12-13 days, his brother Karnail said.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia condoled the demise of Jarnail Singh.

In August last year, the AAP suspended him after a picture with objectionable comments against Hindu gods was posted from his Facebook account.

He deleted the post after facing backlash on social media, and claimed that the image was mistakenly published by his son during an online class. — PTI

## No interim relief for Kalra till May 18 in O2 hoarding case: HC

**New Delhi, May 14:** The Delhi High Court Friday declined to grant interim protection from arrest to Navneet Kalra, seeking anticipatory bail in connection with alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, agreeing with the reasons given by the trial court while denying him the relief.

A sessions court had on Thursday dismissed Kalra's anticipatory bail plea, saying the allegations against him were serious and his custodial interrogation was required to "unearth the entire conspiracy".

"I am persuaded by the



Navneet Kalra

reasons given by the trial court which is a valid ground for me not to grant any interim protection now," Justice Subramonium Prasad said

while listing the matter for hearing on May 18.

The observation came after Kalra's lawyers — senior advocates Abhishek M Singhvi and Vikas Pahwa — urged the court to grant some interim protection if the matter was going to be adjourned till May 18 on the request of Additional Solicitor

General (ASG) S. V. Raju. When the hearing commenced on Friday afternoon, ASG Raju urged the high court to hear it on Tuesday, May 18, as he had a lot of material, like information with regard to shell companies, which he needed to place before it and would require some time. Heavens would not fall if the matter is taken up on May 18, Raju said, adding that there was no need for giving such a preference, like hearing the case on a holiday, to Kalra as his plea for anticipatory bail is just like that of anyone else seeking the same relief. — PTI

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railway's have decided to cancel the following Unreserved Mail/ Express & other Special Trains due to low occupancy and other operational reasons as per the following details:-

CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MAIL/DMU EXPRESS SPECIAL TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
04523 Saharanpur - Nangal Dam Daily Special	17.05.2021 to till further advice
04524 Nangal Dam - Ambala Cant Daily Special	18.05.2021 to till further advice
04532 Ambala Cant - Saharanpur Daily Special	18.05.2021 to till further advice
04461 Delhi Jn - Rohtak Jn DMU Daily Special	17.05.2021 to till further advice
04462 Rohtak Jn - Delhi Jn DMU Daily Special	18.05.2021 to till further advice
04455 New Delhi - Ghaziabad Daily Special	17.05.2021 to till further advice
04404 Saharanpur - Delhi Jn Daily Special	17.05.2021 to till further advice
04459 Delhi Jn - Saharanpur Daily Special	17.05.2021 to till further advice
09805 Kota Jn - Udhampur Weekly Special	19.05.2021 to till further advice
09806 Udhampur - Kota Jn Weekly Special	20.05.2021 to till further advice

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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## SHORT TAKES

## Kerala lockdown extended till May 23

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The Kerala government on Friday announced that the total lockdown being enforced in the state from May 8 to May 23 to contain the massive spread of Covid. The decision to extend the lockdown was taken in view of high test positivity rates in districts, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. The state is currently under a 9-day complete shutdown as part of its efforts to bring down the daily caseload of infected persons. Addressing a press conference here, Mr Vijayan also announced 'triple lockdown' in four districts — Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Malappuram — from May 16 to bring down the rising number of cases. Such strong measures will help contain the massive spread of virus in these districts, he said. — PTI

## Hany Babu tested Covid-19 positive

**Mumbai:** Bhima Koregaon case accused Hany Babu has tested Covid positive, his family informed on Friday. The family has asked the Maharashtra government to shift him to a multi-specialty hospital. Babu was admitted to the state-run JJ hospital on Thursday for the follow up treatment of his eye infection. "At about 7.30 pm [on Thursday], when Hany's mother arrived at JJ Hospital to meet her son, she was informed by a nurse that Hany had tested Covid Positive," the family said in a statement. Urging the Maharashtra government to shift Babu to a better hospital, the family said, "It is an injustice that he had to suffer due to the negligence [of] state officials. We are dealing with an opaque and callous system which is deaf to our cries and blind to our pain."

## DJ held for hurting Rupani's reputation

**Ahmedabad:** Police have detained a 30-year-old DJ in Vadodara city of Gujarat on the charge of harming state chief minister Vijay Rupani's reputation by making and uploading a video by using a part of the latter's past speech, officials said on Friday. The accused was identified as Pradeep Kahar, a resident of Kahar Mohalla in Dandiya Bazaar locality of Vadodara, they said. He was detained on Thursday by Vadodara city crime branch under IPC section 469, which deals with forgery for purpose of harming reputation, a release issued by the police said. Right now, he is kept under detention and will be formally arrested once his Covid report comes negative, it said. Kahar is a local DJ and uses the name 'DJ Ade' on various social media platforms, including on FB. — PTI

## Covid mayhem continues in J&amp;K

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, MAY 14

Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated in a subdued manner in Jammu and Kashmir as Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc upon lives. As many as 115 more people fell prey to the deadly virus whereas about 7,500 new positive cases surfaced in the twin Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh during the past two days.

The local religious groups and the mosque committees in J&K had, around midnight on Wednesday, endorsed Pakistan Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal (Eid) moon. However, no big Eid congregations could be held anywhere in the UT due to the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 pandemic.

Only small groups of Muslims offered Eid prayers in local mosques or in the lawns of residential houses with complete adherence to the Covid standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. Prominent physician Dr Abdul Wahid Bandy said that the lockdown is the most effective remedy to break the chain and that he was happy to see that the people were abiding by it and should bear it for some more time.

Meanwhile, the armies of India and Pakistan, on Thursday, the Eid day on both sides of the Line of Control, exchanged sweets and pleasantries at Tithwal

▶ **THE LOCAL** religious groups and the mosque committees in J&K had, around midnight on Wednesday, endorsed Pakistan Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal (Eid) moon. However, no big Eid congregations could be held anywhere in the UT due to the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 pandemic.

crossing on Kishanganga River (called Neelum River in Pakistan) in Tangdhar and Kaman Aman Setu along the de facto border in frontier districts of Kupwara and Baramulla to revive the goodwill gesture witnessed on major festivals.

J&K has currently about 60,000 active cases of Covid and Srinagar district has the highest number of these. The death toll has crossed the 3,000 mark after sixty more people died from the virus on Friday. Among them were three Jammu-based doctors Tahir Mirza, Mohammad Akram Malik and Basharat Hussain Shah.

Ladakh has currently 1,547 active positive cases of Covid and the death toll is 161. The landlocked region which has a population of less than 300,000 has had a total of 15,916 positive cases but, as was claimed by the official in Leh, 14,208 of them have already recovered.

## Covid relief work will continue, says Youth Cong chief

Questioning is being done following a Delhi high court order, says police

**New Delhi, May 14:** A Delhi Police crime branch team on Friday questioned Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas B.V. over Covid-related material, including medicines and oxygen cylinders, being provided by him to people. The questioning is being done following a Delhi high court order, police said. The court on May 4 had directed police to examine instances of politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir in Delhi and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence.

"The policemen wanted to know how did I get the relief material to distribute among the people. I said I was helping people to save



Srinivas B.V.

▶ **THE QUESTIONING** is being done following a Delhi High Court order, police said.

▶ **THE COURT** on May 4 had directed police to examine instances of politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir in the national capital and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence

their lives and we have an entire team of hundreds of volunteers at IYC (Indian Youth Congress) that was working round the clock to arrange material and provide it to people," Mr Srinivas said.

BJP leaders, including East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir and Delhi unit spokesperson Harish

Khurana who have also been questioned by police in connection with distribution of relief material, said that the issue should not be politicised.

Mr Srinivas said he was undaunted by the police questioning and was only helping those who had no support from any quarters in this hour of crisis.

"We are continuing our work and not scared of police or any PIL. There is nothing wrong in helping people who have no one to fall back upon and who are desperately trying to save themselves and their families from the fatal virus," the IYC president said.

Mr Srinivas said he answered questions of the police team and also submitted a detailed written response to its queries.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a time when people are craving for help all over the country, the government is wasting its time by indulging in "raid raaj" instead of helping the people. — PTI

## 270 deadly black fungus cases reported in Pune

**Pune, May 14:** Around 270 cases of Mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection, have been reported so far in Pune district, prompting a government task force to come up with a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for patient management in hospitals, officials said on Friday.

Symptoms of Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision.

It affects the sinuses, the brain and the lungs and can be life-threatening in people who are diabetic or have suppressed immunity.

Mucormycosis, whose treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach, has come in focus during the pandemic as it has been detected in some

▶ **SYMPTOMS OF Mucormycosis**, also known as black fungus, include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision

recovering and recovered coronavirus patients.

Saurabh Rao, divisional commissioner, Pune division, said so far around 270 cases have been reported in various hospitals in the district.

"Our divisional task force member Dr Bharat Purandare has come up with a detailed SOPs for management of Mucormycosis. The SOPs have been vetted by the task force," he said.

"The SOPs have been issued to all hospitals in the state. We have asked hospitals to follow the guidelines mentioned in the SOPs," the IAS officer said.

The SOPs contain details about clinical management, treatment protocols, patient management, surgical intervention and medication, Mr Rao said.

Asked about fatality rate among Mucormycosis patients in Pune district, the senior bureaucrat said they are collating data in this regard. It is a rare fungal infection. Before Covid

also, we used to see such cases, but their number was very low. During the first wave of Covid, we came across hardly four to five cases. "But during the second wave of Covid, we are seeing quite a number of cases, said Dr Abhishek Ghosh, a microvascular reconstructive surgeon at Noble Hospital.

He said so far around 40 cases of Mucormycosis have been reported in his hospital. — PTI

## J&amp;K: BSF recovers AK-47 rifle, pistol dropped by Pak drone

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, MAY 14

The BSF, on Friday, claimed that it has seized a consignment of arms and ammunition dropped by a drone from across the International Border (IB) in J&S Samba district.

The consignment, wrapped in a polyethylene bag and supported by a wooden frame, included one AK-47 assault rifle and a 9 MM pistol with a magazine and 15 rounds of ammunition, a BSF spokesman said in Jammu.

A statement issued by the paramilitary force,

which forms the 'first line of defence' along the 198-km stretch of the IB with Pakistan, added that upon getting specific information of dropping of the consignment by drone, it (BSF) carried out a search operation in the general area of Samba sector on Friday.

