

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 7 MAY 2021

## WEATHER

Max: 37.7°C  
Min: 23.7°C  
RH: 37%  
Rain: 1.5 mm

Forecast: Rain likely in evening or night.  
Max/Min temp. 38/24°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Chaitra Bahula Ekadasi till 3.34 pm  
Star: Poorvabhadra till 12.27 pm  
Variyam: 10.59 pm to 12.45 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 8.23 am to 9.14 am; 12.37 pm to 1.28 pm  
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon  
HILARI CALENDAR  
Ramzan 24, 1442 AH

## PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.42 am  
Zohar: 12.22 pm  
Asar: 4.39 pm  
Maghrib: 6.43 pm  
Isha: 7.56 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6.37 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.47 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.31 AM  
MOONSET TODAY 2.22 PM

## RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.43 PM (TODAY)  
SEHRI: 4.19 AM (TOMORROW)

## COUNTER POINT



The highest bidder will get the bed!

## SHORT TAKES

### RLD leader Ajit dies of Covid

**New Delhi:** Former Union minister and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) leader Ajit Singh passed away at a Gurgaon hospital on Thursday morning battling Covid-19, his family said. He was 82. Singh, the son of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, was diagnosed positive for Covid-19 on April 20, the family said.

■ Full report on Page 4

### Air ambulance in emerg. landing

**Mumbai:** A chartered plane carrying a patient and a doctor, from Nagpur to Mumbai landed on its belly at Mumbai airport on Thursday after declaring a full emergency. The runway was carpeted with foam to prevent a fire when the air ambulance landed. Reports said the aircraft had lost its front wheel during take-off.

■ Full report on Page 4

### Sri Lanka bans Indian travellers

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka on Thursday announced that all arrivals from India will be banned with immediate effect due to the record rise in COVID-19 cases in the neighbouring country. Several countries like the UK, the UAE, Australia and Singapore have already banned travellers from South Asian countries.

■ Full report on Page 5

### Monsoon to enter India on June 1

**New Delhi:** Extended forecast suggests that monsoon will arrive in Kerala around June 1, its normal onset date, said M. Rajeevan, the secretary in the Ministry of Earth Sciences, on Thursday. "This is an early indication The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will issue an official monsoon forecast on May 15," the secretary said in a tweet.



## WORLD | 5

Britain, France spar over fishing rights



## SPORTS | 8

Chelsea take on City in Champs League final

## TABLOID

Polymorous relationships



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## SC rules out gag order on media

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

Ruling that any gag on media from reporting court proceedings would be retrograde, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said that the internet has revolutionised the court reporting and open court hearing ensures that information relating to a court proceeding is available in public domain. An open court proceeding ensures "public scrutiny" and "transparency."

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud heading a bench also comprising Justice M.R. Shah said that the High Court should exercise a "degree of caution and circumspection" in making oral observations in the course of the hearing more so when party in question is another constitutional authority.

The court made these observations in its judgment on a petition filed by the Election Commission complaining against the harsh oral observation made against it by the Madras High Court in the course of the hearing of a

plea seeking enforcing of Covid protocol in the just concluded assembly polls and the countering.

The observations in question were made on April 26, 2021. The Election Commission was aggrieved with the oral observation attributing responsibility on the poll panel for surge in Covid cases and saying why it should not "be put up for murder charges".

Assuaging the poll panel, the court said, "The remarks of the High Court were harsh. The metaphor is inappropriate. The High Court — if indeed it did make the oral observations which have been alluded to — did not seek to attribute culpability for the Covid-19 pandemic in the country to the EC."

Declining to expunge the oral observations by the High Court and the media reporting of the court proceedings be restricted to judgments and orders, Justice Chandrachud said that the media reporting was not limited to just reporting the judgments and the court orders but also included its proceedings as well.

## Central team in WB for review

RAJIB CHOWDHURI and  
RAJNISH SHARMA | DC  
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, MAY 6

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused some Union ministers of trying to instigate riots in the state after the BJP's defeat in the Assembly election on the pretext of visiting saffron party workers injured in the post-poll violence.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also asked the BJP not to create unrest and accept the fact that it had lost the election. Speaking at Nabanna, the state secretariat, she said: "Not even 24 hours have passed since I took again, and letters have started pouring in as Union ministers resumed visits. Political rallies have been banned due to the Covid-19 pandemic here, so I don't know why some Central ministers are unnecessarily visiting villages and trying to provoke riots."

The Chief Minister added: "I request them not to worsen the situation through their provocation. I ask the BJP to show restraint, accept the mandate. This is happening as they haven't been able to accept the people's verdict."

Meanwhile, in a move that is bound to further escalate tensions between the Central government and the West Bengal government, the Union home

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— Mamata Banerjee,  
WB Chief Minister

ministry on Thursday sent a four-member team to review the law and order situation in the state, led by an additional secretary-level officer. This was done after the MHA sent two letters to the state government seeking a detailed report on the post-poll violence in West Bengal.

In Kolkata, the chief minister's remarks came hours after a violent attack allegedly by TMC workers on the convoy of minister of state for external affairs V. Muralidharan in West Midnapore. The minister, however, escaped unhurt but a car in his motorcade, that included pilot cars from the state police, was vandalised by an armed mob at Panchkuri.

■ Page 4: Centre seeks report on WB violence

## KCR will not lock down state

Tells people to begin Covid treatment without tests; Asks PM for more oxygen

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Thursday ruled out imposing lockdown in the state as the move did not help other states in controlling the spread of Covid 19.

Urging people not to panic after noticing symptoms, the Chief Minister asked them to start medication without being worried over getting tested. The medical kits would be provided by the government to every household, he said.

The Chief Minister was of the view that lockdown was counterproductive as the common man would be badly hit and the economy would collapse. He recollected the horrifying experiences of last year's lockdown and stressed the need for a proper atmosphere for free movement of paddy and rice during the current season of purchase of agricultural produce. Instead, the government would step up containment measures and improve health infrastructure and treatment, he said. He held a detailed review with officials concerned after a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to a CMO release, the Chief Minister brought to Modi's notice the issue of patients from Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh rushing to Hyderabad for Covid treatment in view of the state capital being developed into a medical hub. There is a severe impact on supply of oxygen and essential medicines including Remdesivir as 50 per cent people from outside in excess to Telangana's population thronging Hyderabad for better treatment.

He informed the Prime Minister that the state was not receiving the allocated quota of oxygen from Tamil Nadu and Odisha. He urged the Prime Minister to enhance the allocation of oxygen from 440 metric tonnes (MT) to 500 MT and remdesivir from 4,900 vials per day to 25,000 besides providing at least two lakh doses of vaccine every day.

The CMO said railway minister Piyush Goyal spoke to the Chief Minister on the directions of the Prime Minister and assured all help. He told the Chief Minister that oxygen supplies would be arranged from eastern states instead of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Later, at the review with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and other officials, he directed them to hold daily media conferences and reveal to people the number of infected people, treated and discharged. A special officer should be appointed to coordinate the anti-Covid operations, he said.

■ Page 2: Get 12 cryogenic tankers from China: CM



Elderly people wait for their turn for vaccination without adhering to Covid-19 norms of social distancing at Fever Hospital, Nallakunta, Hyderabad, on Thursday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

## Identify districts with 10% positivity rate: PM to states

DC CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to the Chief Ministers of Telangana State, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand about the Covid-19 situation in their respective states, government sources said.

He also spoke with the Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry, the sources added.

While details of these interactions could not be ascertained, Modi had also held a review meeting earlier in the day on the pandemic situation in various states and districts.

He reviewed the progress of vaccination and the road map for scaling up production of vaccines in the next few months, the Prime Minister's Office said.

"The Prime Minister also noted that an advisory was sent to the states to identify districts of concern where case positivity is 10 per cent or more and bed occupancy is more than 60 per cent on either oxygen supported or ICU beds," a statement from PMO said.

Meanwhile, Kerala has announced a full lockdown from May 8 to 16 which will be more stringent than the partial ones in view of rising Coronavirus cases.

Indian Railways has suspended trains like Rajdhani and Duronto "due to poor occupancy".

## US backs IPR waiver for Covid vax

## Russia okays new single-shot Sputnik

**Moscow, May 6:** Russian authorities gave regulatory approval on Thursday to a single-dose version of the country's Sputnik V vaccine, arguing that the move could accelerate the process of achieving herd immunity against the coronavirus.

Named Sputnik Light, the new version is identical to the first dose of the two-dose Sputnik V and has yet to complete the advanced testing needed to ensure its safety and effectiveness in line with established scientific protocols. Russia started human trials of Sputnik

Light in January, and the studies are still ongoing, according to official records. Sputnik Light is the fourth domestically developed Covid-19 vaccine approved in Russia.

Commenting on the decision to authorise it for use, President Vladimir Putin said Thursday, "It's nice to know that this range of tools (against COVID-19) is expanding."

Russian health minister Mikhail Murashko said authorising a fourth jab will help speed up the process of forming herd immunity against the virus.

— AP

"This is a global health crisis, and the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures," said Tai.

"The administration's aim is to get as many safe and effective vaccines to as many people as fast as possible," she said. Tai's announcement

comes hours after WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala spoke to a closed-door meeting of ambassadors from developing and developed countries that have been wrangling over the issue, but agree on the need for wider access to Covid treatments, WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell said.

The WTO's General Council — made up of ambassadors — was taking up the pivotal issue of a temporary waiver for intellectual property protections on Covid-19 vaccines and other tools, which South Africa and India first proposed in October. The idea has gained support in the developing world and among some progressive lawmakers in the West.

Opponents say a waiver would be no panacea. They insist that production of coronavirus vaccines is complex and simply can't be ramped up by easing intellectual property, and say lifting protections could hurt future innovation.

— AP

## SAGE | ADVICE

Supreme Court directs government to create required infrastructure to handle next Covid surge

## Apex court asks Centre to prepare for 3rd wave

**New Delhi, May 6:** The Supreme Court on Thursday said the country needs to be prepared for the third wave of Covid-19 which experts say could be more harmful, especially for children, and emphasised upon the need to create buffer stock of oxygen.

The apex court asked the Centre not to reduce oxygen supply to Delhi from 700 metric tonnes till further orders and ensure that rationalisation exercise is completed while taking into account the pan-India

perspective. The court said that people in Delhi are dying despite efforts being made to treat Covid-19 patients and there is also no denying that many have lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen supply.

It made clear to the Centre and Delhi government that it will not allow the top court of the country to be a ground of recrimination between the two as both indulged in a blame game on the issue of allocation and supply of oxygen. A bench of Justices D.Y.

Chandrachud and M.R. Shah said: "We need to prepare for the third surge of Covid-19 which may have altogether different parameters. We have to be ready for that. We have been reading that some experts have said that the third surge will be more harmful especially to children."

"We understand children are more resilient as compared to elders but we have to also consider that they themselves will not go to hospitals and their parents

We need to prepare for the third surge of Covid-19. We have to be ready for that. We have been reading that some experts have said that the third surge will be more harmful especially to children.

— Supreme Court

will have to take them making them vulnerable."

The bench warned both Solicitor General Tushar

Mehta, appearing for the Centre, and senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, that the Supreme Court being the top Constitutional court of the country cannot be allowed to be a ground of recrimination.

Mehra further said that despite the top court's direction, the Centre has failed to allocate requisite oxygen to the state even on Thursday as per their estimate, a day after it had given 730 metric tonnes. Mehta said that a survey

was conducted in 56 major hospitals of the national capital on May 4 and it revealed that they had significant stock of liquid medical oxygen (LMO).

He said if the Centre keeps on giving 700MT of oxygen to Delhi, it will deprive other states of equitable distribution.

The bench said people and hospitals are making SOS calls including on social media that they have very limited oxygen left or they are running out of it, which is creating panic.

"People and even some big hospitals of the national capital are making SOS calls about a shortage of oxygen supply. Why are you not creating a buffer stock? If as you claim, Delhi is not using or needs 700MT and only 490MT is needed, then this excess 200MT can be used to create a buffer stock, the bench said, adding that there can be a centralised pool of buffer stock, like if any hospital runs out of the oxygen, it can be replenished immediately. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

GET TWELVE  
CRYOGENIC  
TANKERS: CM

FROM PAGE 1

The Chief Minister said the details of bed availability should be placed in the public domain. On improving health infrastructure, the Chief Minister directed the officials to make immediate arrangements to import 12 cryogenic tankers from China. After inquiring with IICT Director Chandrasekhar on immediate steps to be taken to improve the availability of oxygen, the Chief Minister asked officials to immediately buy 500 oxygen enrichers.

CENTRE GIVES  
STATE 25.5L MT  
FERTILISERSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

The Centre has allocated 25.50 lakh metric tonnes of fertilisers to Telangana state to meet demand during upcoming kharif season beginning June. The state currently has reserves of 6.65 lakh metric tonnes.

Agriculture department has initiated steps to transport fertilisers to districts in advance to avoid shortage in kharif season.

Minister for agriculture Singireddy Niranjan Reddy on Thursday reviewed the situation of fertiliser stocks and transport ahead of kharif season and said 3.73 lakh metric tonnes of urea and 2.92 lakh tonnes of other fertiliser stocks were already available in the state.

He asked officials to take measures to ensure that fertilisers are supplied to farmers without any disruption keeping in mind the Coronavirus conditions. He asked Markfed officials to shift the existing stocks in godowns to primary agriculture cooperative societies in districts and keep storage space available in godowns for fresh stocks.

Niranjan Reddy said that the new warehousing godowns constructed by the department will become functional within 15 days. He directed agriculture secretary B. Janardhan Reddy to ensure corona vaccination for all staff working in agriculture department and Markfed. He asked officials to transport fertilisers to Adilabad, Nizamabad and Karimnagar districts first, where kharif cultivation begins early.

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WEEK-LONG  
LOCKDOWN FOR  
VACCINATED: DL GOVT

From Page 1

If such visitors can produce a full vaccination certificate, or a negative RT-PCR certificate issued to them within a 72-hour window of their arrival in Delhi, then such individuals will have to be quarantined for a week, the Delhi government said.

Some exemptions have been given to "all Constitutional and government functionaries and the staff members accompanying them to the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the government said.

However, such individuals must be asymptomatic, or not to have any Covid-19 related symptoms, and should self-monitor their health for the next 14 days. They will be expected to strictly follow the Covid-19 related guidelines/instructions/SOP issued by the government of India as well as the Delhi government. Such people must also restrict their travel within Delhi to the minimum that is required to perform the work for which they have visited Delhi.

But if any such exempted individual shows symptoms, then they too will have to undergo mandatory quarantine as is the case with normal travellers from the two states.

These restrictions will be enforced for anyone visiting Delhi, irrespective of the mode of transport they use to visit the capital.

## TRS to squeeze Etala out

Party not keen on expelling ex-minister, expects him to quit TRS, Assembly

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

The TRS leadership is adopting a cautious approach on former minister Etala Rajendar.

Though he was sacked from the Cabinet, the party leadership is not keen on expelling him from the party despite his criticism of TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. TRS insiders say that the party leadership wants Rajendar to resign from the party as well as the Assembly seat on his own and force a bypoll in the Huzurabad Assembly constituency.

The party wants to seek his disqualification from the Legislative Assembly if he joins any other party. There is a provision to seek disqualification even on the grounds of resorting to 'anti-party activities' or giving statements against the party and party president.

With absolute majority and Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy on its side, the TRS finds no difficulty in getting Rajendar disqualified. The party leadership has been giving indications to Rajendar to resign on his own from

● **THE PARTY** wants to seek his disqualification from the Legislative Assembly if he joins any other party. There is a provision to seek disqualification even on the grounds of resorting to 'anti-party activities' or giving statements against the party and party president.

the beginning of this episode. It began with the party's own media exposing his alleged assigned land encroachments. It was reported on April 30 soon after polling for municipal elections concluded at 5 pm.

However, when Rajendar did not resign, Rao took over his health portfolio the very next day. Despite the setback Rajendar remained defiant, which forced the Chief Minister to dismiss him from the Cabinet on May 2.

Immediately thereafter, Rajendar visited his Huzurabad constituency and held discussions with his supporters until May 5. He has been issuing statements against party leadership accusing it of indulging in 'vendetta politics' against him.

Etala associate, ZP head  
Putta Madhukar missingPULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC  
KARIMNAGAR MAY 6

A heated discussion is on in political circles here about the lack of visibility of the Peddapalli Zilla Parishad chairperson Putta Madhukar.

From the time former minister Etala Rajendar started facing the allegation of encroachment of assigned lands in Achampet and Hakimpet in Medak district, Madhukar went into isolation and is not available even on the phone to his close associates and to the people's representatives of Peddapalli district.

Madhukar had participated in the election campaign for the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) as TRS election in-charge. After completing the campaign, he disappeared from the scene. This, shortly after some allegations against former minister Etala Rajendar were telecast by the media at night.

For the past few days, news spread across the district that ₹2 crore was given by someone to a gang for killing the high court advocate couple Gattu Vaman Rao and P.V. Nagamani earlier this year, and that the state government has taken a serious note of this. One of the accused in the advocates' murder, Bittu Srinu, was the nephew of Madhukar. This apart, with the Etala issue coming to the fore and Madhukar being a close associate of Rajendar, the disappearance of Madhukar raises eyebrows.

Meanwhile, representatives of the TRS' Manthani constituency jointly condemned the news of the disappearance of the ZP chairperson from the constituency. They said that it was with the blessings of MLC K. Kavitha in 2014 that Madhukar got a TRS ticket. After winning the poll with a good majority, he has been striving hard for strengthening the party from the grassroots level

and developed Manthani constituency in multiple ways. They said that when he lost the assembly elections in 2018, chief minister Chandrashekar Rao, IT minister KT Rama Rao and MLC K Kavitha recognized his services to the party and offered him the ZP chairperson post. "Madhukar, along with all the people's representatives of Manthani constituency will be loyal to the TRS party," they said.

"Since Etala Rajendar was one of the ministers in the KCR cabinet, Madhukar had moved a little close to him, but will not go against the party under any circumstance. Some leaders are trying to split the TRS party in the Manthani constituency by taking Etala's exit from the ministry as the right opportunity," they alleged.

They said the TRS party and CM KCR are always supreme for them and that "we will always try to strengthen the leadership of KCR and KTR."

## Covid-19 help desks set up at Tims, Gandhi

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

Hyderabad and Cyberabad police teams have set up 'Corona help desks' at Gandhi Hospital and Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) on Thursday. This is essentially for family members of Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the two hospitals. The family members can get health status details of the patient at the centre, officials said.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar and Gandhi Hospital superintendent Dr M. Raja Rao, inaugurated the centre at Gandhi Hospital.

Additionally, there is a help centre for the bed management system, said Dr Rao. The 24x7 help desk phone number is 040-27505773.

"Through it, we will explain all the details related to Coronavirus



City Police Commissioner interacting with health workers after inaugurating Covid-19 help desk at the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday.

patients to their family members, including about availability of beds. We have also created an app about this, through which the condition and status of the

patient would be informed. We will try to put similar help desks in other big hospitals as well," said the police commissioner. Meanwhile, M. Venkat-

eswarlu, DCP Madhapur, Dr Vimala Thomas, director, TIMS, and RMOs Dr Shashidhar and Dr Nitin, Raghunandan, ACP Madhapur, and

Gachibowli inspector G. Suresh along inaugurated the police help desk at TIMS. It has been set up in coordination with medical and municipal departments.

CM CONDOLES  
DEMISE OF  
AJIT SINGH

Hyderabad, May 6: Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Thursday condoled the death of Rashtriya Lok Dal president and former Union minister Ajit Singh. According to an official release, the Chief Minister said Ajit Singh who worked as a Cabinet minister several times had continued the proud legacy of his father, former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, and became known as a farmers' leader. Rao recalled that Ajit Singh had extended his wholehearted support to the Telangana statehood movement and the political process for carving out a separate state. — PTI

KCR back in Pragathi  
Bhavan after isolationDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao returned to Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday after nearly three weeks.

Soon after his return, he held a high-level meeting to review the Coronavirus situation in the state and imposition of weekend curfew in the wake of High Court orders, which fixed May 8 deadline to take a decision.

Rao had tested positive for Covid-19 on April 19 with mild symptoms. Following

doctors' advice, he isolated himself at his farmhouse in Erravelli. Rapid antigen and RT-PCR tests were conducted on Rao on April 28. While the rapid test result came negative, the RT-PCR was inconclusive. With this, he extended his home isolation. The two tests were conducted again on May 4, and both came negative, implying that he had recovered from corona completely.

After addressing a public meeting at Halia on April 14 in the run-up to the Nagarjunasagar Assembly byelection, Rao complained of uneasiness on April 17 and moved to his farmhouse from Pragathi Bhavan. Three days after he tested positive, his nephew and Rajya Sabha member Joginapally Santosh, who always accompanies Rao, also tested positive on April 22. IT minister K.T. Rama Rao tested positive on April 23. Though both Rama Rao and Santosh were under home isolation initially, both were shifted to a private hospital later. They were discharged on Wednesday.

Prize-winner somarampet  
sarpanch, dies by suicidePULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 6

A village sarpanch who strove hard for development of the village died by suicide in Somarampet village of Ellanthakunta mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district, police said on Thursday.

He was borrowing money from private money lenders and executing works in the village. He was said to be under severe pressure as the government agencies failed to clear the bills for long durations of time.

Vadde Anand Reddy, 48, had been elected unanimously as from Somarampet sarpanch in the panchayat elections in 2019. A time-limit had been set by the collector for completion of various developmental works with an outlay of ₹1.2 crore. Anand Reddy completed the construction works for community buildings, burial grounds and a dumping yard and also did the CC road works, established nurseries and implemented various welfare activities along with other developmental works in the village with painstaking push. When the government did not sanction the funds, Anand Reddy took loan from private money lenders. He completed the developmental works and, in this respect, made the village stand first in the district. As a result, Somarampet received the best village panchayat award in the district. The government, however, did not sanction the amount. Unable to clear debts of ₹30 lakh he took for developmental works, Anand Reddy went into depression and expressed his worry on a number of occasions to his family members and his close associates.

On Wednesday night, Anand Reddy made a phone call to his family members from his fields

GWMC mayor to  
be elected todayDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 6:

The election for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation will be held on Friday after the winning candidates are sworn in as corporators.

The swearing-in ceremony will be held at 3.30 pm at the indoor stadium premises behind the GWMC headquarters. The next governing council will have 66 members.

The bureaucracy focused on the arrangements for the swearing-in of the corporators, the election of the mayor and the deputy mayor. Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanmanthu inspected the indoor stadium premises on Wednesday evening and discussed the arrangements with the authorities. He directed that arrangements be made as per the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the State Election Commission. Only the ex-officio members and 66 winning candidates would participate in the event and no outsiders are allowed.

To this end, entrances, barricades and special zones were set up. Sitting arrangements were made to adhere to physical distancing norms. Face shields, gloves, masks and sanitisers will be provided to those present, the collector informed.

On the other hand, there has been widespread excitement over the mayoral election. There are strong arguments that Gundu Sudharani, who won from the 29th division in the Warangal East constituency will be the mayor. However, others opine that someone from the Warangal West constituency will be the mayor this time as the two previous mayors Nannapuni Narendar and Gunda Prakash Rao were from Warangal East.

It was interesting to see who the deputy mayor could be. If the mayoral post is given to the Warangal West constituency, there are questions as to whether the deputy mayoral post will be from Warangal East and Varthanapeta constituencies. Former Deputy Mayor Khaza Sirajuddin was from Warangal West constituency.

There is a demand that this time the post must be given to someone from the Wardhanapet constituency.

Indla Nageshwar Rao, Boinapalli Ranjith Rao, Diddy Kumaraswamy, Suresh Joshi, Awala Radhika Reddy, Rizwana Shamim are said to be in the race for the deputy mayor. All the corporators were asked to cooperate with the decision of the TRS leadership regarding the selection of the two posts.

LIST OF 3 NAMES  
SENT FOR MAYOR  
POST TO TRS  
HIGH COMMANDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM MAY 6

A list of three names for the Khammam Municipal Corporation Mayor post has been sent to TRS high command by party leaders of Khammam on Thursday. The high command had asked the local leaders including transport minister P. Ajay Kumar, MLC Balasani Laxminarayana and others to submit a short list.

The names of Punukollu Neeraja, corporator from 26th division, B. Prasantha Laxmi, corporator from 20th division, and Paidipalli Rohini, corporator from 56th division, figure in the list.

Prasantha Laxmi has the blessings of former minister Tummala Nageswara Rao while Neeraja has the support of MLC Balasani and Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah. The 56th division corporator Rohini is the choice of Ajay Kumar.

Sources in the TRS said: "If Neeraja is selected, we can say Sandra was given weight. But, there is less chance. Ajay, who was embarrassed by his wife's nomination withdrawal, will get the main chance to name the mayor candidate."

The names of Fathima Johara from the 37th division and Maqbool from the 23rd division will be considered for the mayor post. Two posts in GHMC were given to women.

The 43 TRS corporators are in wait for the last 24 hours for the selection of names for the two posts.

Leaders in the opposition are also anxious as to who all will be selected. Will Ajay be given priority by the high command? This is an important issue for the CPIM, the Congress and the BJP vis-a-vis the future course of politics here.

● **SOURCES** in the TRS said: "If Neeraja is selected, we can say Sandra was given weight. But, there is less chance. Ajay, who was embarrassed by his wife's nomination withdrawal, will get the main chance to name the mayor candidate."

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INTER-STATE  
BUS SERVICES  
FROM TS TO AP  
SUSPENDEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD MAY 6

All inter-state bus services from Telangana state to Andhra Pradesh state have been suspended in the wake of the extended Covid-19 related curfew in Andhra Pradesh.

Vehicles would be allowed into Andhra Pradesh at the border points only between 6 am and 12 noon.

As buses might reach post noon and break the curfew, the decision was taken to suspend the services, officials said.

Ambulances, goods vehicles, doctors, and persons who have flight tickets and need to reach the Gannavaram airport near Vijayawada, however, are exempted from the restriction.