IG (BSF, Jammu) N.S. Jamwal has congratulated the "alert" BSF troops for this "big achievement" which "again foiled the nefarious motive of Pakistan" and said that the BSF is "ever alert and vigilant on IB 24x7 to thwart the nefarious designs of Pakistan," the statement said.

## Odisha sees highest 1-day Covid tally of 12,390 cases

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 14

The Covid-19 graph in Odisha continued its upward trend on Friday with the highest single-day infections of 12,390 cases. This apart, at least 22 patients undergoing treatment succumbed to the virus in the state.

With the detection of the new cases, the Covid-19 positive tally in the state surged to 5,88,687 while the death toll rose to 2,273.

Odisha currently has 1,04,016 active cases while 4,82,345 patients have recovered from the disease so far, state health and family welfare department said.

Of the new cases reported from 30 districts, 6,938 were detected from various quarantine centres, and the rest 5,452 were detected during contact tracing, said data released by the State Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Department.

Four deaths were registered in Khordha, three deaths in Angul, two each deaths in K a l a h a n d i, Kendrapara, Rayagada and Sundargarh while one each death was reported Bolangir, Boudh, Cuttack, Deogarh, Gajapati, Ganjam and Kandhamal.

Of the new cases reported on Friday, Khordha district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, detected the maximum 2,201 cases, followed by Sundargarh (882), Cuttack (719), Sambalpur (677), Angul (532) and Bargarh (507).

## Cong says govt 'harassing' IYC chief for aiding needy

**New Delhi, May 14:** The Congress on Friday accused the Modi government of resorting to "raid raaj" after police questioned its youth wing chief Srinivas B.V. on distribution of oxygen and medicines to Covid affected, even as the BJP insisted that activists across parties were being questioned due to a court order.

The Delhi Polices Crime Branch questioned Srinivas about the assistance being provided by him, and a senior official said it was done as per a May 4 Delhi High Court order.

The court had directed police to examine instances of politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir here and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence.

As the Congress questioned the police action, BJP's Amit Malviya said, "Delhi Crime Branch, pursuant to a court order,

▶ **THE DELHI** Polices Crime Branch questioned Srinivas about the assistance being provided by him, and a senior official said it was done as per a May 4 Delhi High Court order.

is questioning activists across parties, who were arranging help for people in need, on the source of supplies when citizens, even some hospitals were struggling. Only those with a history of hoarding and bootlegging are complaining."

Earlier, the Congress had termed as political drama the questioning of Indian Youth Congress chief Srinivas and asked the Modi government to fulfil "raaj dharma" instead of resorting to "raid raaj".

"The one who saves is always greater than the one takes it," former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi using the hashtag

'IStandWithIYC'.

Its chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a press conference that the Congress will neither be "cowed down" nor "bow down", and will continue to serve and help people in need during the Covid pandemic.

"This is clearly a political drama, which is aimed at threatening and stopping all those who are trying to help others in need. It is the duty of all Indians today to oppose such raids," he told reporters. Surjewala said at a time when people are craving for help all over the country, the government is wasting its time by indulging in "raid raaj" instead of helping the people.

"By raiding the IYC chief, PM (Narendra) Modi and (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah have done a shameful act," he said, asserting that "even foreign embassies are asking for oxygen and help from the IYC". — PTI

## CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to low occupancy and other operational reasons Railways have decided to cancel and reduce the frequency of following special trains, as per the details given below:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
04740 Bikaner Jn.-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Superfast Special	15.05.2021 to till further advice
04739 Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Bikaner Jn. Superfast Special	16.05.2021 to till further advice
02463 Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Jodhpur Jn. Express Special	19.05.2021 to till further advice
02464 Jodhpur Jn.-Delhi Sarai Rohilla Express Special	20.05.2021 to till further advice
04811/04812 Sikar Jn.-Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Sikar Jn. Exp. Spl.	19.05.2021 to till further advice

REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Effective From
02964 Udaipur City-Hazrat Nizamuddin Superfast Special	Daily	Tri-Weekly (Tue, Fri, Sun)	16.05.2021 to till further advice
02963 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Udaipur City Superfast Special	Daily	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Sat)	17.05.2021 to till further advice
04727 Sriganga Nagar-Delhi Jn. Express Special	Daily	Tri-Weekly (Tue, Thu, Sat)	15.05.2021 to till further advice
04728 Delhi Jn.-Sriganga Nagar Express Special	Daily	Tri-Weekly (Wed, Fri, Sun)	16.05.2021 to till further advice

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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103721

# Door to Door Screening for Covid Test in Rural Areas

Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

## Panchayats are being encouraged to implement Test, Track and Treat Strategy

- Teams will aware every household in villages by visiting door to door and such teams will identify covid patients after screening.
- During the screening, patients with mild and moderate symptoms will be given "medicine kit" and patients with severe symptoms will get immediate medical attention in nearby medical centres.
- Such multi-disciplinary teams will include Trainee Doctors, Asha and Anganwadi Workers.
- With the support of panchayats, Village Dharamshalas, Government schools & AYUSH centres etc. will be set up as isolation centres where oximeter, steam machine, thermometer and other essential medicines will be arranged.

Helpline For Assistance Regarding Covid-19 **8558893911** (for Entire State) **1075** (Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

Sanitization | Mask | Social Distancing

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana [www.prharyana.gov.in](http://www.prharyana.gov.in) @Cmohry @DiprHaryana



## SHORT TAKES

## Plea in SC to cancel Class 12 exams

**New Delhi:** A plea has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre to cancel the class 12 exams in view of surge in Covid-19 cases. The petition filed by an advocate said the results of Class 12 students be declared based on 'objective methodology' within a specified time frame. Conducting Class 12 board examination is not possible because of surging Covid-19 cases. Even online or offline examinations not feasible because of an unprecedented pandemic. Delay in the declaration of Class 12 results will hamper students taking admission in foreign universities", the petition said. The petition filed by lawyer Mamta Sharma has made the Centre, Central Board of Secondary Education and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination as parties in the case. — PTI

## 3 inmates killed in UP prison shootout

**Chitrakoot, UP:** Three prisoners were shot dead inside the Chitrakoot district jail on Friday, the police said. The three inmates gunned down in the district jail at Ragauli were identified by police as Anshu Dixit, Merazuddin alias Meraj Ali and Mukeem Kala, belonging to Sitapur, Ghazipur and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh. "Dixit shot dead Ali and Kala, and held some other prisoners at gunpoint and threatened to kill them. He was later killed in an exchange of fire with police," Chitrakoot range IGP K. Satyanarain said. Asked how did a firearm reach Dixit inside the jail, the IG said, "Only after the probe, it can be concluded how weapon reached inside the jail." Jailor S.P. Tripathi, however, had earlier said Dixit had snatched the service revolver of a jail staff when the official had intervened in an argument among the inmates. — PTI

## 3 kids among 6 drown in Punjab

**Ludhiana:** Six including five children died after they drowned in a pond in Mangarh village, about 20 kms from here, on Friday, the police said. The police said that one of the children entered the pond to take a bath during which he slipped and lost control. As the other four boys standing outside saw him drown they also jumped into the pond in a bid to save him. Seeing all the children drown, a 22-year-old youth, who was standing near the pond also entered it to save them. However, he also lost his life. Joint commissioner of police Deepak Parikh said that all the six bodies have been taken out. The children who lost their lives were between the age of 4 and 10, he added. — PTI

## Grenade blast kills 2 in Assam

■ **Continued from Page 1**  
attack was one Surajit Talukdar who succumbed to his injuries at the Assam Medical College and Hospital Dibrugarh. The other deceased person has been identified as Sanjiv Singh (25). Two more persons have sustained injuries and are stated to be in critical condition. Police reached the spot immediately after the incident and an investigation has begun. The Army and Police have cordoned off the area. Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed concern over the grenade blast and asked DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta to deal with the incident sternly and nab the miscreants at the earliest. Sources said that preliminary reports suggest that it was an extortion related incident as Ulfa-I rebels have intensified extortion drives in upper Assam districts and are mounting pressure on businessmen, tea garden owners and business houses for paying extortion money. The incident was aimed at making their presence felt so that businessmen start responding to their extortion demands, security sources said. Mr Sarma in a social media post informed that Union home minister Amit Shah called him to enquire about the grenade blast and condoled the death of two civilians. "I apprised the Union home minister on the matter and informed that Assam police has been asked to take stern measures against perpetrators and nab them immediately," he said.

## YSR Cong rebel MP K. Raghu held for sedition



Raghu Ramakrishna Raju

■ **THE CRPF**, under whose protection the MP is in, allegedly tried to prevent the CID sleuths from taking Raju into custody, but the CID authorities took up the matter with the CRPF top brass and went ahead with their action

■ **THE MP** was celebrating his birthday at his Hyderabad residence when he has arrested several months now.

In recent days, he has been attacking the state government over the "mishandling" of the Covid-19 crisis.

The CRPF under whose protection the MP is in on the orders of the Union home ministry, allegedly tried to prevent the CID sleuths from taking Raju into custody, but the CID authorities reportedly took up the matter with the CRPF top brass and went ahead with their action.

The MP was celebrating his birthday at his Hyderabad residence when the CID men nabbed him. "About 30 CID men came to our house without any warrant and forcibly took away our father. They even shoved the CRPF personnel away. We were not served any notices," Mr Raju's son Bharat alleged. — PTI

## 'Havan' can ward off 3rd wave: MP mantri

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, MAY 14

Unfazed by criticism from several quarters for her recent remarks that 'havan' can ward off Covid-19, Madhya Pradesh tourism minister Usha Thakur said one can shield oneself from the virus if one adopted the Vedic way of life. "I can establish with evidence that one can stay healthy by following Vedic way of life. I stand by my statement that 'yagya' can keep the third wave of coronavirus pandemic at bay," she told reporters late on Thursday. The minister a couple of days ago created a flutter when she exhorted people to perform yagya, describing it an 'ancient

## Cong MLA booked for circulating 'fake' video

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
BHOPAL, MAY 14

A Congress MLA was booked for sharing a 'fake' video in social media to expose mismanagement in the Covid care Centre opened in Vidisha Medical College hospital in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Friday. Shasank Bhargav, who

represented Vidisha Assembly constituency, posted the video in a WhatsApp group as well as his Facebook wall alleging mismanagement of the Covid care centre.

BJP leader Surendra Singh Chouhan took strong exception to it and lodged a complaint, claiming that the video clip had no link with Vidisha Medical

College hospital and the 'fake' video was circulated to tarnish the reputation of the institution and the district. "A thorough scrutiny of the video clip has established that the hospital captured in the video was not the Covid care centre of Vidisha Medical College hospital. It was circulated to defame the hospital," he said.

The minister had earlier drawn flak by suggesting reciting Hanuman Chalisa to keep one safe from Covid-19. "I recite Hanuman Chalisa, perform havan with cow dung cakes, and blow conch to shield me from coronavirus", she had earlier said.

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practice, going on since ages, to purify our environment for keeping the third Covid wave away". "We all have the responsibility of purifying our environment. The practice of performing yagya to end a pandemic has been prevalent since time immemorial. This is

rubble in the neighboring town of Beit Lahia, residents said. Four strikes hit the building at 11 pm, just before the family went to sleep, Rafat's brother Fadi said. The building's owner and his wife also were killed.

"It was a massacre," said Sadallah Tanani, another relative. "My feelings are indescribable."

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, said the operation involved tank fire and airstrikes, aimed at destroying a tunnel network beneath Gaza City that the military refers to as "the Metro", used by militants to evade surveillance and airstrikes.

"As always, the aim is to strike military targets and to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties," he said. "Unlike our very elaborate efforts to clear civilian areas before we strike high-rise or large buildings inside Gaza, that wasn't feasible this time."

When the sun rose, residents streamed out of the area in pickup trucks, on donkeys and on foot, taking pillows, blankets, pots and pans and bread. "We were terrified for our children, who were screaming and shaking," said Hedaia Maarouf, who fled with her extended family of 19 people, including 13 children.

Adnan Abu Hasna, a spokesman for UNRWA, said thousands broke into

## Heavy rain lashes parts of Kerala, floods feared

*Monsoon to make early arrival over Kerala, claims IMD*

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 14:** As the low-pressure area in the south-eastern Arabian Sea intensified into a severe depression on Friday, heavy rains lashed many parts of Kerala and huge tidal waves started hitting low-lying coastal areas.

Anticipating massive tidal flooding, the authorities have started shifting to safety people living in the low-lying seaside regions of the southern part of the state.

The southwest monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala on May 31, a day earlier than its normal onset date, the India meteorological department (IMD) said on Friday.

The normal onset date of the monsoon over Kerala is June 1.

In some coastal pockets, tidal waves entered the seaside areas, exposing coastal villages to high tides and flooding.



A family tries to wade through their flooded house due to heavy rain in Kochi on Friday.

Authorities have sounded red alerts in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Ernakulam districts on May 14. Northern districts, including Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasargod, would be on red alert on Saturday.

Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the state has taken steps to deal with any calamity arising out of the cyclonic storm. Even though Kerala is not in the predicted path of the cyclone, heavy rains, strong winds and strong sea gusts are expected till May 16. — PTI

## Assam order probe into jumbos' death

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, MAY 14

Assam forest minister Parimal Suklabaidya who on Friday visited the remote hills where at least 18 elephants were killed said that preliminary investigation indicates that wild elephants were killed due to electrocution caused by lightning. However, the exact reason will be known once the post-mortem report comes, he added.

"An inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of exact death. The preliminary report of inquiry has been asked to be submitted within three days and a detailed inves-



A woman pays tribute to a wild elephant which is believed to have died after Thursdays lightning strike at Bamuni hills in Nagaon district.

igation report within 15 days," Mr Suklabaidya told reporters. The minister also expressed deep concern and grief over the

unfortunate incident. In what has left the wildlife lovers and activists in tears, at least 18 wild elephants were

## Body of Kerala woman killed in Israel to be brought home May 15

**Idukki (Kerala), May 14:** The body of Soumya Santhosh from Kerala, who was killed in a Palestinian rocket attack in Israel on May 11, will be brought here on Saturday.

Minister of state for external affairs V. Muraleedharan said on Friday that the mortal remains were being repatriated from Israel to Kerala via New Delhi. "The mortal remains of Ms Soumya Santhosh, who was killed in rocket attacks from Gaza, are being repatriated today from Israel to Kerala through Delhi. They will reach her native place tomorrow," Mr Muraleedharan, who is also from the southern

State, said in a tweet. "I will personally be receiving the remains in Delhi. May her soul rest in peace," he tweeted. Soumya, 30, hailing from Keerithodu in Idukki district, had been working as a housemaid in Israel for the last seven years. She was killed on Tuesday when the rocket fell on her residence in the city of Ashkelon while she was talking to her husband Santhosh, who is in Kerala, over video call, her family has said. — PTI

## VHP urges judiciary to take cognisance

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

**BENGAL CLASHES**

Claiming that 3,500 villages and 40,000 people, mostly Hindus, including those from the SC/ST communities, have been affected due to the "brutal and gruesome political violence" in West Bengal, the VHP Friday urged the judiciary to issue strict directions to the TMC government for "restoration" of law and order.

Asking the judiciary to take cognisance of incidents, the VHP alleged that several people have been "badly affected" and shops and houses vandalised and asked the state government to rise above petty politics and make arrangements for victims of the violence.

The TMC retained power in the state for the third consecutive term earlier this month and since then Opposition parties, mainly the BJP, have been claiming that its supporters and workers have been facing "political violence"

unleashed by the TMC supporters.

The VHP alleged that a section of people has been victims of "brutal and gruesome political violence," shops, houses, standing crops have been destroyed in the violence, and "groups of goons are forcibly collecting protection money from the victims. It also alleged that important documents, like voter IDs, Aadhar cards among others, have been forcibly taken from some residents while false cases have been registered at many places against the victims of the political violence.

VHP central secretary general Milind Parande, who was in West Bengal to take stock of the situation, alleged that the state government and the administration appear to be completely indifferent to the incidents, and complaints are also not being registered.

## Penpa Tsering elected prez of Central Tibetan Administration

**Dharamsala, May 14:**

Penpa Tsering, former speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, has been elected as the president of the Central Tibetan Administration based here, officials said Friday.

Tsering secured 34,324 votes to secure the post of "Sikyong" (political leader), whereas Kalsang Dorjee Aukatsang won 28,907 votes in the recently held polls, said chief election commissioner of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Wangdu Tsering Pesur, during an online press briefing here.

He also announced the appointment of 45 members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. More than 83,000 Tibetans living in 26 countries participated in the third and final round of voting for the election to the post of Sikyong on April 11.

The 45 new members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will include 10 members representing each of Tibet's three traditional provinces — U-tsang, Kham, and Amdo — and two representatives from each of Tibet's four major schools of Buddhism and pre-Buddhist Bon religion. There are around 1.3 lakh Tibetans in India and across the globe. — PTI

## Virus spreads to rural India: PM

■ **Continued from Page 1**  
Modi added: "You have never disappointed the nation. We hope this time too, to protect yourself and your family from Covid, all necessary precautions are taken. Wearing masks properly and regularly is important."

Facing the world's worst health crisis, India has reported over three lakh daily infections for 22 consecutive days. The health ministry said India logged 3,43,144 new infections in the last 24 hours, taking the case tally to 2,40,46,809. The tally of total cases

crossed 2.4 crores on Friday. With 4,000 more deaths, the toll stands at 2,62,317 since the pandemic first struck India over a year ago. While 2,00,79,599 people have recovered from the virus across India, the number of active cases is 37,04,893. The bulk of new infections is said to be coming from rural areas.

On Friday, Mumbai reported 1,657 new cases, and over 2,572 recoveries and 62 deaths in the last 24 hours. Seeing a dip in the number of positive cases, Delhi on Friday reported 8,506 new cases,

the lowest since April 10, with the positivity rate falling to 12.40 per cent; and 289 more deaths. The Kerala government on Friday extended the strict statewide lockdown to fight the pandemic till May 23.

Andhra Pradesh reported 22,018 new Covid-19 cases, taking the cumulative caseload to 13,88,803. Eith 15,747 new Covid cases, Uttar Pradesh recorded 312 deaths in the last 24 hours. Kerala reported over 34,000 new cases on Friday, and Odisha 12,390 new cases and 22 more deaths Friday. Karnataka

reported 41,779 new cases, 35,879 recoveries and 373 deaths in the last 24 hours. Rajasthan had 14,289 fresh Covid cases and 155 deaths on Friday, taking the infection tally to 8,35,814, with the death toll in the state at 6,472, officials said.

The health ministry said Friday it would supply a total of 191.99 lakh doses of vaccines — Covishield and Covaxin — to the states and Union territories free of cost from May 16 to May 31.

These include 162.5 lakh Covidshield doses and 29.49 lakh Covaxin doses.

with ensuring their security are unable to do their job. The situation is such in the state that people are scared of the police, and the police are scared of the ruling party (TMC) workers. Where is the rule of law?" he asked. More than 175 people from West Bengal are taking shelter at a Ranpagli school in Dhubri district, bordering the neighbouring state. The Assam government has been facilitating shelter to them.

Mr Dhankhar thanked the Assam government for "attending to people" who took shelter in

Election Commission and the Central forces. This is against the very soul of the Constitution". He said, "I had never imagined that I would have to go through such severe hurt and pain while discharging my duties as a governor. After the poll results were announced, West Bengal experienced blood-shed, arson, loot, violation of woman's dignity and rampant vandalism."

"People flee from their homes and take shelter in other states only when they realise they are insecure and those entrusted

with ensuring their security are unable to do their job. The situation is such in the state that people are scared of the police, and the police are scared of the ruling party (TMC) workers. Where is the rule of law?" he asked.

More than 175 people from West Bengal are taking shelter at a Ranpagli school in Dhubri district, bordering the neighbouring state. The Assam government has been facilitating shelter to them.

Mr Dhankhar thanked the Assam government for "attending to people" who took shelter in

Assam. "I would like to express my gratitude to the Assam government for taking care of our people who fled their homes under unfortunate circumstances," Mr Dhankhar said.

He also sought to know why human rights activists and NGOs have not tried to reach out to those affected by post-poll violence and highlight their plight.

"My hands are tied as a governor but where are the human rights activists, NGOs and journalists? Are they all wearing dark glasses?" said Mr Dhankhar.



## THE ASIAN AGE

15 MAY 2021

### Opp. letter key first step govt must take on board

Leaders of 12 Opposition parties have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that his government rework its vaccination policy and announce a universal free vaccination programme against Covid-19 and provide immediate financial relief to the people who have been hit by the second wave of the pandemic. The Union government must procure vaccines centrally from all available sources for the purpose and fully spend the budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crores for vaccination and the money in the PM-Cares Fund in the fight against the pandemic, they said.