The restrictions will continue till May 18 as per the GO issued by the Andhra Pradesh government. Meanwhile, there is no restriction on the movement of vehicles from Andhra Pradesh into Telangana state.

● **THE RESTRICTIONS** will continue till May 18 as per the GO issued by the Andhra Pradesh government. There are no curbs on movement of vehicles from Andhra Pradesh to Telangana State.

## COVID | BLUES

Gudur says govt is under-reporting virus cases

## CS lying on Covid crisis: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 6

Bharatiya Janata Party state senior leader Gudur Narayana Reddy on Thursday accused Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar of sweeping facts under carpet and resorting to gross lies on Covid situation in the state.

Referring to the 'situation under control' remarks of the Chief Secretary, the BJP leader alleged that the state government had been indulging in under-reporting of cases as well as deaths. There is



Gudur Narayana Reddy

no truth in Chief Secretary's claims on availability of sufficient beds. "Let us make calls to hospitals in the presence of media and truth

will come out," he said. The BJP leader said no action had been initiated to implement the Chief Minister's promise of 'vaccinate for all free of cost' with an expenditure of ₹2,500 crore. On the Chief Secretary monitoring the Covid control measures, Reddy said a person who was not accessible for people to receive representations and blindly followed the reports of his subordinates would not understand the ground realities.

The BJP leader said the Chief Minister was

least bothered about people's lives and removed the health minister at a crucial time. The Chief Secretary, apparently with an eye on post retirement rehabilitation, has been toeing the line of the Chief Minister. "There is not a single instance of the Chief Minister visiting any hospital to monitor the facilities and treatment provided to Covid patients," he said. Reddy wondered how the health secretary went into oblivion and his subordinates did all the talking.



## OTHER STORIES

TRAFFIC CONSTABLE  
DIES BY SUICIDEDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 6

A Traffic police constable G. Pramod Reddy, 40, died by suicide, at his residence in Chandrasekhara colony on Wednesday. Last November, his father died and his wife and mother have been facing severe health problems. It is believed that unable to bear the health and financial problems in the family, depressed Pramod Reddy died. He is survived by wife and two daughters. Police shifted body for post-mortem and registered a case.

AMAZON GIVES 100  
O2 CONCENTRATORS  
TO 6 GOVT HOPSDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 6

As the state is grappling with the oxygen crisis during this second wave of Covid-19, Bala Vikasa, with the support of Amazon, provided as many as 100 oxygen concentrators to six major government hospitals from various districts of Telangana state on Thursday.

Warangal Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital (MGM), Jangaon District Hospital, AMR District Hospital in Bhuvanagiri, Sircilla District Hospital, TIMS and King Koti District Hospital in Hyderabad were among those who received the oxygen concentrators.

The oxygen concentrators allocated to the MGM Hospital, Warangal were handed over to the hospital management by the Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, "Bala Vikasa has provided critical life-saving equipment at an extremely important time."

This initiative will help save the lives of thousands of people from the most backward and marginalized classes."

The Executive Director of Bala Vikasa Shoury Reddy Singareddy said, "There is an acute need for oxygen cylinders and concentrators, across the country, with many already losing their lives gasping for it."

Bala Vikasa has provided these oxygen concentrators with the sole objective of saving lives. In order to further strengthen the government's efforts to manage this unprecedented health crisis, we are working on multiple relief and assistance initiatives with the support of various CSR Partners.

There is a lot more to be done and we believe it will take more collaboration and support to survive this deadly pandemic. He further expressed his gratitude to Amazon for supporting Bala Vikasa in providing oxygen to the most marginalized and backward communities who are solely dependent on government hospitals.

● **THE EXECUTIVE** director of Bala Vikasa Shoury Reddy Singareddy said, "There is an acute need for oxygen cylinders and concentrators, across the country, with many already losing their lives gasping for it". Bala Vikasa has provided these oxygen concentrators with the sole objective of saving lives. In order to further strengthen the government's efforts to manage this unprecedented health crisis, we are working on multiple relief and assistance initiatives with the support of various CSR Partners.

Startling difference in dist,  
state data on Covid cases

Lack of transparency in Covid +ve cases, deaths confounds public

NARENDER  
PULLOOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 6

Discrepancies in Covid-19 data put out by at district and state officials have become a cause of concern to the people in the undivided Nizamabad district. Number of tests, Covid-19 positivity rate and details of deaths are varying in both bulletins. As a result, people are in the dark about the true extent of Covid spread and unable to understand the ground reality of pandemic in the state, particularly in their native places.

The second wave of Covid-19 has turned the situation worse in Nizamabad district, which shares border with Maharashtra, where Covid-19 is raging. Initially, the medical and health department conducted Covid-19 tests in huge numbers, but scaled them down for the last one week. As a result, people are rushing to private laboratories either for Rapid Antigen or RT-PCR tests.

If one looks at the data released by the state and the district level officials on Covid-19 positive cases, as much as 50 per cent of Covid-19 positive case details are missing in the state bulletin. Details on deaths are reportedly kept secret at various levels.

The Nizamabad district administration releases Covid-19 data every day in the evening, which includes the total number of Covid-19 tests done, positive cases and cumulative details. On the other hand, Kamareddy district administration releases information about target and achievement of daily Covid-19 tests. Shockingly, information on Covid-19 deaths and comorbidities death details is not

VARIATION IN REPORTS		
Date	District	State
April 28	629	301
April 29	655	330
April 30	579	267
May 1	541	301
May 2	572	258
May 3	509	218
May 4	470	184

● **COVID-19 DEATH** details and comorbidities death details have also not declared at district level. Deaths of Covid-19 surfacing in social media groups, but officials are hesitated to declare the accurate number of deaths.

● **COLLECTOR ADMITTED** that there was difference between district, state-level Covid-19 figures. Few people were repeatedly going for Covid-19 tests and some others undergoing tests in pvt, govt hospitals simultaneously, he added. After deleting the double entries, state officials are releasing the data, he clarified.

Covid vaccine slot booking  
turns tricky for rural folksDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 6

The Central government's mandate to implement vaccination through slot booking seems to be only causing a lot of inconvenience to rural population.

People in the age group of 18 and 44 were also asked to register for vaccination. Until recently, people who went to vaccination centres with Aadhaar cards were vaccinated by registering their details online on the spot. The government has cancelled the spot registration since Tuesday. With the introduction of slot booking, those who want to get vaccinated, need to download the Aarogya Sethu app on

smartphones and fill out the details through the Covin portal. Aadhaar card number, district name and details of preferred vaccination centre are required to be recorded. The details of the time and date on which slots are available can be chosen.

However, in rural areas of Mulugu and Jayashankar Bhupalpally with no internet service, this facility cannot be availed. Such people could register their slots through the Mee-Seva centres or the internet centres in their mandal headquarters. While the youngsters can find some way to book a slot, the elders are scared to travel to the mandal headquarters,

stand in the queue for getting registered, and then travel back at a time when the coronavirus is spreading rapidly. Moreover, slot booking is not free at the Mee Seva centres. They are being charged between ₹20 and ₹50 currently. However, if the demand increases, the managers could charge up to ₹100 citing that they are at risk of contracting the virus.

"The government must consider allowing spot booking at least for those who are above the age of 45. This will ease their troubles as most in the age group are illiterates and also more susceptible to the virus," said B. Mallaiah, a farmer from Mangapat.

revealed at district level. Deaths of Covid-19 are surfacing in social media groups, but officials are hesitant to declare the accurate number. Giving true picture helps people

take appropriate measures and precautions.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, district collector C. Narayana Reddy admitted that there was difference between dis-

trict and state-level Covid-19 figures. A few people were repeatedly going for Covid-19 tests and some others undergoing tests in private and government hospitals simultaneously,

NIZAMABAD  
COLLECTOR VISITS  
COVID-19 WARDSDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 6

District collector C. Narayana Reddy visited Covid-19 ward by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) kit at the Government General Hospital on Thursday to get first hand information on the Covid-19 medical services. He spent almost three hours in the hospital, where he inspected ICU ward, maternity ward and washing area, oxygen provider site.

GGH in-charge superintendent, Harichandra Reddy, deputy superintendent Nimmala Balraj, doctors Saraswathi, Fareeda and others accompanied the collector. Speaking on the occasion, Narayana Reddy said that GGH staff should treat the patients with utmost care. He said that premises of the hospital should be sanitised frequently to prevent the spread of infection.

Collector said that all facilities will be provided at GGH and the medical fraternity and staff should boost up confidence among patients and their family members. Confidence should be built up on government hospitals and people of all sections should avail the facility, he said.

he added. After deleting the double entries, state officials are releasing the data, he clarified. The schedule is also different for district and state level bulletins, he pointed out.

## Common sight



A Coronavirus victim's body being taken in an ambulance in Karimnagar —DC

SPL CELL FOR  
POLICE COVID  
PATIENTS: CP

**Khammam:** Commissioner of police, Vishnu Warior said that a cell is operating to look after the police staff, who are undergoing Covid-19 treatment. He said that the members of the cell are calling the patients and getting the details on their health. He said that the patients are being counselled by the doctors and asking them not to lose their cool during treatment. The patients are being supplied dry fruits and medicines during the treatment. Commissioner, in a message, said, "It is a tough time and we can cross it with will power. I hope all the patients recover soon."

**NOTICE**  
No. DUBA/Cons/434/MR/2021-1106  
DATED: 06/05/2021  
MR. VENKATESH KONDA, S/o. RAJAIAH KONDA, R/o. 196/1, INDIRAMMA PLATS, CHINTHAKUNTA, KARIMNAGAR, 505001, TELANGANA, INDIA.  
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PRESENT ADDRESS: APT #005, RASHID OBAID BUILDING, KARAMA, DUBAI, UAE.  
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Remdesivir sale in black market;  
three hospital employees heldDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, MAY 6

As Covid-19 is spreading at the rate of four positive cases against every 10 RT-PCR tests, the black marketing of remdesivir, the critical care drug, is noticed in Khammam and Bhadradi districts.

Three persons including auxiliary nursing midwife N. Sunita and two outsourcing employees, Satish and Krishna, working in the district headquarter hospital in Khammam have been taken into custody while they were allegedly trying to sell the vials, the task-force police led by ACP Ramanujam said. The trio was handed over to Two Town circle inspector Karunakar and they were remanded to custody.

In Bhadrachalam, three persons at the government area hospital including anaesthetist Dr G. Krishna Prasad and Chava Yugandhar and Srinivasa Rao were arrested for selling remdesivir vials in the black market.

On the other hand, the

## 3 held with Remdesivir vials

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 6

The task force and the Subedari police on Thursday jointly arrested a gang of three members who were selling Remdesivir injection provided by doctors during emergencies to corona patients at a higher rate than the MRP. Police seized 28 Remdesivir vials and ₹20,000 cash from them.

Among those arrested were Bagaji Manohar, a pharmacy assistant in Mandi Bazaar, Kolipaka Kumaraswamy, a pharmacist from Bheemaram and

Aita Ashok, a pharmacy worker from Karimabad.

Warangal police commissioner, Tarun Joshi said the accused wanted to cash in on the severity of the Covid pandemic. The patients are going to hospitals for treatment and the usage of Remdesivir injection is on the rise.

Working in a local hospital pharmacy, the trio decided to turn the current unavailability of the injection in their favour and plotted to exploit the public by selling the injections at high prices. Remdesivir injection which can be procured from Hetero Pharma

Company for ₹2,800 each should be sold in retail to the patients for ₹3,490.

However, the accused are allegedly selling it at a price of ₹35,000 to ₹45,000. After receiving information, the task force and the Subedari police raided the drug store in the respective hospitals and arrested suspects with 28 Remdesivir injections.

The top cop appreciated Central Zone DCP Pushpa, Hanamkonda ACP Jitender Reddy, task force ACP Pratap Kumar, Subedari inspector Raghavender, and their staff for arresting the gang.

Covid-19 cases are increasing day by day in Khammam and Bhadradi districts. The government is not releasing the test results, but the details coming from various mandals proved the severity of the virus. About 21 out of 56 persons in Kamepalli

mandal were tested positive.

In Dummugudem, 17 persons out of 38 tested were found Covid +ve. In Dammapat, the hospital staff is conducting RT-PCR tests only to a limited number of persons by saying there was non-availability

of test kits. In Julurpad mandal, ten out of 25 tested persons were found to be positive.

District medical and health officials of the two districts are not releasing the details of Covid tests following such a direction from the government.

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## SHORT TAKES

## BJP TAKES DOWN VIDEO CLAIMING DEATH OF 'JOURNO'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

A video released by the BJP on its social media platform of its members who were "victims of the post-poll violence" in West Bengal had to be pulled back as photograph of one of the victims — Manik Moitra from Sitalkuchi — turned out to be that of a journalist.

The BJP had earlier shared the names of nine victims of post-poll violence in West Bengal including Monik Moitra. The party had to pull back the video after the journalist tweeted that he was "living and hale and hearty and around 1,300 km away from Sitalkuchi."