India is now witnessing the more fatal second wave of the pandemic and is left with no option but to declare an all-out war against the coronavirus. The steps the Opposition has listed invariably could be part of the strategy even an expert would lay out. On the other hand, the vaccine policy the government now follows is deeply flawed: It has left the job to the state governments and the private sector to source doses from Indian or foreign

**The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus**

The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus. The government now says the country will get 216 crore doses by December-end. This is a welcome announcement as the quantity is enough to inoculate all the eligible persons in this country. With an assured supply of the doses, the government must now set a practical deadline for vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the population which, experts say, is a necessary condition to attain herd immunity, and roll out a programme with definite milestones. The state governments and the private sector can be drafted for the success of the mission. The programme should work in a reverse engineering mode and ensure that every bottleneck is cleared.

The Opposition has called for the postponement of the Grand Vista project as well as scrapping of the three laws that would govern the agriculture sector in this country. We find these demands are a digression. This nation has far too many issues left unaddressed for centuries, but the challenge the virus poses eclipses them all.

The nation is going through one of the most difficult phases in its history, and it's time all the people joined together and fought off the enemy, a microorganism, as one man. Shorn of the political points in it and the rhetoric, the Opposition leaders' letter can be seen as a first step. The government should drop the recalcitrant attitude it has shown towards the earlier Opposition positions and instead take this as an opportunity to work together to save the nation from further devastation.

### Courting transparency

The Chief Justice's idea of live-streaming and telecasting live proceedings of the Supreme Court is to be welcomed. The CJI is seeking a consensus within the court to try and take forward a path breaking concept, which can bring transparency and openness that can reinforce the faith of the public in the judicial system. The idea was mooted in a 2018 case in the top court and experiments were conducted in the Gujarat high court, which telecast proceedings on the YouTube channel. The pandemic may have enforced virtual hearings on the judiciary but it does appear the experience can prove beneficial if it leads to telecasts and live-streaming from the Supreme Court of India.

Progress in the form of open media access was seen recently in online media portals being able to hear court proceedings. In fact, it was the reporting in online portals of the observations of Madras high court judges on the Election Commission of India that brought out the severity of issues surrounding polls in the time of the pandemic. Contentious though the comments were and also frowned upon by the top court, such access to reporting of court proceedings by the media allowed the matter to come out in the public domain.

There may be much that is opaque in the manner in which the wheels of justice move, especially in areas like the process of nomination of judges to the higher judiciary. While such matters should be confidential and handled between the collegium and the executive branch of government in power, there is no reason why the proceedings in celebrated cases cannot be telecast live so that the wider legal fraternity as well as members of the public can witness them. Of course, the matter of what is live-streamed or telecast should lie strictly in the control of the highest judiciary so that issues like those that popped up in the famous O.J. Simpson case in the US do not crop up.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Printer & Publisher: K. SUBHAKAR

The Asian Age office is located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

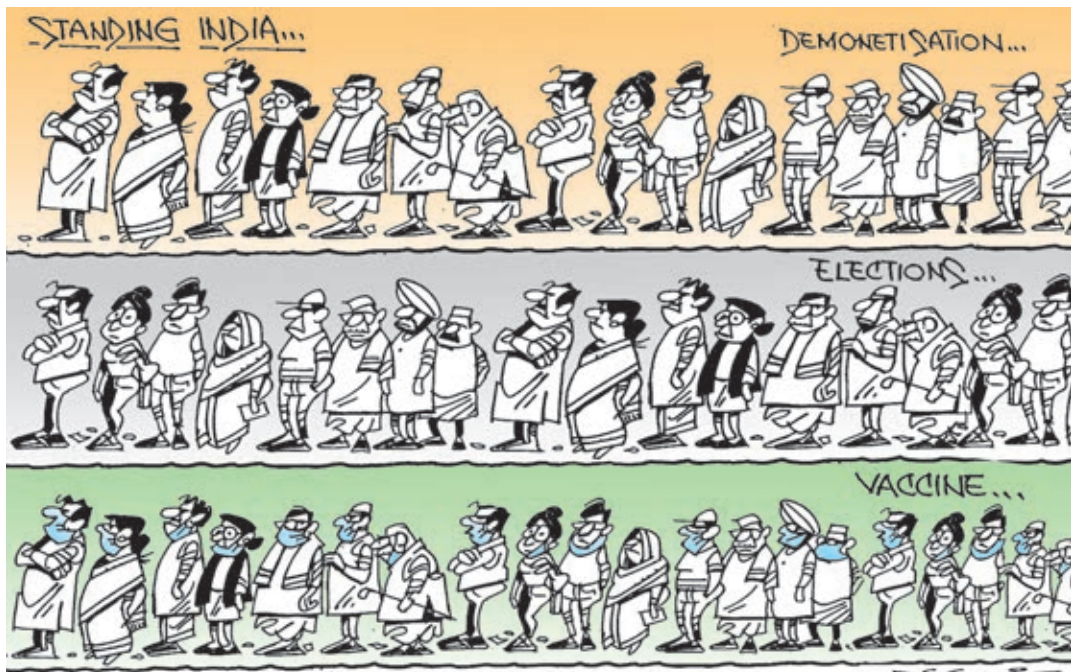
Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



## What'll it take for Modi to stop playing ostrich?



Shobhaa's Take

The Hindi word for the two-toed, flightless, largest living bird known as the ostrich is “*shuturmurg*”. I bet you didn't know that! Well, India is full of *shuturmurgs* right now, most of them working for the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't seem to make up his mind — to be a peacock or an ostrich. Which is maybe why he plays both, depending on the occasion. Of course, the ostrich in him makes sure he sees nothing and says nothing, while he watches India being turned into the world's biggest funeral pyre. Ostriches are known to run really fast when they are being chased by enemies (real or imaginary). Since our PM is staying put and not running, it's safe to assume he has zero enemies chasing him. The peacock in him makes sure his rare public appearances are perfectly colour coordinated and his flowing snowy beard well-groomed. He is now beginning to resemble the biblical Moses rather than Tagore or an Indian sage. But, unfortunately for citizens, he doesn't bear tablets in his hands nor an iPad with 10 or 20 or even 100 commandments. He says nothing at all. For a man known to like the sound of his own voice (six years of Modinama), one wonders about the stony radio silence.

Meanwhile, home minister Amit Shah stays in purdah as meme-makers go into overdrive (“Students’ union files a missing person’s report for Amit Bhai”). With two of the most important men in India not around during the country's biggest crisis, we are stuck with a headless chicken (the absentee government) in charge. In

charge of WHAT, you ask. Hello! In charge of us: the hapless citizens of this great nation. Guys — get this clearly — we are adrift, minus life jackets. There is no sighting of the captain who seems to have abandoned the ship. So please don't stress over minor issues and keep asking: “Where's the roadmap for the future? How do we tackle the acute vaccine shortage? What happens when the third wave hits India?” *Bhagwan ka naam lo* — and hope for the best. The roadmap doesn't exist.

A distraught friend from Jaipur was close to tears when he said: “People are dying on the streets. But the government reports only six deaths, while the funeral homes report 57 — that's how wide the gap is.” From all corners of India, citizens are sending out pathetic appeals for oxygen cylinders, beds, oximeters, vaccines — anything to save their loved ones. There is only a stone wall in front of them. Isn't it unbelievable and horrifying that our PM keeps mum through such an unprecedented tragedy? Why? It's an absolute mystery! Why has the “Great Communicator” not expressed sympathy, reassured citizens and calmed an agitated nation? Forget an apology. Forget owning up his responsibility. Forget taking charge. Such a cavalier and heartless attitude speaks of bad politics and terrible image management. Here's a man who rose to the pinnacle of power through image manipulation. He understands the impact of optics, he's the master of the social media game — and yet he refuses to pacify his countrymen and countrywomen. Unless we are overlooking the arrogance of megalomani-

acs through history — those who cruelly control their own people through fear, terror tactics, severe punishment and the threat of death.

At this point, death is at our door regardless — what's left to “fear”? Experts are warning us the times ahead will be a lot worse. In a masterly, timely and balanced essay Dr Devi Shetty gives readers a no-frills, straight-up perspective on what awaits us. The picture is far from pretty. That we are woefully short of ICUs is known. But so far, these were meant for adults. The third wave is likely to affect our infants and children — hospitals are simply not geared to meet this challenge. As always, Dr Shetty doesn't merely paint a grim picture and leave it there, he also offers strategic solutions. Why doesn't our PM induct him to lead a crack Covid team and stall the inevitable disaster?

All along, India wasted precious time and resources not enforcing Covid-19 protocols strictly. An old clip of Assam's then BJP health minister (who is now chief minister) Himanta Biswa Sarma is doing the rounds. In that he tells a persistent reporter that masks are “not necessary” as there's not even a single Covid-19 case in his state. That's the level of brazenness, plus a lack of education of our elected representatives. This week former Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Rawat said: “Corona is also a creature and has the right to live.” Insane!! D.V. Sadananda Gowda, another brilliant minister

**Our leaders lack humanity. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction...**

(chemicals and fertilisers) asks unnecessarily: “If vaccines are not produced yet, should we hang ourselves?” To which net-zines retorted: “What an idea, *Sirji!*” Chief ministers are callously playing with the lives of citizens, sitting back and averting their eyes from the pileup of corpses. Unless, of course, those corpses are found floating in the holy Ganga! That's when a few politicians sit up and ask for an inquiry. *Kyon?* Because the holy Ganga has been polluted — not because those who threw the half-burnt, plastic-wrapped bodies into the river may have been left with no other choice! We are running out of firewood for pyres. We will soon run out of space for graves.

These are humanitarian issues. Our leaders lack humanity. They don't have to be scientists or Covid experts. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction in New Delhi: Prime Minister Modi's pet project. Imagine the irony: a man the world admired for rising to the highest position in the country after starting his life as a humble *chaiwalla* and sleeping on a hard floor now wants to reside in an opulent multi-crore palace, financed by us!

Today, there are any number of Indians who are demanding the Prime Minister's resignation (as would happen in any other civilised country) and holding him directly responsible for this unspeakable tragedy. Others are seriously nominating an actor (Sonu Sood) for PM, in recognition of his sustained work during the pandemic. Rather an actor who delivers and feels the pain of his fellow citizens than a wannabe superstar who has forgotten his dialogues.