"The image of Abhiro Banerjee was erroneously included in the video while using an article by him as a source for the content," said a statement issued by the BJP, which also included a hyperlink and an image link in its statement claiming that Manik Moitra "succumbed to his injuries in Sitalkuchi following violence instigated and inflicted by TMC members."

## CHARTERED PLANE MAKES BELLY-LANDING

**Mumbai, May 6:** A chartered plane carrying five people, including a patient and a doctor, landed on its belly at Mumbai airport late on Thursday evening after declaring a full emergency. Airport authorities carpeted the runway with foam to prevent the plane catching fire.

All passengers were evacuated safely after the belly-landing of the plane, which was flying from Nagpur to Mumbai, according to the CSMIA (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport Mumbai). A full emergency was declared for the non-scheduled Beechcraft flight.

While it could not be independently confirmed, reports said that a wheel of the aircraft came off soon after taking off from Nagpur.

Pictures of the plane landing on the foamed runway were also doing the rounds on social media.

In a detailed statement, the Mumbai airport said the plane — carrying two crew members, a patient, one relative and a doctor — did a belly-landing at the airport at 9.09 pm on Thursday.

"As a precautionary method, CSMIA also foamed RWY (runway) 27 in order to prevent the aircraft catching fire. All passengers were evacuated safely and flights operating in and out of CSMIA remain on schedule," the airport said in a statement.

"The airport's emergency response team, including the fire and rescue responders, follow-me vehicles, CISF medical team amongst many others, was activated instantly and on stand-by to provide immediate assistance to ensure the safe evacuation of the passengers," the statement said.

Full emergency is declared when an aircraft approaches an aerodrome in a manner that there is a danger of an accident occurring.

## WRESTLER'S DEATH: POLICE LOOK FOR SUSHIL KUMAR

**New Delhi, May 6:** The Delhi Police on Thursday said it is conducting raids in search of two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar and others in connection with a brawl that led to the death of a wrestler inside the Chhatrasal Stadium complex in north Delhi.

A senior police officer said Kumar, the only Indian to win two individual Olympic medals, is yet to join the investigation.

Teams have been formed and raids are being conducted in Delhi and the neighbouring states, the police said.

A 23-year-old wrestler died and two of his friends got injured after they were allegedly brutally assaulted by other wrestlers inside the Chhatrasal Stadium.

The incident occurred in the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday over a dispute related to a property located in the Model Town area.

Prince Dalal (24), a resident of Haryana's Jhajjar, has been apprehended in connection with the case and a double-barrel gun has been seized from his possession.

The police said they have seized two double-barrel guns, seven live cartridges, two wooden sticks and five cars in connection with the case.

## Centre seeks report on WB violence

Mamata offers jobs of home guards to one family member each of Cooch Behar victims

From Page 1

The MoS was going to visit the family of a slain BJP worker and other injured.

He later tweeted: "TMC goons attacked my convoy in West Midnapore, broken windows, attacked personal staff. Cutting short my trip. We could not visit the house of @BJP4Bengal Karyakarta, Biswajit Mahesh, who was killed in the post-poll violence at his village Markundachak. Police advised us not to go after the attack on my convoy at Paanchkuri."

Mr. Muraleedharan added: "@BJP4India will not be threatened by Un-Democratic forces. Our fight against perpetrators of violence will continue in Democratic means. Arrived at Debra to meet workers of @BJP4Bengal who have been brutally attacked, whose houses have been destroyed by TMC goons."

At Nabanna, Ms Banerjee said, referring to the troubled zones: "We have marked some areas as black spots where unrest is spreading after the BJP has won by transferring police officials, including superintendents of police, due to their organisational inefficiency."

She also announced her government's compensation of ₹2 lakhs for the family of each person killed in the post-poll clashes.

At Dinhat in Cooch Behar of North Bengal, former TMC MLA Udayan Guha, who lost to Nishith Pramanik of the BJP this time, was injured in the right hand while two of his security personnel suffered head injuries after saffron party workers beat them in an attack.

Ms Banerjee also offered jobs of home guards to one family member each of all five villagers killed in the paramilitary forces' firing at Sitalkuchi in the district during the elections.



A team of home ministry officials seen after a meeting with a West Bengal BJP delegation at the BSF office in Kolkata on Thursday. The team is tasked with filing a report on the post-poll violence in the state.

— PTI

## Nadda condemns attack on Muraleedharan's car

**New Delhi, May 6:** BJP president J.P. Nadda on Thursday condemned the attack on Union minister V. Muraleedharan's convoy in West Bengal and claimed that "TMC-sponsored" violence was in full swing in state after the assembly poll results were declared.

Union minister of state for external affairs V.

Muraleedharan's car was vandalised at Panchkuri village in West Midnapore district on Thursday while he was visiting the area following alleged post-poll violence on saffron party workers.

Muraleedharan alleged in a tweet that "TMC goons" were behind the attack on his convoy.

Condemning the attack,

Nadda alleged that law and order has completely collapsed in West Bengal. "If an Union minister can be attacked then what would be the condition of common man?" he posed.

"TMC-sponsored violence is in full swing in West Bengal after assembly elections in the state," the BJP president alleged.

— PTI

claimed all police officers in key positions were also appointed by the Election Commission.

The MHA had asked the chief secretary why ade-

quate measures to stop the violence had not been taken so far. "There are fresh reports which suggest that post-poll violence has not stopped.

Immediate measures should be taken to stop the violence and a report should be sent immediately," the home secretary said in his letter.

— PTI



A family member reacts as he speaks on the phone after a relative died of Covid-19, in Ajmer on Thursday. Rajasthan reported 161 Coronavirus-related deaths and 17,532 fresh cases, pushing the toll to 5,182 and the infection count to 7,02,568.

— PTI

## Kerala imposes total lockdown

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
MAY 6

The Kerala government on Thursday decided to enforce total lockdown from May 8 to 16 in view of the huge spike in Covid 19 cases.

The state on Thursday reported 42,464 new cases

● DURING THE last 24 hours 1, 55, 632 samples were tested and the test positivity rate was 27.28 per cent.

of Covid-19 taking the total number of active cases to 3,90,906. During the last 24 hours 1, 55, 632 samples were tested and

the test positivity rate was 27.28 per cent.

The state also recorded 63 deaths taking the total death toll so far to 5,628.

Meanwhile, the state government decided to put in place strong curbs to contain the increasing number of cases. With two districts; Ernakulam and Kozhikode districts

currently having more than 50,000 patients each in hospitals, there's is tremendous pressure on health care facilities including ICU beds, oxygen requirement and ventilators. Similar situation prevails in Malappuram, Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram districts.

FALSE | BELIEVES

In Ganeshpur village, people take out torch rally to 'drive out' Coronavirus from their village

## MP villages fight virus with superstitious practices, quacks

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, MAY 6

A few remote pockets in rural Madhya Pradesh are currently battling the Coronavirus pandemic with superstitious practices and quacks, due to lack of access to medical facilities.

In the village of Johri under Bomari block in Guna district, people have started thronging the nearby river of Barni to fetch 'miracle water' to

cure Covid-19, official reports reaching here on Thursday said.

According to the reports, a rumour that a small patch of the dried up river bed has begun yielding water made rounds, the area immediately witnessed mad rush by locals who wanted to fetch a bottle of the 'miracle' liquid to treat people infected by Coronavirus.

The block administration has rushed the local 'patwari' or revenue inspector to probe the inci-

dent and dissuade the villagers not to believe in such superstitions.

"Patwari Mahendra Singh Dhakad visited the spot on Wednesday. He asked people gathered on the riverbed to disperse. He was, however, chased away by the mob", a senior district officer said unwilling to be quoted.

In another village of Umaria under Aron police station in the district, police last week arrested three healers who were taking gullible villagers

for a ride by promising them to ward off 'corona ghost' to make them immune to Covid-19.

The three accused, Kalyan Singh Ahirwar, Ram Singh Ahirwar and Maheswar Ahirwar, were arrested under section 269 (negligently spreading infection), 270 (willingly spreading infection) and 188 (disobedience to order promulgated by public servant) and Section 4 of the Epidemic Act, 1897, police said.

In the village of

Ganeshpur in Agar Malwa district, people took out a torch rally last fortnight to 'drive out' corona from their village.

The local youths ran around the village holding torches and chanting 'bhago corona bhago' (go corona go) slogans on the night of April 22 believing that the pandemic would be driven out by resorting to such superstitious practices.

Quacks in the villages were seen making hay out of the pandemic due to

## POST-POLL CLASH: WB ANNOUNCES ₹2L COMPENSATION TO KIN OF VICTIMS

**Kolkata, May 6:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said 16 people have lost their lives in post-poll violence in the state, and announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh each for their families.

Banerjee, during a press meet here, also said that her government will provide jobs of home guard to one family member each of all five persons killed in CAPF firing in Cooch Behar's Sitalkuchi area last month.

She further said that a CID team has initiated a probe into the incident of firing in Cooch Behar that took place when the voting exercise was underway for the fourth phase of assembly elections, on April 10.

"At least 16 persons — mostly from the BJP and the TMC and one of the Samyukta Morcha — died in post-poll violence. We will pay a compensation of ₹2 lakh to their family members. Our government will also provide jobs of home guard to the next of kin of Sitalkuchi victims," she said.

Taking a swipe at the BJP, the CM said that the saffron party was yet to come to terms with people's mandate.

She accused central leaders of inciting violence in the state.

"Not even 24 hours have passed since I was sworn-in as the Chief Minister, and letters, a central team have started arriving. This is because the BJP has not yet reconciled to the mandate of common people. I will request the saffron party leaders to accept the mandate," she told reporters.

— PTI

## Delhi, Maha see a fall in new cases; under testing suspected

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

Delhi and Maharashtra are finally witnessing some respite with fresh Covid-19 cases showing decline but it may be too early to rejoice as there are also complaints of under testing. In Delhi, the positivity rate is below 25 per cent and on Thursday it recorded about 1,900 cases less than Wednesday. India on Thursday had over 4 lakh fresh cases and close to 4,000 deaths in the last 24 hours, the highest so far ever since the pandemic began last year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country during which the need to ensure quick and holistic containment measures were discussed. "Prime Minister noted that an advisory was sent to the states to identify districts of concern where case positivity is 10 per cent or more and bed occupancy is more than 60 per cent on either oxygen supported or ICU beds," a statement from PMO said.

Modi also spoke with the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Telangana about the Covid-19 situa-

● PRIME MINISTER reviews the availability of medicines and was briefed about the rapid augmenting of production of medicines, including Remdesivir.

tion in their respective states, as well as with lieutenant governors of Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry, sources said.

Several oxygen plants and machines donated by different countries have been made functional even though the Central government is yet to give a complete list of their deployment locations.

The Prime Minister also reviewed the availability of medicines and was briefed about the rapid augmenting of production of medicines, including Remdesivir, officials said. There was also a discussion on vaccination which is in short supply.

In Delhi, people complained of not finding any slots to get vaccinated, and in Mumbai people complained that they were turned away from vaccination centres despite having taken prior online appointments.

Meanwhile, the Union government on Thursday approached the Supreme Court against a Karnataka high court

direction asking the Union government to allocate 1,200 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen to the state. Karnataka is facing an acute shortage of medical grade oxygen and 38 patients have already died due to lack of oxygen supply at various hospitals.

Meanwhile, there was an interesting tweet from Indian Commercial Pilot's Association demanding vaccines given their risk level. "We want vaccines, not your attitude. We're sick of your stupid platitudes. So from longitude to latitude, we can serve the nation with gratitude," the tweet said. Ministry of civil aviation (MoCA) responded by saying it has issued guidelines to facilitate the vaccination program in a fast and efficient manner to ensure timely vaccination of the aviation community.

"As per the guidelines, all players in the Civil Aviation Sector would be advised to cover their personnel under the ongoing vaccination program. Guidelines further state that the organisations which have already made arrangements with government/private service providers for the vaccination to their employees may continue to do so," MoCA said.



Ajit Singh

## RLD LEADER AJIT SINGH DIES OF COVID-19

**New Delhi, May 6:** Former Union minister and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) leader Ajit Singh passed away at a Gurgaon hospital on Thursday morning battling Covid-19, his family said. He was 82.

Singh, the son of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, was diagnosed positive for Covid-19 on April 20, the family said in a statement.

"Chaudhary Ajit Singh ji was diagnosed as Covid+ on the 20th April. He battled his condition till the very end and breathed his last today morning, the 6th of May, 2021," his son Jayant Chowdhury tweeted.

"Throughout his life journey, Chaudhary Sahib was loved and respected by many. He, in turn cherished this bond with all of you and gave his best consideration and efforts for your welfare," he said.

"As our Nation confronts the horrific pandemic, it is our humble request to all those who wish to pay their respects, to please stay at home as far as possible. We must observe all safety protocols to keep ourselves and everyone around us healthy and safe. This would be the best way to honour Chaudhary Sahib as well as all those Covid warriors who are working night and day to protect us," he said. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

INDONESIAN  
LANDSLIDE DEATH  
TOLL RISES TO 10

**Medan, Indonesia:** The death toll from a landslide at a hydroelectric dam project on Indonesia's Sumatra island has risen to 10, an official said on Thursday, as authorities called off a week-long search for victims.