*Kuch na Kaho... Kuch bhi na kaho...*

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

#### LETTERS

#### RUSE TO BUY TIME

The Centre's nod to increase the interval between two Covishield doses to 12-16 weeks from 6 to 8 weeks on the recommendations of the Covid working group means a longer wait for lakhs of citizens. This is the second time in three months that the authorities have adopted this gap-raising ploy. In March, the ministry had asked states to increase it from 28 days to six to eight weeks, citing enhanced protection. But with many state governments running out of vaccine stocks for 45 years and above, one wonders whether this is a ruse to buy time.

N.J. Ravi Chander  
Bengaluru

#### RIP CHANDRASEKHAR

**THE PASSING AWAY** of the former three-time national table tennis champion Venugopal Chandrasekhar, once hailed as a “glamour boy” of Indian sport, whose career was cruelly nipped in its prime after a botched knee surgery that left him to battle for life, struggling to even do routine things, due to Covid-19 is huge loss. As a coach, he groomed top national players like S Raman and G Sathian.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

#### SPUTNIK HOPE

**AT A TIME THAT** the entire country is ravaged by the Covid pandemic, the soft launch of Russian vaccine Sputnik V spells relief and is expected to boost the pace of the vaccination drive in India. Pharmaceutical giant Dr Reddy's has partnered with the Russia Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to bring this vaccine to India and other countries. Clinical trial data published in The Lancet has indicated that it “appears safe and effective”. It is the only one other than those of Pfizer and Moderna to demonstrate efficacy of more than 91.6 per cent against Covid-19.

N. Sadhasiva Reddy  
Bengaluru

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



*“It's called hiding and running Or Silence, Exile and Cunning All with Capital letters To unchain Envy's fetters*

*Always beat about the Bush Suspense keeps hearers Kush Language and idiom mix The ideal poetic fix?”*

— From **Chowpatty Repartee** by Bachchoo

## Why is Labour, once a force in British politics, on the rocks?

**A**pologies! Heres' a political quiz: Question 1: In which democracy is the party, which has very often been in power since the late 1940s, now on the brink of collapse?

Question 2: In which democratic country has the governing party come to power through an appeal to irrational or non-rational factors?

Question 3: Which government was slow to react to the Covid pandemic and caused as a consequence an avoidable number of deaths?

Congratulations, gentle reader — perhaps the questions were too easy and the answers obvious: But you got it — the answer to all three questions is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland!

The Opposition Labour Party has lost its appeal and is falling apart; the Tories appealed not to rational material advance of classes but to emotional xenophobia and BoJo's government will be castigated in the forthcoming inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 emergency, for not implementing lockdown measures in the face of rampant public contagion.

So, why is the Labour Party, a force in British politics since its formation in 1906, on its uppers if not on the rocks? Last week, on May 6, the UK held elections for several local council seats — control of the municipalities. Labour lost 267 of them while the Tories gained 294. The biggest disaster for Labour on May 6 was the single byelection for the Westminster Parliament held in the northeastern port of Hartlepool. For seventy years this town has voted Labour. This time it changed to Conservative. What the media in Britain characterise as another brick in the “red wall” turning blue!

In 2019, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party lost disastrously to Boris Johnson's Brexiteer buccaneering Tories. BoJo's 80-seat majority in the House of Commons was made up substantially of MPs from constituencies in this red

wall — the towns and cities of the Midlands and the North who were traditionally Labour, as they had vast populations of the working class. Did these “natural” Labour voters have a change of heart or even of DNA?

No, gentle reader, they voted with a change of allegiance towards the party that promised to “Get Brexit Done” and so ban European citizens from coming into the country, whether they came into their own red wall constituency or not.

Why? Go back a few governments and we have the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher who closed down the mines and mills, destroyed swathes of traditional manufacture and opened up Britain's markets, for example, to Polish coal and Asian textiles.

It left millions of people in the red wall territories unemployed. Subsequent Labour governments did very little to make the economic revival of these towns and cities their priority. Albeit there was a lot else to do and the 2008 world financial crisis didn't assist those Labour governments either.

Membership of the European Union gave European citizens — Poles, Hungarians, Spaniards and others

from the 27 countries — the right to come to Britain and work. These workers brought skills which had become scarce or prohibitively expensive in UK cities. For instance, in London, if you needed a plumber or a builder, the most convenient, cheapest and reliable one to do the work would be Eastern European.

Apart from an innate xenophobia, which no columnist can honestly quantify, there was the definite canard in the British working classes that these “foreign” workers were undercutting British wages. There were other more nebulous reasons — a faux-nostalgia for a supposedly vanishing British culture, eroded by the presence of other languages, religions, cuisine etc. “Keep Johnny Foreigner out” was the unspoken credo of the Brexiteers.

And the Labour Party was split on the issue. Jeremy Corbyn and several leftish infiltrators and open “Trotskyists” (Yes, gentle reader, in 2019!) were wholehearted Brexiteers. They made no assessments of the damage to Britain and to its working classes or to its security. They were following the 1960s and 1970s' contention of their hero Tony Benn who called the EU a “capitalist club”. They would leave it and join Russia, China, the United

States, India and other great “socialist” nations and with them defeat pernicious capitalist clubs. No, gentle reader, this is not an extract from Monty Python or any other satirical show. These advocates, some of them my friends, really believed and preached this.

What had started out in 1906 as a party of workers, mostly unionised, has, a hundred years on, become the political vehicle of an urban elite who would support Jeremy Corbyn's plans to nationalise the railways and take its ownership away from French and Dutch capitalist companies. They would support taxing the very rich, plugging the tax-dodge holes that the Tories and Rishi Sunak have left gaping. What they would also support is what has come to be known as the “woke” agenda. And most important, they (including yours truly) are decidedly anti-Brexit.

Labour has become two factions — the red wall xenophobes and the liberal, partially if dedicatedly, “woke” (not quite yours truly) urban membership. These are political enemies and can't present the country with a unified Opposition. Kali's heads can look both ways and manifest her powers — the Labour Party's can't.



## SHORT TAKES

## TURKISH TOURISM VIDEO TAKEN DOWN AFTER BACKLASH

**Istanbul:** A video promoting tourism in Turkey amid the pandemic has caused an uproar on social media for showing tourism employees wearing masks that read “Enjoy, I’m vaccinated.”

The video was published on the social media accounts of official travel guide Go Turkiye on Thursday and was taken down later that day. It aimed to promote travel to Turkey as a “safe haven” for foreigners and showed unmasked tourists being served in hotels on the Turkish coast.

Opposition parties and critics on social media said the promotional video was an insult to Turks. A hashtag calling for the tourism minister to resign was trending on Twitter on Friday. Tourism workers have been prioritised to receive their vaccinations and the country’s foreign minister promised “we will vaccinate all people tourists may see by the end of May.”

## AS A GESTURE, MYANMAR FREES JAPANESE SCRIBE

**Bangkok:** An arrested Japanese freelance reporter left for home on Friday after being released by Myanmar’s ruling junta in what it called a gesture of friendship to Japan, Japanese officials and Myanmar state media said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Yuki Kigazumi was released after efforts by Japanese diplomats and others. The reporter boarded a plane at Yangon’s airport and was expected to arrive in Japan on Friday night.

Myanmar’s army-run *Myawaddy TV* said Kigazumi was arrested on April 18 for “inciting” anti-military civil disobedience and riots. “Although the journalist is a lawbreaker, the case will be closed and he will be released at the request of the Special Envoy of the Japanese Government for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, in view of the close ties and future relations between Myanmar and Japan,” the junta said in a statement read on TV.

## UN ENVOY ASKS THAI AID IN ENDING MYANMAR CRISIS

**Bangkok:** The United Nations’ special envoy on Myanmar met with Thailand’s prime minister on Friday as she continues efforts to end violence in Myanmar sparked by a military takeover in February.

The envoy, Christine Schraner Burgener, told Prayuth Chan-ocha in Bangkok that she hopes Thailand will find ways to work with Myanmar’s military to ease the unrest, the prime minister’s office said in a statement. The army’s seizure of power has been opposed by a broad cross-section of Myanmar’s population, and the junta has responded with a violent crackdown that has cost hundreds of lives.

The escalation of violence and the junta’s failure to restore order has led to fears the country could become a failed state, impacting neighboring Thailand and the whole region. Prayuth told Schraner Burgener his government is ready to listen and exchange information that could be beneficial, according to the statement, which said the two also discussed humanitarian assistance for affected people.

## PUTIN ALLY, OPPN MIN. UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN UKRAINE

**Kyiv (Ukraine):** A top Ukrainian opposition politician with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin was placed under house arrest on Thursday, days after being charged with treason.

Viktor Medvedchuk, who heads the Opposition Platform for Life party, the largest opposition force in parliament, denies the charges brought against him last week and says they’re politically motivated.

Medvedchuk, who has close personal ties with Putin, the godfather of Medvedchuk’s daughter, could face 15 years in prison if tried and convicted. Prosecutors had asked a court in Kyiv to put Medvedchuk in jail, but a judge ordered house arrest instead.

Medvedchuk, 66 is accused of transferring oil and gas production licenses from one of the fields in Crimea to Russian authorities. Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula in 2014, weeks after Ukraine’s former Moscow-friendly president was ousted by protesters.

Medvedchuk is also charged with allegedly disclosing secret data on the deployment of Ukrainian military units last year.

## U.S. VOWS TO STAND BY ALLY AUSTRALIA AGAINST CHINA

**Washington, May 14:** The Biden administration has vowed to stand by Australia in its worsening trade and other disputes with China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Australian counterpart on Thursday that the US will not leave Australia alone on the field or maybe I should say alone on the pitch in the face of economic coercion by China.

That’s what allies do,” he said. “We have each other’s backs so we can face threats and challenges from the position of collective strength.

Like the United States and China, Australia and China are in the midst of several major disputes as Beijing seeks to apply pressure over commerce and influence. Blinken said the United States and Australia are bound together by deeply held shared values that no other nation, including China, can uproot.

Blinken and Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne both said that presenting a united front to China is key. — AP

## HONG KONG FREEZES JIMMY LAI’S ASSETS

**Hong Kong, May 14:** Hong Kong authorities on Friday announced that they had frozen the assets of billionaire pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai, including shares in his media publications, for breaching the city’s national security law.

The security bureau said it had issued an order to freeze Lai’s shares in Next Digital media group and “the property in the local bank accounts of three companies owned by him”.

A rags to riches billionaire, media tycoon Lai has long been a thorn in Beijing’s side thanks to his caustic tabloids and unapologetic support for democracy.

His *Apple Daily* newspaper has staunchly backed Hong Kong’s pro-democracy cause, including the huge and often violent protests that swept the international financial hub in 2019. — AFP

## No mask for fully vaccinated in US

Covid test, quarantine waived for travel; Biden says Americans can now greet with a smile

**Washington, May 14:** In the biggest indication that the United States is fast returning to pre-pandemic life, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said that fully vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks. The recommendation holds true for both indoors and outdoors, the CDC said.

Following the announcement on Thursday, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris appeared before reporters at the Rose Garden of the White House without wearing masks.

“I think it’s a great milestone. A great day. It’s been made possible by the extraordinary success we’ve had in vaccinating so many Americans so quickly,” Biden said.

He said 250 million vaccine shots have been given in 114 days. “We are seeing the results. Cases are down in 49 of 50 states. *New York Times* has reported that hospitalisations are the lowest they’ve been since April of 2020, over a year ago, right after the start of the pandemic. Deaths are down 80 per cent and also at their lowest level since April of 2020,” Biden said.

He said that the virus tragically rages in other countries. “In less than four months, we’ve gone from 5.5 per cent to nearly 60 per cent of the adults in America with at least one shot in their arm. We’ve gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We’ve gone from an anemic job creation, to a record for job creation for a new administration,” Biden added.

The CDC said fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Those travelling within the United States need not get tested before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel. The CDC said the vaccines are effective at preventing the Covid-19 disease, especially severe illness and death.

Biden spoke about the thousands of deaths and the lives upended for millions more as they missed family gatherings and important rituals.

He heaped praise on ordinary Americans who, he said, had met the challenge head on — and better than in some other countries.



Ahead of the tightening of restrictions due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country, people dine at a restaurant in a shopping mall in Singapore on Friday. — AFP

## Indian strain doubles in 1 week in UK

**London, May 14:** The case numbers related to the B.1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread “increasingly rapidly”.

Public Health England (PHE) said on Thursday that its latest analysis

● **UK HEALTH** Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation “very carefully” and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first detected in Maharashtra

has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week. Most cases are in the northwest of England, with some in London, and additional measures are being put in place to “rapidly break chains of transmission”.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation “very carefully” and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary,

indicating that the roadmap to lifting all lockdown measures from June 21 may have to be reassessed. “This data demonstrates why our swift and decisive measures are in place. Everyone has a part to play in controlling this variant, from participating in surge testing, to following the rules, to getting the jab,” said Hancock. — PTI

## Washington state schools to resume full-time classes

**Olympia (Washington), May 14:** Washington authorities said on Thursday all schools in the state must provide full-time, in-person education for students for the 2021-22 school year and that students and staff will still be required to wear masks.

The Washington state Department of Health released guidelines that included mitigation efforts they said were

designed to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. The mask directive could prove controversial, as the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday moved to ease indoor mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people.

Currently people over the age of 12 are eligible for Covid-19 vaccines in Washington state. About 1.1 million students attend

public schools in Washington state. The Washington state schools directive for fall calls for all people in K-12 schools to wear masks indoors – as well as outdoors if six feet of distancing can’t be maintained.

State authorities are recommending Covid vaccinations and testing programs but are not requiring them for in-person instruction in the fall. — AP

## 12 killed in Kabul bomb blast

● **THE EXPLOSION** comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government.

heard the sound of screams, including children, as smoke filled the mosque. Sahebzada said he saw several bodies on the mosque floor and at least one child was among the wounded.

It appeared the explosive device had been hidden inside then pulpit at the front of the mosque. “I was afraid of a second explosion so I came immediately to my home” he

said. An image circulating on social media showed three bodies lying on the floor of the mosque, which showed minor damage.

The explosion comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government. The pause was for the Islamic festival Id-ul-Fitr, which follows the fasting month of Ramadan. Until now many of the attacks in the capital have been claimed by the local Islamic State affiliate, but both the Taliban and government blame each other.

The most recent attack last week killed over 90 people, many of them pupils leaving a girls’

school when a powerful car bomb exploded. The Taliban denied involvement and condemned the attack.

The relentless violence comes as the US and allied NATO forces continue with their final withdrawal from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war. Just this week the last of the US troops left southern Kandahar Air Base, while some NATO troops still remained. At the war’s peak more than 30,000 US troops were stationed in Kandahar, the Taliban heartland. Kandahar was the second largest US base in Afghanistan after Bagram north of the Afghan capital. — AP

## 2 detained Indians freed after outrage in Scotland

● **HUNDREDS OF** residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from removing the men.

removing the men. One person lay underneath the van, according to the reports.

The protesters chanted “Leave our neighbours, let them go” and “Cops go home” being heard as a ring of police stood around the van, local Scottish newspapers said. Officers said they were

freeing the men for the safety of everyone involved following a stand-off in Glasgow. The protest prompted Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon to accuse the Home Office of creating “a dangerous and unacceptable situation”. “Doing this on Id, in the heart of our Muslim community, and in the midst of a serious Covid outbreak was staggeringly irresponsible — but the even deeper problem is an appalling asylum and immigration policy,” she said. — PTI

## FINANCIAL | TROUBLE

With over half of Lebanese population in economic crisis, people depend on NGOs for pet food

## Poverty takes toll on the lives of pets in Lebanon

**Beirut, May 14:** Ibrahim al-Dika had raised his Belgian shepherd Lexi since she was a tiny pup, but then Lebanon’s economic crisis made him jobless and he had to sell her to repay a bank loan.

“I didn’t sell a car or a telephone. I sold a soul. I sold a part of me.” Can you afford to keep your pet? Animal activists say this is a dilemma a growing num-

ber of Lebanese owners are facing as their purchasing power nosedives.

Tens of thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced to a pittance due to Lebanon’s worst economic crisis in decades. As many families struggle to stay afloat, activists say increasingly more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them.

Dika, after losing his father to illness, was laid off last year when his employer, a fashion retailer, closed shop, affecting

his ability to support his mother and brother.

He had spent around a year caring for Lexi, and training her to sit, heel, give him the paw, and play dead. But when the bank started calling, he saw no option other than to sell her. He drove over a few days later to check in on her, and Lexi thought he had come to take her home. “She leapt straight into my car,” he said. “She broke my heart the way she looked at me.”

With more than half of Lebanon’s population now living in poverty, many Lebanese have to depend on non-governmental

organisations to get by — even to feed their pets.

Amal Ramadan, 39, said she used to make donations to animal charity PAW. But these days it is her receiving free bags of food from them for her pit bull and bichon, Nelly and Bluffy.

Her monthly salary working in car rental, once equivalent to \$1,000, is now worth just \$120 because of the Lebanese currency’s sharp devaluation.

But as the price of imported pet food, meat and veterinary care soars, activists said some other animals have not been so lucky. — AFP



Founder of Woof N wags shelter Joe Okdjian plays with rescued dogs in the shelter on the outskirts of the village of Kfar Chellal in south of Beirut. As people struggle economically, activists say more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,168.54	1.36
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110▲146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

ADB sanctioned \$3.92 billion loan to India in 2020

The Asian Development Bank on Friday said it has committed a record \$3.92 billion in sovereign loans for 13 projects to India in 2020, including \$1.8 billion in Covid-19 related projects to support the government's pandemic response. The agency said it has provided emergency assistance to contain the disease and establish social protection measures for relief to the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Forex reserves swell by \$1.4b to cross \$589b



The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.444 billion to \$589.465 billion in the week ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended April 30, 2021, the reserves had risen by \$3.913 billion to \$588.02 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. The increase in reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets.

Vandita Kaul is appointed Bol's nominee director

State-owned Bank of India (BOI) on Friday said the government has appointed Vandita Kaul, additional secretary in the finance ministry, to its board as a nominee director. The bank said it has received the communication from the finance ministry about Kaul's nomination on May 13, 2021. Bank of India has a total of eight members on its board, including the MD and CEO Atanu Kumar Das.

Mphasis Q4 net profit declines 10.2% to ₹316 cr

Mphasis has reported a 10.2 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹316.9 crore in the March 2021 quarter. Its net profit stood at ₹353.2 crore in the year-ago period, the company said. Its revenue from operations grew 7.5 per cent to ₹2,524.2 crore in the quarter from ₹2,346.1 crore in the year-ago period, it added. For the full fiscal 2019-20, Mphasis' net profit was up 2.7 per cent to ₹1,216.8 crore from ₹1,184 crore.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Akshaya Tritiya didn't end up as dud Gold sales muted but not a washout

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 14

Despite the lockdowns in key gold-buying states, Akshaya Tritiya was not a complete wash-out this year as it was the last year. The jewellery industry expects close to one-third of the usual sales to have happened this time.

Consumer sentiment remained muted and offline sales were severely affected due to lockdown in major cities and gold-consuming states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Further, the sentiments were affected by an uneasy air of fear.

According to P.R. Somasundaram, managing director, India, World Gold Council, there were certain markets that were still open and hence it was not a complete washout as last year.

"Many organised jewellers have adopted digital and omnichannel strategies to reach out to their consumers, learning from the lockdown experience of 2020. Coupled with decent pre-bookings before lockdown, these steps could redeem the festival from being a complete washout and present a slightly improved picture than last year," he said.

He expects almost one-third of the usual Akshaya Tritiya sales to have happened this time. Usually, 20 to 30 tonnes of gold is sold during Akshaya Tritiya. Some of the organised players and

Gold bond's price fixed at ₹4,777 gm

Mumbai, May 14: The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from May 17, has been fixed at ₹4,777 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

The government has decided to issue the bonds in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021. The RBI will issue the bonds on behalf of the Government of India.

"The nominal value of the bond based on the simple average closing price for gold of 999 purity of the last three business days of the week preceding the subscription peri-

online companies saw a good jump in digital buying. "In 2020 Augment sold around 15 kg of Digi Gold on Akshaya Tritiya and in 2021 it has increased by almost 100 per cent to around 30 kg of gold. Gold coins and gold bars in the range of ₹3,000-4,000 was preferred by buyers this year," said Ketan Kothari, director, Augment.

Some of the jewellers saw good demand for gold coins that were booked on calls to be delivered post-lockdown. However, the lockdown in almost all of the south Indian states

affected the sales of some retail chains.

"Most markets in India remained closed and the overall sentiment was muted. Only 20 per cent of our showrooms were operational and they functioned under strict guidelines with reduced working hours. As expected, traction in these showrooms was minimal. It is not appropriate to compare this year's Akshaya Tritiya with any of the pre-Covid years," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers.