A landslide triggered by heavy rains struck the Chinese-backed Batang Toru hydropower plant on Thursday last week, burying an estimated 13 people.

Employees were checking on the area over concerns that heavy rains could trigger landslides when the disaster struck. At least two children are among the victims. The body of a Chinese employee of the plant was identified on Wednesday.

Another Chinese employee narrowly escaped as he fled the scene.

ISRAELI AIR  
STRIKES HIT  
SOUTHERN SYRIA

**Damascus:** Israel carried out air strikes overnight in the southern Syrian province of Quneitra, Syrian state media and a war monitor said on Thursday, though there were no reports of casualties.

The strikes came a day after one civilian was killed and six others injured in similar attacks in the northwestern region of Latakia, a bastion of President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite minority.

Official news agency SANA said there had been "an Israeli attack led by a helicopter in one of Quneitra's zones" not far from the border with Israel. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported there had been "Israeli strikes".

The Britain-based war monitor, which relies on an extensive network of sources on the ground, said the strikes targeted the Syrian Army's 90th Brigade and regime military positions in north Quneitra, near the Israel-occupied Golan Heights.

UN: 155 MILLION  
FACED SEVERE  
HUNGER IN 2020

**United Nations:** At least 155 million people faced acute hunger in 2020, including 133,000 who needed urgent food to prevent widespread death from starvation — and the outlook for 2021 is equally grim or worse, a report by 16 organisations said on Wednesday.

The report, which focuses on 55 countries that account for 97% of humanitarian assistance, said the magnitude and severity of food crises last year worsened as a result of protracted conflicts, the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, and weather extremes that exacerbated "pre-existing fragilities."

The 155 million people faced "crisis," "emergency" or "catastrophe/famine" levels of food needs, an increase of around 20 million people from 2019, it said.

According to the report, two-thirds of the people in those crisis levels were in 10 countries — Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Haiti.

GUNMEN KILL  
FORMER TV  
PRESENTER, FLEE

**Kabul:** Gunmen killed a former Afghan TV presenter on Thursday as he was travelling in the southern city of Kandahar, a provincial official said, adding to fears for press freedom in the war-wrecked country.

Nimat Rawan was shot at noon, provincial spokesman Baheer Ahmadi said, by two assailants who were able to escape with his mobile phone. Security officials have told several other journalists in the area that extremists are targeting them as well, he added.

The killing heightens worries over the fate of Afghan journalists as US troops pull out. Many fear violence will spike and reprisals will be taken out against those who worked with foreign forces. Rawan was a former presenter for the well-known local channel *Tolnews*. He had been working in the Finance Ministry's media office, media watchdog Nia said in a statement. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but it comes a day after the Taliban issued a threat to Afghan journalists it considered too close to US-backed security agencies.

EU ready to discuss Covid-19  
vaccine patent scheme today

Move comes after US backs patent waivers for Covid-19 vaccines

**Brussels, May 6:** European Union leaders said on Thursday that in the wake of the US backing patent waivers for Covid-19 vaccine technology, the 27-nation bloc immediately will start discussing whether they should join such a move.

The leaders' first opportunity to mould a common view will come as soon as a two-day summit in Porto, Portugal, that starts Friday. While many insist that waiving patents would only go part way toward making vaccines available and likely in the midterm only, French President Emmanuel Macron said he "completely" supports opening up intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines as "a global public good".

At the same time, Macron insisted that the immediate priority for wealthier countries should be first donating more vaccine doses to poorer countries.

EU nations have long insisted they were in the vanguard of helping the rest of the world obtain vaccines, and have looked with a weary eye at how the United States effectively banned such exports itself.

The move to support waiving intellectual property protections on vaccines under World Trade Organisation rules marked a dramatic shift for the United States, which had previously lined up with many other developed nations opposed to the idea floated by India and South Africa. While the EU did not echo the US position, it generally welcomed President Joe Biden's move.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that "we are ready to discuss how the US proposal for waiver on intellectual property protection for Covid vaccines could help" and the crisis. Von der Leyen said in a video address Thursday, though, that other issues should take center stage. "In the short run... we call upon all vaccine-producing countries to allow exports and to avoid measures that disrupt supply chains," she said. —PTI



Patients arrive to receive a dose of a Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in a shopping mall of Belgrade on Thursday. Serbia's president said that his country would pay each citizen who gets a Covid jab before the end of May, in what could be the world's first cash-for-jabs scheme. — AFP

Oz's Victoria state to send  
\$41 million help to India

**Melbourne, May 6:** The Australian state of Victoria on Thursday announced 41 million dollar worth of aid and medical equipment, including 1,000 ventilators, for India to assist it to curb the devastating second wave of Covid-19.

The donation will be made to the Commonwealth medical stockpile. "We are working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to deliver this support to India as the country works to manage the second wave of coronavirus and treat those infected," according to an official statement.

"The 1,000 ICU Ventilators are currently owned by the Department of Health and will be donated to India for humanitarian purposes and the state was also preparing to send a range

of supporting equipment like connectors and humidifiers, with the total package valued at over 41 million Australian dollars. Announcing the support package, the state's acting Premier James Merlino said: "The situation in India right now is devastating and shows that the fight against this pandemic is not over — we have a responsibility to help where we can and that's exactly what we're doing." Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence said: "Our thoughts are with everyone impacted by this unfolding tragedy and we hope this package will go some way to addressing the challenges India is facing right now."

New Coronavirus cases and deaths in India hit a record daily high with 4,12,262 new infections and 3,980 fatalities being

reported, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,10,77,410 and the death toll to 2,30,168, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

Expressing solidarity with India and the people, Kaushaliya Vagghela, the first Indian born MP elected to the Victorian Parliament, said "at this painful and difficult time, all Victorians stand side by side with our Indian community, both here and abroad." She said she had also expressed her concerns about India and requested the state government to support India and Australians in India during this crisis. "I stood up in Victorian Parliament to urge the federal government to explore all options possible to safely bring back Australians currently in India," she added. — AP

SRI LANKA BANS  
TRAVELLERS  
FROM INDIA

**Colombo, May 6:** Sri Lanka on Thursday announced that all arrivals from India will be banned with immediate effect due to the record rise in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring country.

Several countries like the UK, the UAE, Australia and Singapore have already banned travellers from India as well as other South Asian countries. The Civil Aviation Authority on Thursday said that travellers from India will not be allowed to disembark in Sri Lanka.

The decision has been taken as the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly in India. The Director General Civil aviation in a letter to the CEO of the national carrier Sri Lankan Airlines has said, "in accordance with instructions received from health authorities of Sri Lanka due to pandemic." —PTI

Macron endorses  
share of vax tech

**Paris, May 6:** French President Emmanuel Macron is joining the Biden administration in saying that he backs the sharing of the valuable technology behind Covid-19 vaccines. But Macro is also insisting that the immediate priority for wealthier countries should be first donating more doses to poorer countries.

Speaking on a visit Thursday to a vaccine center, the French leader said he "completely" supports opening up intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines. Macron said that "evidently, we must turn this vaccine in a global public good." But he also argued that even if patents are

waived, pharmaceutical companies in places like Africa aren't currently equipped to make Covid-19 vaccines and that donations of doses should be prioritized instead.

Macron claimed that the European Union is leading the way in vaccine donations and called for the United States and Britain to share more, too.

He said that "Europe is the most generous continent with the rest of the world," having exported 45 million doses, and expressed hope that "the British, the Americans and others will follow." He added that, "in the short term, this is what will allow us to vaccinate." —AP

Japan builds statue  
with Covid-19 grant

**Tokyo, May 6:** A remote Japanese fishing town has sparked debate after spending coronavirus relief funds on a giant squid statue that cost nearly \$2,50,000 in a controversial bid to boost post-pandemic tourism.

The huge pink monument with its tentacles outstretched was unveiled in March by the coastal town of Noto in central Japan as a proud nod to its local delicacy.

It cost around 27 million yen (\$2,47,000) and was mostly paid for with a national tax grant to aid communities hit financially by Covid-19 restrictions.

Despite online debate over the merits of the public spending, local officials said they hoped the installation at a roadside rest stop would pique travellers' interest at home and abroad.

"Tourism in our town has been badly damaged by the coronavirus. We wanted to do something to support the local industries," including promoting squid fishing, an official at Noto town hall said on Thursday.

As well as the impact of Japan's border restrictions and calls to limit domestic travel in the past year, the town's economy has also been hurt by recent bad catches, he



A giant squid statue, built at a cost of nearly \$2,50,000. — AFP

added. Many people came to see the 13-metre (43-foot) monument this week during a series of public holidays, the official said, with children playing on it and adults taking quirky pictures for social media.

But some people online were less delighted by the 10-tentacled statue. "This is too surreal. What is also unclear is why this qualified for the grant," one Twitter user wrote in Japanese.

"It is wrong to spend tax on a non-urgent, unnecessary item. The mayor and local politicians should pay for it," said another.

But others were supportive. "My daughter will go there for a picnic in autumn. I hope they will not take it away," one person tweeted. — AFP

French boats leave Jersey,  
stand-off with Britain ends

**Saint Helier, Jersey, May 6:** French trawlers withdrew from waters around Jersey on Thursday after a protest over post-Brexit fishing rights that led to a brief standoff between British and French navy and coastal patrol boats.

The latest blow to cross-Channel relations was caused by angry French fishermen protesting over new fish licensing arrangements on the Channel island of Jersey following Britain's departure from the European Union.

At dawn, a flotilla of around 50 trawlers massed in front of the Saint Helier harbour on Jersey, a picturesque self-governing territory that is dependent on Britain for its defence.

Fears of a blockade prompted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to send two royal navy gunboats to the area, with France following suit by sending two of its own coast patrol vessels.

"We won't be intimidated by these manoeuvres,"



French fishing boats return home following their protest in front of the port of Saint Helier off the British island of Jersey to draw attention to what they see as unfair restrictions on their ability to fish in UK waters after Brexit, on Thursday. — AFP

French Europe Minister Clement Beaune told AFP of the navy deployment. Jersey lies just off France's northern coast and its rich fishing waters

were previously open to French boats before Brexit tore up the previous arrangements.

In the middle of the afternoon, after hours of

bobbing around while letting off the occasional smoke flare, the French trawlers began withdrawing. — AFP

SpaceX successfully  
lands Starship rocket

**Washington, May 6:** SpaceX successfully landed its prototype Starship rocket at its Texas base on its fifth attempt, a livestream showed.

The test flight represented a big win for Elon Musk's hard-charging space company after the last four tries ended in explosions.

"Starship landing nominal!" tweeted Musk.

"Nominal" means normal in the context of spaceflight.

The execution wasn't quite perfect, with a small fire engulfing the base of the 50 meter- (160 feet-) high space vessel shortly after landing.

● The rocket dubbed SN15 took off from the Starbase in Boca Chica, southern Texas at around 5:25 pm.

SpaceX webcaster John Insprucker explained this was "not unusual with the methane fuel we're using," adding engineers were still working out design issues.

The flames were quickly put out with a water cannon, footage showed.

Earlier, the rocket dubbed SN15 took off from the Starbase in Boca

Chica, southern Texas at around 5:25 pm local time (2225 GMT), reached an altitude of around 10 kilometers (6 miles) and performed a series of flight maneuvers.

SpaceX was facing added pressure to succeed with Wednesday's flight after NASA announced a version of Starship will be used as a lunar lander when the space agency returns humans to the Moon.

The \$2.9 billion contract is currently suspended after two rival companies, Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Dynetics, lodged a protest. — AFP

## CHINA HALTS ECONOMIC DEAL WITH OZ

**Beijing, May 6:** China said on Thursday it had suspended an economic agreement with Australia, in an apparent tit-for-tat response to Canberra's scrapping a Belt and Road infrastructure pact and threat to undo a deal leasing Darwin Port to a Chinese company.

The China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue deal has been pulled "based on the current attitude" of the Australian government, China's National Development and Reform Commission said in a statement, blaming some officials of "ideological discrimination." Beijing will "indefinitely suspend all activities under the framework" of the agreement, the statement said. — AFP

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Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813 : Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-22185)	
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Dy. CE/Substation Design/ TS Organization, PSPCL, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-tender For Manufacturing, Testing And Delivery of Various types of Marshalling Boxes. For detailed NIT & Tender specifications, please refer to <a href="https://eproc.punjab.gov.in">https://eproc.punjab.gov.in</a> from 10.05.2021 (11:00 AM onwards).	
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# DECCAN Chronicle

7 MAY 2021

## As she fights Covid, Mamata must check Bengal violence

On taking the oath as West Bengal's chief minister for the third time on Wednesday, Mamata Banerjee went into top drive on the issue of battling the Covid-19 pandemic and the post-poll political violence in the state that had claimed 14 lives till then. Action on both began immediately, although she did say tackling Covid-19 was her "top priority". If not Covid, what else can it be for any major leader of significance? Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a notable exception. The news of the second wave reached him late. Even today, the trench warfare against Covid-19 is being waged by state governments, with the Centre lording it over as the distributor of charity imports of oxygen.