CHIP SHORTAGE TO COST \$110B

As the semiconductor shortage hobbling the global automotive industry has worsened, its cost as a hit to sales has almost doubled to \$110 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$61 billion, according to AlixPartners, a global consulting firm.

It also now says the world's carmakers will lose 3.9 million vehicles of production to the chip shortage this year, more than its prediction four months ago of 2.2 million or 4.6 per cent of the total production. — Bloomberg

SENSEX NOT PRICING IN COVID LOCKDOWN

India's Covid-19 crisis has so far failed to spark a deep stock selloff like that seen last year, and some asset managers point to less stringent curbs on the activity as one factor at least for now.

Even as the nation reports more than 300,000 confirmed infections and over 4,000 deaths a day, India's benchmark equity index has been moving in line with regional peers. The Sensex has declined 6.6 per cent from a mid-February peak, compared to a 23 per cent fall last March. — Bloomberg

BIG TECH FIRMS ENTER FRAY TO SAVE JOBS OF STAFF'S SPOUSES

New York, May 14: Big Tech is wading into a legal fight over visas in an attempt to preserve the jobs of spouses of its foreign employees who are working in the US.

Amazon.com Inc., Apple Inc., Google, Microsoft Corp. and more than 20 other companies and organisations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, on Friday, urged a federal court in Washington to reject a lawsuit seeking to eliminate work authorisation for more than 90,000 H-4 visa holders.

Eliminating H-4 visas "would not only siphon off US gross domestic product but gift that productivity — and the innovation that comes with it — to other nations, harming America's global economic competitiveness into the future," the companies and organisations said in a so-called friend-of-court brief.

Under the Obama-era "H-4 Rule," the US department of homeland security in 2015 issued visas to spouses, more than 90 per cent of whom are women, of more than 580,000 highly skilled workers who live in the US on H-1B visas, according to the companies' filing. H-4 visas are critical to couples' decisions to come to the US, buy homes and raise children, they argue. The Trump administration attempted to dismantle the rule, but never executed its decision. — Bloomberg

Farmers got ₹1.35L cr under PM-Kisan: Modi

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the Centre has transferred around ₹1,35,000 crore so far under the PM-KISAN scheme with the payment of the eighth instalment on Friday and is also procuring a higher quantity of paddy and wheat at MSP to boost farmers' income.

Out of the total amount disbursed since the launch of the scheme in February 2019, Modi said around ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is helping farmers in these difficult times.

The Prime Minister on Friday released the eighth instalment of ₹20,667 crore to more than 9.5 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme via video conference.

Under the scheme, which became effective from December 2018, the Centre provides ₹6,000

per year to eligible farmers in three equal instalments of ₹2,000. Addressing the event, Modi said farmers have performed their duties even during this Covid-19 pandemic and helped the country achieve record production of foodgrains and horticulture crops.

He said the PM-KISAN scheme was launched to help farmers, especially small and marginal ones, in meeting their input costs.

He said around 10 crore farmers have received the 8th instalment. "To West Bengal farm-

ers, the benefit has begun to reach for the first time. Today, lakhs of farmers in West Bengal have got their first instalment. Gradually when the names of farmers are sent to the Centre, the number of beneficiaries will increase," he added.

Overall, around 11 crore farmers have received around Rs 1,35,000 crore under the PM-KISAN scheme so far, Modi said, adding that about ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PM-KISAN is benefiting small and marginal farmers. In these difficult times, this money is helping these farmers a lot. So far under the scheme, about 11 crore farmers have got ₹1.35 lakh crore in their bank accounts. There are no middlemen," Modi said.

The government is continuously making efforts to ensure benefits to farmers reach directly at a faster pace, the Prime Minister added. — PTI

India's exports up 3-fold in April

New Delhi, May 14: India's exports in April jumped nearly three-fold to \$30.63 billion from \$10.36 billion in the same month last year, according to government data released on Friday.

Imports too rose to \$45.72 billion last month as against \$17.12 billion in April 2020, the data showed. The trade deficit widened to \$15.10 billion

as against \$6.76 billion in April 2020.

Exports in April last year had plunged by a record 60.28 per cent due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion.

Due to the low base effect, exports in April 2021 recorded a growth rate of 195.72 per cent.

Oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.66 billion in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals. — PTI

Dr Reddy's set to focus on Sputnik shots, Covid drugs

New Delhi, May 14: Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday reported a 29 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹557 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021.

The Hyderabad-based drug major had posted a net profit of ₹781 crore in the January-March period of 2019-20.

Net sales, however, rose to ₹4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with ₹4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of 2019-20, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing.

For 2020-21 fiscal year, the company posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,952 crore as against ₹2,026 crore in 2019-20.

Net sales increased to ₹18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with ₹16,357 crore in 2019-20.

"In FY 21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline," Dr Reddy's Laboratories co-chairman and MD G.V. Prasad said.

The company is prioritising its efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine across India while working on the development and com-

Bharat Biotech to set up vaccine unit in K'taka, says deputy CM

Bengaluru, May 14: Karnataka will soon have a Covaxin-manufacturing plant of Bharat Biotech in Kolar district near here, Deputy Chief Minister of the state Dr C.N. Ashwath Narayan said on Friday.

The construction work has already begun and the

government has invited investors to make the vaccine in the State, he said.

"Covaxin vaccine-manufacturing plant of Bharat Biotech will be established at the earliest in Malur Industrial Area of neighbouring Kolar district," he said. — PTI

mercialisation of several drugs for the treatment of mild to severe Covid-19 infections, he added.

The drug maker said it has commenced a detailed investigation into an anonymous complaint which alleges that healthcare professionals in Ukraine and potentially in other countries were provided with improper payments by or on behalf of the company in violation of US anti-corruption laws.

A legal firm is conducting the investigation at the instruction of a committee of the company's board, it added.

Dr Reddy's noted that it has disclosed the matter

to the US Department of Justice, Securities and Exchange Commission and Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

"While the matter may result in government enforcement actions against the company in the United States and/or foreign jurisdictions, which could lead to civil and criminal sanctions under relevant laws, the probability of such action and the outcome are not reasonably ascertainable at this time," it added.

The company said its board has recommended a final dividend of ₹25 per share of ₹5 face value (500 per cent) for financial year 2020-21. — Reuters

GO AIRLINES FILES DRHP FOR ₹3,600-CR IPO

New Delhi, May 14: Go Airlines, which has rebranded itself as 'Go First', has filed preliminary papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and the proceeds will be mainly used to repay dues amid the aviation industry facing strong headwinds due to the coronavirus pandemic.

After taking to the skies 15 years ago, the Wadia group-promoted budget carrier — which has ambitious expansion plans — is looking to mop up the amount through the issuance of fresh equity shares. It also has plans to raise up to ₹1,500 crore by way of a pre-IPO placement.

Once the shares get listed, Go Airlines (India) Ltd will be the third operational scheduled carrier after SpiceJet and IndiGo to trade on Indian bourses. "We expect competitive conditions in our industry to intensify further as new entrants emerge and as existing competitors seek to extend their operations and flight frequencies over routes that we operate," as per the DRHP. It also noted that the aviation industry faces significant business challenges due to Covid. — PTI

COVID | WARRIORS

Centre for special drive for fin services staff

Vaccinate bank staff, says finmin

New Delhi, May 14: The finance ministry on Friday asked state governments to accord priority to employees of banks and insurance companies for Covid-19 vaccination, saying they are exposed to high risks during these difficult times.

Department of financial services secretary Debashish Panda, in a letter, addressed to chief secretaries of states and union territories, said states should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems



and other financial services providers on priority.

Tagging the letter, he said in a tweet, "Kudos to our Bankers, Insurers, Payment Service Providers, Bank Mitras for

ensuring uninterrupted delivery of banking and financial services to people in need during these challenging times."

He also mentioned that many of these employees have succumbed to

Covid-19. "All state/UT governments are requested to instruct local authorities to provide them necessary help and support in ensuring delivery of banking and financial services. Vaccinating them on priority will mitigate their high exposure to risk in the delivery of public service," he said.

Raising the issues of some instances of manhandling by state law enforcement authorities during local lockdowns, the letter also asked state administration to ensure easy movement of officials for discharge of duty. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Shaw stopped for pass, gets it soon

**Mumbai:** India batsman Prithvi Shaw was stopped while on his way to Goa in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra for travelling without an E-Pass, a police official said on Friday.

The incident took place at Amboli on Wednesday when the cricketer was heading for Goa in his car, said the official. He was allowed to leave after obtaining a pass.

Shaw was going to Goa for vacation, he said.

The Maharashtra government has made it mandatory to obtain a pass for travelling in its efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic.

After the police stopped him in Amboli, he applied for the pass online afresh and got it in an hour. — PTI

## Hussey Covid free, Saha still positive

**New Delhi:** Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey has recovered from Covid-19, paving the way for his return to Australia on Sunday but Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha has received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, prolonging his isolation.

Saha, who has been named in India's squad for the World Test Championship final and the subsequent Test series against England, is hoping to join the squad's bio-bubble in Mumbai on May 25. His inclusion is subject to fitness.

Both Hussey and Saha had first tested positive during the now suspended IPL. "Hussey has returned with negative RT-PCR results and has recovered well," CSK CEO Kashi Viswanathan said on Friday. — PTI

## Nadal rallies past Shapovalov in QF

**Rome:** When it comes to long, grueling clay-court battles, nobody is better than Rafael Nadal. Nearing his 35th birthday, the Spanish great showed he's still got the stamina to withstand much younger challengers in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3) comeback win over 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov on Thursday that secured him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals.

Nadal, a nine-time champion in Rome, will next face Alexander Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion. He also won in a comeback, beating Kei Nishikori 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Earlier, top-ranked Novak Djokovic cruised past Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2 6-1. — AP

## Tvesa off to good start in Capetown

**Capetown:** India's Tvesa Malik made a good start before dropping two bogeys to finish at even-par 72 and lie tied fifth after the first round of the Investec South African Women's Open golf tournament here. Tvesa had a share of the lead for some part of the day before faltering.

Lee-Anne Pace and Welsh Lydia Hall, who carded two-under 70 each on the opening day, shared the lead.

Elsewhere, Shubhankar Sharma helped avert an Indian wipeout as he made up for a disappointing first round with 1-under 71 in the second round to make the cut at the Betfred British Masters in Wishaw, UK. — PTI

## Indian shooters hit range next week

**New Delhi:** In quarantine till May 19, India's Olympic-bound shooters are keeping themselves busy with dry firing in their respective hotel rooms at Zagreb before they hit the range next week.