It is just as well, therefore, that Ms Banerjee prioritised the fight against the virus. It is noteworthy, though, that the Centre has a different priority. The PM telephoned governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to say the post-poll violence must be tackled urgently. The PM's phone call is far from customary. It would have sufficed for the Union home secretary to call the state chief secretary.

The PM bringing himself into play is apt to be seen as a dog-whistle. BJP president J.P. Nadda rushed to Kolkata and staged a dharna. The notorious BJP IT cell went into overdrive with fake images that were called out by Alt News. An out-of-work ex-MP began lurid messaging on "Hindus" coming under even sexual attack.

In fact, a commission of inquiry will be needed to go into all aspects of the violence in the state in recent weeks, including the communal dimension. It will be found the dangerous process and the entire period of electioneering were co-terminous, and the post-poll violence was only the tailend of it. It is also incontrovertible, as Ms Banerjee noted, that for the past three months the state's law and order machinery was under the control of the Election Commission.

With a popular government back in the saddle, the chief minister now can't evade her responsibility. She must crack down on the troublemakers in all districts. It is not enough for her to say that the violence was mostly in constituencies where the BJP won. Attempts to communalise the situation with violence after a bitter defeat may be expected by bad losers, but triumphalist exuberance by the winners to showcase their prowess can't be ruled out.

In Tamil Nadu, Ms Banerjee's counterpart M.K. Stalin, the DMK chief, had his party supporters arrested for ransacking "Amma Canteens", a symbol that recalls late AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa. This show of "raj dharna" and neutrality in administrative affairs is a fine example to emulate.

In recent days, repeated direct and indirect calls from elements at all levels within the BJP to impose President's Rule in West Bengal, using the post-poll violence as a pretext, it is self-evident that such posturing ridicules the saffron camp. In the real world, imposing Central rule is undoable after a stunning election. In fact, the BJP's moves are no more than a desperate attempt by the defeated side to shore up the battered morale of the faithful.

Besides tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, and the very culture of political violence — which Ms Banerjee is now uniquely placed to root out after her stupendous win — dealing with the unemployment monster must engage Ms Banerjee's attention without delay.

## 50% cap on quotas ideal

The Supreme Court has drawn a line in the sand in the matter of quotas. While striking down the reservation created for the Maratha community in Maharashtra, the court emphasised that the 50 per cent limit on total reservations cannot be crossed. This significant part of the ruling should help immensely in curbing the adventurism of political parties in creating openings for the wooing of community-based votes or pandering to dominant communities that have already achieved social salience. Also, in stretching quotas without end by quoting extraordinary circumstances, the states have been inclined to breach the 50 per cent, limit as Tamil Nadu (69 per cent) and Telangana (67 per cent) have done in extreme examples of reservation limits stretched unduly.

It is in perpetuating the principle of reservation, first thought of as a decade of social upliftment for disadvantaged people, that it has become an entitlement impelling movement beyond 50 per cent for those who, like dalits and SCs/STs, were historically denied by India's rigid and reprehensible caste system. True emancipation lies in the creation of opportunities in education and jobs so that no community feels left out. In the midst of the pandemic, this might seem a huge challenge, but progress can be achieved only if reservation is supported for those who really need it. Welfare measures for all economically backward people will be of greater help.

The court's stand on the inviolability of the 50 per cent limit set down in the Indra Sawhney verdict in 1992 might curb the rights of the states. The ruling that a single list of socially and educationally backward classes notified by the President of India alone will prevail, with states having only a recommendatory, role may prove contentious as it could lead to a further empowering of the federal at the cost of the regional. History does, however, suggest that neither the law nor the states have been able to do much about the creamy layer and their succeeding generations cornering opportunities stemming from reservations. In any event, breaching the 50 per cent ceiling will undermine the noble intentions of quotas for the most disadvantaged.

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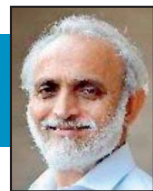
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Subhani



# The case against quotas isn't about meritocracy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The five-member Supreme Court Constitution Bench's order quashing the Maharashtra law granting reservations in admissions to educational institutions and in government jobs for the Maratha community is quite a complicated ruling. It does not reject the idea of affirmative action, which is what many opposed to caste-based reservations of any kind want, nor does it approve the free run of reservations for different groups. The 50 per cent limitation on reservations pronounced in the 1992 Mandal ruling by a nine-member bench of the Supreme Court is indeed a compromise between the need for affirmative action and the need to set up a cutoff point. But it is not a rigid cut-off point, and there is room to accommodate groups which need affirmative action even if it means breaking the 50 per cent barrier.

In its May 5 verdict, the Supreme Court had spelled out various reasons for disallowing reservations for the Marathas. It said that the move breached the 50 per cent ceiling on reservations and that there were no compelling reasons to do so because the community was adequately represented in all government services. It made the additional observation that the states have no right to determine which group belongs to the backward class, and that this can only be decided by the Central government through the National Backward Class Commission. The state government can only make its recommendation to the Central government. All these issues pass muster legally, but

they do not close the possibility of discussion and the tenability of contrary and legitimate viewpoints.

It is but a truism that things are rarely if ever purely legal, and the politics of it all, and not always in the negative sense, cannot be brushed aside. It is on the political ground that the case of reservations for Marathas in educational institutions and government jobs will have to be assessed. And there would be sufficient arguments on the side of those favouring reservations for the Marathas, as well as of those who are opposed to it. And it is a moot point as where does the principle of equality figure in the middle of this political and social tussle.

A look at the three Articles of the Constitution related to equality show that the principle is not a simple one at all. Article 14 is about "equality before the law", which means "equal protection of the laws". And while Article 15 prohibits discrimination "on grounds of only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them", it says in Article 15(4) that this shall not "prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes". And power of the State to make "special provision" is reiterated in Article 16, which is about "equality of opportunity in public employment".

The ideal solution would be when there would not arise the need to make any "special provision" for certain sections of society which has been historically

unequal, not just in unthinking ways but in a deliberate and vicious manner. In Indian society, the battle lines have been shifting from that between traditional upper castes to the middle class, middle castes, and again to a battle between the newly empowered middle caste middle classes to the middle classes of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is the further complication of a battle between the middle classes of different middle castes seeking special provisions. It is not an easy thing for either the political leaders or for the judges to resolve the social disequilibrium.

The reservations issue poses a special dilemma for the Shiv Sena and the BJP, as both subscribe to conservative ideologies of different shades. The Shiv Sena's belief in the Maharashtrian identity is not sufficient to tackle the demands of different groups like that of the Marathas. Similarly, the BJP's Hindu identity, which seeks to overlook the clash of castes in the intra-Hindu framework, is of no help in facing up to the demand for reservations by the powerful middle class middle caste groups like the Patidars in Gujarat, the Marathas in Maharashtra and Jats in Rajasthan and Haryana.

It is quite easy to derive satisfaction from the discomfiture of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, but it does not help in resolving the basic challenge of delivering the terms of equality as enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16. What is needed is a debate across different

**It is quite easy to derive satisfaction from the discomfiture of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, but it does not help in resolving the challenge of delivering the terms of equality as enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16.**

sections of society about equality and how the fairness principle as spelled out by American political philosopher John Rawls can be applied. In a memorable passage from his classical treatise, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls had stated: "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions, no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust."

This statement can serve as an ideal touchstone for discussions in the legislatures and courts, in universities and homes for debating the question of equality and how every individual and every section can have access to it. It will always remain a work in progress. There can be no permanent solutions. If today the Maratha community feels the need for reservations in educational institutions and government jobs, there must come a time through remedial laws that it will not suffer from those handicaps. It is a judgment call that the Marathas must take. Also, the leaders of the Maratha community must be able to decide as to who among the community really needs reservations. If every citizen has an equal right to education, and there are enough schools and universities for all, would there be a need for reservations? If there are enough jobs, would there be a need for reservations for government jobs for any community?

The BJP-led Central government can bring in the necessary legislation to break the 50 per cent ceiling in reservations, and all other parties would support it. But it does not provide a solution to the basic issue — education for all, and full employment.

*The writer is a commentator and analyst based in New Delhi*

### LETTERS

#### ID SHOPPING

It was shocking to see hundreds of shoppers at Charminar (*Old City opens up for Id-ul-Fitr, DC, May 6*). I wonder how the authorities allowed such a massive gathering of people at this place. The arrogance of people not wearing mask is openly seen endangering everyone. The shopping centre must be immediately closed in everyone's interest. The High Court must take cognisance and stop this market if the state does not.

**Shahbaz Husain**  
*Hyderabad*

#### THIRD WAVE

The principal scientific adviser's ambiguous statement is silent about when, how and why such a third wave will occur (*Centre warns of 3rd wave, DC, May 6*). One wonders if such a statement is backed by a scientific data or is just a guess work. Such statements serve no purpose and also make people lose confidence in science and governments. A meaningful silence is always better than point-less words.

**Kshirasagara Balaji Rao**  
*Hyderabad*

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Rare gold coins recovered

HYDERABAD, MAY 6. The city police stumbled on to rare coins of the 14th century A.D. belonging to the Vijaynagar empire at Mubarakpur village, about 35 miles from here in Vikarabad taluk. This happened in strange circumstances. One hundred rare gold coins were recovered from a waddar, who earlier was nabbed by the police for suspected robbery. Forty-five-year-old Yelliah, a waddar (stone-cutter), while cutting rocks and digging earth ten days ago, found a stone vessel. He dug out the vessel and when he heard tinkling sounds from inside became curious and broke it. To his surprise, he found it was filled with gold coins. There were 200 coins. Being an illiterate, the waddar did not realise the value and historical importance of his discovery. Thanking his stars he rushed to a goldsmith in a nearby village and converted 100 of the gold coins into ingots.

Jawed Naqvi



## Will Cong, Left help or hinder Mamata's effort to unite Opp?

It was a crucial make-or-break vote that P.V. Narasimha Rao faced when Mamata Banerjee was ushered into a packed and tense Lok Sabha in a wheelchair and helped to her seat. From the press gallery above, one could see her shaking with spasm under a woollen blanket that wrapped her. The fever from malaria ran high and she struggled to control waves of rigour that came with the affliction. Eventually, Rao won the trust vote with a narrow margin. She did her duty by the Congress and contributed in her way to the early economic reforms, which usually Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh are credited with.

Now, the tycoons her vote had helped become rich with India's top-down neo-liberal policies were switching sides. Their money power was transferred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP. All the loot one could imagine was thrown into the massive effort to dislodge Mamata Banerjee. She though was confidently plotting the fightback for a third term as West Bengal's chief minister. Her secular resolve and populist economic priorities can be gleaned from her modest home surrounded by lower-middle-class

dwelling and shanties in a non-descript Kolkata district. The Trinamul Congress she set up was itself a critique of the Congress, which nurtured her as a youth leader but was beginning to be associated with wealth and pelf.

Trinamul means "grassroots" in Bengali, and her party's name suggests her plain thoughts about her parent group. The results were out on May 2, the same day as Satyajit Ray's birth centenary. Bengal has been shaped by Ray, Nazrul Islam and Tagore, by Vivekananda and Kali worship. For her to open her account in West Bengal, her worldview had to challenge the invincible Communist hegemony, much of it secured under Jyoti Basu's watch. He had steered the state for most of the three decades of Left rule since 1977, a handy reward for steadfastly fighting Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

After Basu retired, citing age, the party's fortunes quickly melded with the economic chaos across India. The party evicted peasants from fields to make space for industry, a lesson they erroneously believed could be bodily lifted from China. If Nandigram and Singur were what the comrades saw as aspects of "socialism

with Bengali characteristics", the move boomeranged, and Ms Banerjee pounced on the opportunity.

During much of the post-Basu rule, Communist priorities in West Bengal dovetailed with the core quests of the Vajpayee-Advani duo in Delhi. West Bengal's Marxist CM and the BJP's Union home minister found common cause, really two causes, in fact. They both desired to deal decisively with the Maoist challenge, and both harboured strong reservations about a real or imagined influx of people from Bangladesh. This worked as a wedge that eventually drove many Muslims away from the party, while alienating many who opposed harsh solutions to tackle the Maoists.

Marxist CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya went a step further in his induced aloofness from a people he had no use for. He turned down a request from a fellow partisan in Delhi to help the Progressive Writers Association host an Urdu conference in Kolkata. "Do you want me to patronise another Partition?" he had exploded.

Sunday's results saw the CPI(M) wiped out of West Bengal's Assembly. Self-criticism and intro-

spection don't seem to go well with the current crop of Leftists. They blamed their decline on state terror supposedly unleashed on the party by Ms Banerjee's TMC. If that were true, why did the cadre switch en masse to the BJP? Did the Communists really hope to challenge the BJP had they succeeded in defeating Ms Banerjee in the recent polls? The election results showed how Left votes helped in the narrow defeat of Ms Banerjee in Nandigram.

This mindless game of revenge and short-sighted gambits to somehow crawl back to power has harmed the Left enormously. It has also dented the cause of Opposition unity that is urgently needed to arrest the erosion of India's democracy under Narendra Modi. The party may learn from the DMK in Tamil Nadu, under whose umbrella it could win two seats in the southern state.

Ms Banerjee has periodically invited the Communists to join her struggle against the essentially anti-federal, anti-secular character of the BJP. This has also been the quest of Kerala's Marxist CM Pinarayi Vijayan, who landed a record second consecutive term by defeating the Congress. Ironically, it's these two

parties that are holding Opposition unity to ransom, has both display a marked inability to identify self-harm in their cherry-picking of friends and foes. The Marxists offer a terrible logic of being adversaries of the Congress in Kerala and its allies elsewhere. What kind of a national messaging does that invite? Was it a good idea for them to join hands against the TMC in West Bengal, granted that they at least benefited from being together in Tamil Nadu?

Everyone has congratulated Mamata Banerjee on her fine victory against extremely heavy odds posed by the combined strength of India's right, left and centre parties. She has shown them their place. A Shiv Sena leader called her the "Tigress of Bengal". Arvind Kejriwal, M.K. Stalin, Akhilesh Yadav and Sharad Pawar, no small-time leaders, have greeted her with renewed hope to stall the march of fascism. The question is, will the Congress and the Left Front work with Ms Banerjee? Or will they persist with their misplaced zeal to inflict harm on themselves, and thereby on India's struggling democracy?

*By arrangement with Dawn*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48949.76	0.56
Nifty 50	14724.80	0.73
S&P 500*	4,178.58	0.26
Dollar (₹)	73.77	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.64	0.06
Euro (₹)	88.86	-0.15
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,680▲439	0.94
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.36	-0.87
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.974	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.561	-0.023

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## C19 resurgence bringing new challenges: Fitch

Fitch Solutions said while Covid-19 containment measures will weigh on India's ongoing economic recovery, the localised nature of restrictions means that the actual impact is likely to be much less severe relative to April-June 2020 when a strict nationwide lockdown was imposed. Fitch forecast real GDP to grow 9.5 per cent in 2021-22. Risks to this forecast are to the downside, it said.

## BoE expects UK economy's best year since 1941k



The Bank of England has kept interest rates on hold as it forecast the fastest annual pace of growth for the British economy since early on in World War II, largely from the rapid rollout of vaccines. The Monetary Policy Committee said it will maintain the bank's main interest rate at 0.1 per cent, the lowest in the bank's 327-year history. The bank is now projecting economic growth of 7.25 per cent in 2021, instead of 5 per cent.

## LIC to have five-day week from May 10

LIC will have five working days starting from May 10 since Saturdays have been declared as a holiday for the insurer. Pursuant to a notification on April 15, 2021, wherein the central government has declared every Saturday as a public holiday for LIC, all policy holders are informed that w.e.f May 10, all offices of LIC will work from Monday to Friday, it said. Office hours would be 10 AM to 5:30 PM," it added.

## Revolt EV bikes' booking closed to meet demand

Electric bike maker Revolt Intellicorp said it has received strong response for Revolt EV bikes and has stopped taking any fresh bookings owing to high demand. Due to overbooking, Revolt has suspended taking any fresh bookings on its website, the company said. It said it will re-open the bookings after meeting the current set of orders in hand. But it did not share the number of confirmed booking orders.



## ■ Malaysia's IHH runs 34 hospitals in India Mitsui eyeing reins of Fortis parent IHH

SANGEETHA G  
with agency inputs  
CHENNAI, MAY 6

In a move that will help grab a large pie of India's private healthcare delivery infrastructure, Japan's Mitsui & Company is exploring a deal to take full control of Malaysian hospital group IHH Healthcare. IHH Healthcare runs 34 hospitals in India through Fortis Healthcare, Gleneagles Global Hospitals and Continental Hospitals.

The Malaysian group also has a presence in India's diagnostic market through Fortis subsidiary Religare Ltd.

According to a Bloomberg report, Mitsui & Company is exploring a deal to take a majority stake in Kuala Lumpur-headquartered hospital group IHH Healthcare and delist it from the stock exchanges of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Mitsui has reached out to Malaysian sovereign fund Khazanah Nasional, IHH's second largest shareholder, to pick up the latter's 26 per cent stake in the company. Mitsui has a 32.9 per cent stake in IHH Healthcare through a subsidiary. As of now IHH Healthcare is run as an independent company.

It may be recalled that IHH Healthcare acquired a 31 per cent stake in Fortis Healthcare in August 2018 in a \$1.1-billion deal, but could not make an open offer to acquire a 26 per cent more



stake in Fortis, owing to a Supreme Court stay order secured by Japan's Daiichi Sankyo over its disputes with the Singh brothers, the erstwhile promoters of Fortis.

As per the report, a few private equity firms have approached the Japanese trading house to team up on the potential transaction to buy out IHH's other shareholders.

Mitsui had raised its stake in IHH in 2018 to 32.9 per cent, after buying additional 15 per cent shares in the hospital operator from Khazanah. The Japanese firm is now the single biggest shareholder in the company.

IHH, which is listed on the stock exchanges of Malaysia and Singapore, has a market value of \$11 billion. IHH runs a total of 80 hospitals in 10 countries.

In India, IHH runs 34

hospitals, with 4,770 operational beds across Fortis Healthcare, Gleneagles Global Hospitals and Continental Hospitals. IHH had a 50-50 joint venture with Apollo Hospitals to operate Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals in Kolkata, but last December IHH entered into a share purchase agreement to divest its 50 per cent stake in this.

IHH, which has majority stake in Fortis Healthcare, plans to rebrand the Fortis chain as Parkway, the Malaysian healthcare chain owned by it, but this will now require permission from the Supreme Court.

Recently, IHH had also entered into a partnership with Bharat Biotech to provide Covaxin at its Gleneagles Global Hospitals in three locations in India—Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad.

## IBM UNVEILS WORLD'S FIRST 2 NANOMETER CHIP TECHNOLOGY

New Delhi, May 6: Tech giant IBM on Thursday said it has developed the world's first chip with two nanometer (nm) nanosheet technology that promises to speed up access to the internet, longer battery life and faster processing time in applications.

Semiconductors are needed to run everything from computers to appliances and transportation systems to critical infrastructure.

According to IBM, the potential benefits of advanced 2 nm chips could include quadrupling of cell phone battery life, reduction in the carbon footprint of data centres, and drastically speed up a laptop's functions (including quicker processing in applications to assisting in language translation more easily and faster internet access).

The use of the new technology could also contribute to faster object detection and reaction time in autonomous vehicles like self-driving cars, it said in a statement.

The demand for increased chip performance and energy efficiency continues to rise, especially in the era of hybrid cloud, AI and the Internet of Things.

"IBM's new 2 nm chip technology helps advance the state-of-the-art in the semiconductor industry, addressing this growing demand. It is projected to achieve 45 per cent higher performance," it said. —PTI

## Prime residential prices drop in top Indian cities

ANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MAY 6

The coronavirus pandemic seems to have hit the country's prime real estate market relatively more compared to the trend in the global market. Indian cities figuring in property consultant Knight Frank's Global Prime Residential Index saw a drop in prices while prime properties became dearer in many key cities abroad.

While the global index moved up 4.6 per cent in January-March (Q1) 2021, all the Indian cities in the index—Bengaluru, New Delhi and Mumbai—slipped down the index, with the property prices declining.

Prime residential property prices in Bengaluru declined 2.7 per cent, Mumbai 1.5 per cent and Delhi 0.2 per cent in Q1 against the same quarter last year. Sequentially also prices dropped. Against Q4 2020, Bengaluru prices fell 1.6 per cent, Mumbai 0.6 per cent and Delhi 0.1 per cent.

Due to price drop, Bengaluru came down

THE KNIGHT FRANK PRIME GLOBAL CITIES INDEX Q1 2020			%	%
Rank	City	World regions	12-MONTH (Q1 2020-Q1 2021)	3-MONTH (Q4 2020-Q1 2021)
1	Shenzhen	Asia	18.9	6.7
2	Shanghai	Asia	16.3	8.5
3	Guangzhou	Asia	15.2	12.6
4	Vancouver	North America	15.2	6.3
5	Seoul	Asia	14.8	1.3
6	St. Petersburg	Russia & CIS	13.4	2.5
7	Los Angeles 1,3	North America	12.6	2.2
8	Moscow	Russia & CIS	12.4	7.3
9	Taipei	Asia	12.2	6.5
10	Miami 1,3	North America	10.2	2.4
11	Toronto	North America	10.1	5.3
32	Delhi	Asia	-0.2	0.0
36	Mumbai	Asia	-1.5	-0.1
40	Bengaluru	Asia	-2.7	-0.6
46	New York	North America	-5.8	-1.6

(Ranked by annual % change)

Source: Knight Frank Global Research

four places in the index from 40 to 36 while Mumbai fell from 36 to 35 and Delhi from 32 to 31.

During the January-March 2021 quarter, prices of top three cities in the index—Shenzhen, Shanghai and Guang-

zhou—appreciated 18.9 per cent, 16.3 per cent and 15.2 per cent, respectively, against the year-ago quarter. Against Q4 2020, prices of these cities moved up 6.7 per cent, 8.5 per cent and 12.6 per cent, in the same order.

## STATES GET ₹9,870 CRORE AS REVENUE DEFICIT GRANT

New Delhi, May 6: The finance ministry on Thursday released the second monthly instalment of revenue deficit grant of Rs 9,871 crore to 17 states. With the release of the second instalment, a total amount of Rs 19,742 crore has been released in the first two months of the current financial year as

Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the states, the ministry said in a statement.

The Centre provides such grant to the states under Article 275 of the Constitution.

The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly

instalments to meet the gap in revenue accounts of the states post-devolution.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended Post Devolution Release Deficit Grants to 17 states based on the gap between the assessment of revenue and expenditure of the state.

—PTI

## Top pharma firms lobby for G-20 protection for patents

ALESSANDRO SPECIALE  
MAY 6

Representatives for the world's major pharmaceutical and medical companies are warning Group of 20 leaders that moves to weaken intellectual property rights protection will reduce investments and hurt innovation.

The warning comes in a report prepared for G-20 leaders by representatives of health and life-sciences companies, including Novartis AG, Sanofi FP AstraZeneca PLC and Johnson & Johnson, and from organisations such as the OECD and Europe's EFPIA pharmaceutical industry association.

"No investment can be made or secured without proper intellectual property rights, that are fundamental and must be maintained to foster a life-sciences ecosystem that can deliver innovation and improve patient outcomes across the world," reads a draft report seen by Bloomberg.

The US gave its support for a waiver of intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines that will

## PATENT WAIVER TO HELP VAX MFG:GOVT

New Delhi, May 6: India on Thursday said temporary waiver of certain provisions of intellectual property rights under a WTO agreement would be an important step to enable scaling up of manufacturing and timely availability of affordable Covid-19 vaccines and essential medical products.

India and South Africa had on October 2 proposed in the WTO a relaxation in norms of the Trips agreement to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries.

be discussed by the World Trade Organization, setting the stage for potentially thorny talks over sharing proprietary know-how needed to boost global supplies of the life-saving vaccines.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has also signalled readiness to discuss any



Piyush Goyal

India welcomed the US government's support for this initiative.

"We welcome the US government supporting this initiative and joining 120 other countries working towards affordable Covid-19 vaccines," commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal tweeted.

—PTI

proposal that "addresses the crisis in an effective and pragmatic manner."

Business leaders say that the G-20 should share a "balanced international and local vision regarding an effective protection of intellectual property rights in health and life sciences," according to the draft. —Bloomberg

## Framework for onboarding social enterprises suggested

New Delhi, May 6: A Sebi-appointed panel on Thursday suggested a detailed framework for onboarding social enterprises and non-profit organisations on the proposed social stock exchange.

Corporate foundations, political and religious organisations, among other entities should not be allowed to be on the bourse, the panel said as it listed out 15 broad activities that will make a social enterprise (SE) eligible to be onboarded on the exchange.

In its report submitted to Sebi, the panel, under the chairmanship of Nabard former chairman Harsh Kumar Bhanwala, also deliberated on aspects related to the ecosystem development, especially on social auditors.

SE eligible to participate in social stock exchange (SSE) should be entities non-profit organisation (NPO) and for-profit social enterprise (FPE) having social intent and impact as their primary goal. And, such intent is demonstrated through its focus on eligible social

objectives for the underserved or less privileged populations or regions, as per the recommendations. The primacy is to be determined through application of three filters SE should be engaged in at least one of the 15 broad eligible activities; it should target underserved or less privileged population segments or regions; and SE should have at least 67 per cent of its activities qualifying as eligible activities to the target population.

The 15 broad areas of eligible activities included eradicating hunger, poverty, malnutrition and inequality; promoting health care, supporting education, employability and livelihoods; gender equality empowerment of women and supporting incubators of social enterprises.

Besides corporate foundation, political or religious organisations, the committee has recommended that professional or trade associations, infrastructure and housing companies should not be permitted on the exchange. However, it said

that entities in the affordable housing segment can be allowed.

Further, the panel has made certain recommendations for capacity building fund which will enable NGOs to navigate the SSE and its fundraising mechanism.

"These concepts of social auditors and capacity building fund are unique to fundraising for social enterprises in India, and would facilitate SSE in its activities," according to the report released by Sebi for public comment.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought comments from public till June 20 on the report.