Accorded a warm welcome by the Croatian shooting fraternity, including world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa, the Indian team will take part as a guest invitee in the European Championship from May 20 to June 6 at Osijek. — PTI

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**FA Cup Final:** Chelsea vs Leicester from 9.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301.  
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy,  
RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep.Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## COACH POTATO

Raman writes to Ganguly, Dravid on 'Prima Donna Culture' in women team

**New Delhi, May 14:** Ousted Indian women's cricket team coach W. V. Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a "prima donna culture" in the national team and it needs to change.

In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

In a surprising move, the former India Test player was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job. Raman's major achievements included a runners-up finish for the side at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"As far as I know, Raman has said that he has always 'believed in team being placed above everybody else, and insisted that no individual can really be a prima donna,'" a source privy to Raman's mail said.

The stylish former left-hander's crisp letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallout with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good.

While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out.

"Raman has asked Dada



(Ganguly) that if a past accomplished performer feels constrained by this culture, then he (Ganguly) as a former India captain, should take a call on this matter, whether the coach is asking for too much," the source added.

Raman, it is learnt, is dismayed by allegations that he is not proactive as a coach. He has recalled how he oversaw three training sessions (for Trailblazers, Velocity and Supernovas) between 1 pm to 9 pm in humid UAE conditions during the last T20 challenge.

"In case the president and secretary want to hear his opinion on allegations about his work ethic, he can explain."

The letter has been copied to Dravid because Raman sincerely believes that he can contribute towards building a roadmap for Indian women's cricket. — PTI

## Raman, David were not on same page for SA selection

**New Delhi, May 14:** Former opener W. V. Raman's unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

It has been confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margate, Mithu Mukherjee and V. Kalpana picked for the South Africa series, for which teen batting sensa-

tion Shafali Verma was not picked for the ODIs and senior pacer Shikha Pandey was inexplicably dropped.

While both David and Raman couldn't be contacted for corroboration, it is understood that the BCCI nowadays records all selection meetings. The just-removed coach didn't approve the changes.

"Do you know what kind of logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said.

The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard

on training during lockdown and was "overweight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged.

In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked. — PTI

## VIHARI AND TEAM COMES TO THE AID OF COVID PATIENTS

**New Delhi, May 14:** Crushing the pain barrier to save a Test match is by no measure a small feat but for Hanuma Vihari, the biggest satisfaction these days comes from being able to arrange a hospital bed or oxygen cylinders for desperate Covid-19 patients through a network of friends.

Vihari, while being in the UK for his county stint, has used his Twitter handle to amplify appeals for help. He has also created a team of 100 volunteers, comprising friends and followers from across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

Just like Congress leader B.V. Srinivas in New Delhi, Vihari's friends and followers have reached people with plasma, oxygen cylinders and arranged food and hospital beds for patients.

"I don't want to glorify myself. I am doing it with the intention of helping people at the ground level, who actually need every help possible in these difficult times. It is just the start," the 27-year-old said.

Vihari left for England in early April to play in the English county for Warwickshire.

Vihari, like every Indian, has been shocked by the obstacles that Covid-19 patients and their families have encountered on a daily basis.

"With the second wave being so strong, getting a bed became a difficulty and that is something which is unthinkable. So, I decided to use my followers as my volunteers and help as many people as I can," Vihari, who has more than 110,000 followers, said. — PTI

## Rookie Roy gets maiden call-up for England tour

**New Delhi, May 14:** Rookie wicketkeeper-batter Indrani Roy from Jharkhand was rewarded with maiden Test and ODI call-up for India's tour of England next month but senior left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad missed out due to an injury.

The Neetu David-led selection panel made a course correction with teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey making it to all three squads after their South Africa home series snubs.

Sneh Rana and Indrani were two stellar performers in the National One-Day competition and thus got their call-ups.

The likes of Monica

## THE FIXTURES

- **Test:** June 16-19 (Bristol)
- **1st ODI:** June 27 (Bristol)
- **2nd ODI (D/N):** June 30 (Taunton)
- **3rd ODI:** July 3 (Worcester)
- **1st T20 (D/N):** July 9 (Northants)
- **2nd T20:** July 11 (Hove)
- **3rd T20 (D/N):** July 15 (Chelmsford)

## SQUADS

**Test & ODI:** Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur (vice-captain), Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

**T20:** Harmanpreet Kaur (captain) Smriti Mandhana (vice-captain), Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simran Dil Bahadur.

Patel, C. Prathyusha have been dropped from the squad altogether.

As expected Mithali Raj will lead the team for the one-off Test, to be played at Bristol from June 16 to 19 and the three One-Day Internationals while Harmanpreet Kaur will take over the reins during the three T20 Internationals. — PTI

## TUCHEL TARGETS FA CUP AS FOXES CHASE HISTORY

**London, May 14:** Thomas Tuchel plans to ruin Leicester's bid to make history, as the Chelsea manager eyes the first trophy of his reign in Saturday's FA Cup final at Wembley.

Tuchel has enjoyed a superb run since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January. The German has led Chelsea to the FA Cup and Champions League finals, while taking them back into the Premier League's top four. Winning his maiden silverware in English football would be further evidence of Tuchel's impact.

But Leicester will pose a significant threat to Tuchel's ambitions under the astute guidance of boss Brendan Rodgers.

The Foxes are aiming to win the FA Cup for the first time in their first final appearance since 1969.

No club have appeared in more FA Cup finals without lifting the trophy than Leicester, who have lost four times in the showpiece match. — AFP

## Reds boost chances of CL return

**Manchester, May 14:** Liverpool kept their chances of a place in next season's Champions League in their own hands with a thrilling 4-2 victory over Manchester United at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Jurgen Klopp's men still need to win their remaining three games to guarantee a place in the Premier League's top four, but cleared the biggest hurdle in their path with a first victory away to United since 2014.

Roberto Firmino scored twice either side of half-time after Diogo Jota cancelled out Bruno Fernandes' early opener for the home side.

Marcus Rashford's strike set up a grandstand finish, but Mohamed Salah secured a vital win in the final minute as Liverpool moved up to fifth in the table.

"We are still in the game, still in the race. That is all we could do tonight," said Klopp.

"It was necessary. Without this result we don't have to talk about it."

The clash between



Liverpool's Roberto Firmino (left) scores against Manchester United in an EPL match at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday. — AP

## MADRID VICTORY PUTS PRESSURE ON ATLETICO

**Madrid, May 14:** Real Madrid kept the pressure on Atletico Madrid by thrashing Granada 4-1 on Thursday to reduce the gap to two points at the top of La Liga, with two games left to play.

A draw or defeat for Real would have given Atletico the chance to win the title on Sunday by beating Osasuna but goals from Luka Modric, Rodrygo, Alvaro Odriozola and Karim Benzema secured a comfortable victory.

Atletico could still be crowned champions this weekend if they overcome Osasuna and Real fail to win away at Bilbao but the Spanish title race has been full of surprises and still nothing is guaranteed. z" "We can only keep putting pressure on Atletico and hope they don't win both of their games," said goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. — AFP

## Japan to expand virus emergency

**Tokyo, May 14:** Japan on Friday further expanded a Coronavirus state of emergency from six areas, including Tokyo, to nine, as Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga repeated his determination to hold the Olympics in just over two months.

Japan has been struggling to slow infections ahead of the Games. The three additions are Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, where the Olympic marathon will be held, and Hiroshima and Okayama in western Japan.

Despite the worsening infections, Suga stressed his commitment to holding the games safely and securely while protecting Japanese by strictly controlling the movements of foreign participants, including possibly expelling journalists covering the event if they defy regulations.

"I understand there are various difficulties, but the priority is to stop the further spread of infections and protect the people's lives and health," Suga said.

The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the

● **The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the emergency Coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Japan PM Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting on Friday.**

emergency coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting Friday. Bars, karaoke parlors and most entertainment facilities are required to close. Business owners who comply will be compensated; those who don't could face fines.

"Infections are escalating extremely rapidly in populated areas," Suga said. "As new variants continue to spread, we judged that now is a very important time to stop the further spread of infections."

It was the second expansion of the emergency in just one week.

Suga said he will decide on a possible further extension by evaluating the virus situation at the end of May. — AP



Lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, a representative of an anti-Olympics group, shows an anti-Olympic banner during a petition to the Tokyo government calling for the cancellation of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday. — AP

## PETITION SUBMITTED TO CANCEL TOKYO GAMES

**Tokyo, May 14:** An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled has been submitted to the Tokyo government with over 350,000 signatures on Friday morning.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising particularly new variants.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23rd.

The petition will also be sent to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who cancelled a planned trip to Japan this month due to surging cases of Covid-19 in the country, and to International Paralympics Committee President Andrew Parsons.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. The petition was organised by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. — AP

## Irfan negative in second Covid test

**New Delhi, May 14:** Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan and four other elite track-and-field athletes have returned negative for Covid-19 in a confirmatory second test conducted at Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the nodal body said on Friday.

Irfan was among five athletes who tested positive for Covid-19 at the centre in a weekly test conducted on May 7.

But the SAI on Friday confirmed that all these athletes, who got their first jab of Covid-19 vaccine on April 29, have returned negative in the second test conducted on Thursday.

However, the SAI said out of 22 athletes, who underwent the tests, one is still positive but it didn't disclose any further details.

"All have tested negative in the second test conducted yesterday, the results of which came on Friday morning. All athletes at the SAI campus across the country are being tested on a weekly basis," a SAI source said.

A total of 16 tests were conducted on Friday, which included two steeplechase athletes, two male race walkers, a male middle and long distance runner, two female middle and long distance athletes, four para athletes, besides a

para coach and an NCOE athlete.

Others to test negative are two SAI resident staff and one housekeeping worker.

During the weekly test conducted May 6 and 7, 22 athletes tested positive for coronavirus.

"They were asymptomatic and isolated and kept under medical observation. 21 of the 22 athletes have since tested negative after a repeat RT PCR test was done," the SAI stated.

"Among those who have tested negative are, race walker K.T. Irfan, middle and long distance athletes P.U. Chitra and Sandeep Kumar and para athlete Mariyappan Thangavelu. Hockey players Chinglensena Singh and Vivek Sagar Prasad are also among those who have tested negative," the SAI said in a statement.

At SAI Bengaluru, where athletes in hockey, track and field and para-athletics are based, all have been vaccinated on April 29. — PTI