The panel or the technical group (TG) was constituted by Sebi in September 2020 for developing framework to onboard NPOs and FPEs on the SSE, including defining for-profit social investing/enterprises, prescribing disclosure requirements related to financials, governance, operational performance and social impact.

—PTI

## GOOGLE TO MOVE TO HYBRID WORK WEEK: PICHAI



Sundar Pichai

New Delhi, May 6: Google will move to a hybrid work week, where most Googlers spend approximately three days in the office and two days "wherever they work best", according to a note by Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai.

About 20 per cent of Google's workforce will continue to work remotely after its offices reopen later this year, while about 60 per cent Googlers will come together in the office for a few days a week, Pichai said.

"Since in-office time will be focused on collaboration, your product areas and functions will help decide which days teams will come together in the office. There will also be roles that may need to be on site more than three days a week due to the nature of the work," he added.

Pichai also noted that the company will offer opportunities for employees to apply for completely remote work (away from team or office) based on their role and team needs.

As per the financial details released in Q1 2021, Google has 139,995 full time employees worldwide. While Google doesn't disclose country-specific headcount, the company is estimated to have over 4,000 people in India.

"Before the pandemic, we had thousands of people working in locations separate from their core teams. I fully expect those numbers to increase in the coming months as we develop more remote roles..Taken together these changes will result in a workforce where around 60 per cent of Googlers are coming together in the office a few days a week, another 20 per cent are working in new office locations, and 20 per cent are working from home," he said.—PTI

## WEAKENING INVESTMENT

## Exporters reluctant to invest even with surge in shipments

## China faces growth headwinds from mfg

TOM HANCOCK  
MAY 6

China's economic growth faces headwinds this year due to weaker-than-expected investment spending in the country's vast manufacturing sector, driven by Beijing's efforts to rein in pollution and by a profit squeeze at labour-intensive manufacturers, according to Citigroup economists.

Spending by manufacturers has been the slowest component of Chinese investment to recover from the pandemic, with outlays in the first quarter still below 2019 levels. Manufacturers' profitability, the main source of their investment funds, plunged last year, and many businesses are seeing margins squeezed by higher commodity prices and a resumption of social-security contributions that were suspended during the pandemic. Citi economists said in a report.

Manufacturing investment "may be at risk of coming out lower than our previous expectation," which would have a "sizeable impact" on a previous forecast that China's GDP will grow 8.8 per cent this year, the econo-



mists said. While a strong real estate sector has driven a surge in profitability in sectors such as steel and cement, greater government focus on cutting air pollution and slowing growth in carbon emissions will limit their capacity expansion this year, they said.

Chinese exporters interviewed early this year remained reluctant to invest even after shipments surged during the pandemic, partly due to a sharp rise in labour costs and lingering uncertainty from the US-China trade war. China's export growth is widely expected to slow in the second half of the year as consumers in developed economies return to spending on services as more people get vaccinated.

The country's two other main investment drivers also face headwinds. Local government bond issuance, the main driver of

infrastructure spending, has been slower than in previous years. Beijing is tightening a campaign against leverage in real-estate companies, which is likely to weigh on their investment spending.

"We expect downward pressure to start building in housing sales in top-tier cities and nationwide property investment," economists at Societe Generale SA wrote in a report this week.

China's top leadership last week highlighted a "window of opportunity" for reforms such as curbing a rise in house prices, tightening regulation of technology companies and stepping up monitoring of local government debt. Those changes are likely to reduce growth in the short term, though officials contend they'll lead to more sustainable growth over a longer period.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## India's Oly-bound shooters get vax

**New Delhi:** Many shooters, coaches and officials from India's Olympic-bound contingent received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine across cities on Thursday. The shooters were to get vaccinated before leaving for Zagreb, Croatia on May 11 to participate in the European Championship. "All the shooters have got vaccinated today. Some of them got their jab in Delhi while some in their respective home towns," a National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) source said. Some of the members of the Indian team have already got their first dose of the vaccine last month, including pistol ace Manu Bhaker and rifle shooter Anjum Moudgil. As far as the national shooting team's coaches are concerned, quite a few of them, including Suresh Jung, Suma Shirur and Deepali Deshpande, had got themselves vaccinated last month. — PTI

## Indian archers to miss Swiss WC

**Kolkata:** India's Olympic-bound archers will not get to compete in the Stage 2 World Cup in Lausanne as their short-term visa application has been rejected by the Switzerland Embassy. India has been battling a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that has forced many countries to ban travellers from India. The Indian archers will now directly compete in the Stage 3 World Cup in Paris which will be the last Olympic qualification event for the Indian women's recurve team. The seven-day competition will begin on June 23. "Swiss Embassy did not allow any short term Visa and we had little time for the Stage 2 World Cup (May 17-23). Our focus is solely on the Paris World Cup now," Archery Association of secretary general Pramod Chandurkar said. — PTI

## Bopanna in men's doubles last eight

**Madrid:** India's Rohan Bopanna combined with his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov to stun top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah in straight sets and reach the men's doubles quarterfinals of Madrid Open Masters. This was the 41-year-old Bopanna's first win on the ATP tour in 2021. The Indo-Canadian duo won their round of 16 match 6-3, 6-4 on Wednesday. Bopanna and Shapovalov will take on German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the quarterfinals. "A superb victory by #TOPSATHlete tennis player @rohanbopanna and his partner @denis\_shapo who beat World #1 men's doubles pair of Robert Farah and Juan Sebastian Cabal 6-3, 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals of the MutuaMadridOpen," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted. — PTI



Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateshwar Reddy (left) congratulates badminton world champion and Olympic silver medalist P. V. Sindhu after she was nominated as athlete ambassador for International Olympic Committee's 'Believe in Sports' campaign, at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad.

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**Europa League semifinal second legs:** Roma vs Manchester United from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, 3, HD, Arsenal vs Villarreal from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## DEPARTURE GATES

## Aussies fly out, New Zealand contingent leaves on Friday

**New Delhi, May 6:** The Australians flew off to Maldives, the South Africans headed home and the ones from New Zealand waited to be sent back on Friday as the suspended IPL's foreign cricketers bid adieu to India, hoping that the country recovers from the mayhem unleashed by a second wave of Covid-19 cases.

The 40-strong Australian contingent, except for a Covid-positive Mike Hussey, left for Maldives on Thursday to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia once the travel restrictions end on May 15.

"We can confirm that Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators have been safely transported from India and are en route to the Maldives," Cricket Australia stated in a press release.

"The Australians will remain in Maldives until the conclusion of the travel pause pertaining to flights from India to Australia," it added.

The IPL was suspended on Tuesday after four players and two coaching staff members from three different teams tested positive for Covid-19 inside the bio-bubble.

Of the 40 Australians involved in the league after three early pullouts, 14 were players, including mega-stars such as David Warner, Pat Cummins, and Steve Smith among others.

The 11 South Africans in the league boarded flights for Johannesburg as their country has not imposed any restrictions on travel from India, which recorded more than 4 lakh Covid-19 cases on Thursday and close to 4,000 deaths.

"My constant prayers is with the people from India to get through this. Pls Take care of yourselves," Proteas star Faf du Plessis, who turned up Chennai Super Kings, posted on Instagram.

The Cricket Australia thanked the BCCI for its assistance in ensuring that players were able to leave India within two



Trent Boult (left) and Chris Lynn of the Mumbai Indians.

● The 40-strong Australian contingent, except for a Covid-positive Mike Hussey, left for Maldives on Thursday to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia once the travel restrictions end on May 15.

● Of the 40 Australians involved in the league after three early pullouts, 14 were players, including mega-stars such as David Warner, Pat Cummins and Steve Smith among others.

days of the league's suspension owing to Covid-19 cases inside its bio-bubble.

"CA and the ACA extend their sincere thanks to the BCCI for their responsiveness in moving the Australians from India to the Maldives....," the statement read.

On the wait-list were the Black Caps. Four members of their Test contingent, including captain Kane Williamson, will head for the United Kingdom on May 11 while the rest will make their way back home on Friday, the country's cricket board announced.

New Zealand are scheduled to play hosts England in a two-match Test series, beginning on June 2, before facing India in the World Test Championships final at Southampton from June 18.

"We've worked closely

with the BCCI and the IPL franchises on the various departure strategies and we're very appreciative of their support during what is, clearly, a very challenging time," New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive David White said in a statement on Thursday.

Williamson, pacer Kyle Jamieson and spinner Mitchell Santner, as well as physio Tommy Simsek, will remain in a mini-bubble in New Delhi before departing for the UK, ahead of preparations for the Test series against England, and the WTC final against India.

There were 17 New Zealanders involved in the League, including 10 players.

NZC said May 11 is the earliest date it could obtain for the team's arrival in the UK.

However, pace spearhead Trent Boult will return home briefly to see

his family before joining the Test squad in early June, for the second match against England and the WTC final.

"...Boult will leave MIQ (Managed Isolation and Quarantine) on May 22 and will spend a week at home with his family, training at Mt Maunganui before departing for the UK in early June," NZC stated.

White said IPL players, support staff and commentators returning to New Zealand would adhere to all regulatory protocols, including pre-departure Covid-19 tests.

Those returning to New Zealand on Friday from India also include Stephen Fleming, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, Shane Bond, Mike Hesson, Tim Seifert, Adam Milne, Scott Kuggeleijn and James Pamment.

— PTI

## AFTER MOTHER, VEDA LOSES HER SISTER TO VIRUS

**New Delhi, May 6:** Indian women's cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy's sister Vatsala Shivakumar has died due to Covid-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the dreaded virus. The 45-year-old died at a private hospital in Chikkamagaluru on Wednesday night.

The all-rounder, who has been helping others through her social media by amplifying their requests for aid, had lost her mother Cheluvamba Devi last month.

On April 24, the Bengaluru-based cricketer, who has represented India in 48 ODIs and 76 T20s, had tweeted about her mother's demise while also informing that her sister too was battling for her life.

— PTI

## EX-RAJASTHAN PLAYER YADAV DIES OF COVID

**Jaipur, May 6:** Vivek Yadav, a former Rajasthan leg-spinner and a member of their Ranji Trophy-winning squad, died of coronavirus-related complications.

He was 36-years-old and is survived by his wife and a daughter.

Yadav breathed his last at a city hospital on Wednesday.

"Rajasthan Ranji Player and a dear friend...Vivek Yadav is no more. May his soul R.I.P. Thoughts and prayers with the family," former India opener Aakash Chopra tweeted.

Yadav was undergoing treatment for cancer and had gone to the hospital for his chemotherapy, where he was tested and returned positive for Covid-19. His health deteriorated before he lost his battle against the dreaded virus.

— PTI

## Sri Lanka offers window for IPL

BY BIPIN DANI

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is "keen" to help the Indian cricket board host the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

This offer has come at the time when former India captain Sourav Ganguly, who is now BCCI president, has said: "We have to speak to other boards and see if a window can be made available before the T20 World Cup".

"If we fail to complete the IPL, the loss will be close to ₹12,500 crore (\$340 million approximately) going by early estimates."

"Yes, we can certainly provide a window to host the IPL in the month of September," Prof. Arjuna de Silva, chief of the managing committee of Sri Lanka Cricket, speaking exclusively over the telephone from Colombo, said.

"We hear the UAE (United Arab Emirates) is one option for BCCI but Sri Lanka cannot be ignored for all reasons," he said.

"We are planning to host the Lanka Premier League

We hear the UAE is also an option but Sri Lanka cannot be ignored for all reasons. We are planning to host the Lanka Premier League in July-August and the grounds and other infrastructure will be ready for the IPL in September.

— ARJUNA DE SILVA  
SLC managing committee chief

(LPL) in July-August and the grounds and other infrastructure will be ready for the IPL in September," de Silva added.

Prof. de Silva's term is scheduled to be over this month after the SLC elections on May 20, but the offer will stand whoever comes into power.

The IPL teams have already hired the services of Sri Lanka's legendary cricketers — Kumar Sangakkara, Muthiah Muralitharan and Mahela Jayawardene in coaching roles.

## COVID-INFECTED HUSSEY, BALAJI FLY TO CHENNAI

**Chennai, May 6:** Chennai Super Kings' batting coach Mike Hussey and bowling coach L Balaji have been flown into the city from Delhi in an air ambulance as they recover from Covid-19, a top franchise official said on Thursday.

Hussey and Balaji were among the prominent non-playing staff to test positive when the IPL was "indefinitely suspended" on Tuesday, following multiple Covid-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

"We decided to bring Hussey and Balaji to Chennai by an air ambulance as we have better contacts here and wanted to ensure better medical facilities in case of any need," the CSK official said.

He further said the duo was "asymptomatic and doing fine."

The CSK official said Hussey would have to wait for a Covid-19 negative report to be able to leave the country.

"Hussey has to wait and get a Covid negative report before he can leave India. We will make arrangements for a charter when it is safe for him to fly," the official added.

While Hussey will have to wait, rest of the Australians participating in the IPL on Thursday left for Maldives to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia.

The CSK official said the franchise made arrangements for the foreign players of the team to leave by charter planes.

The official also informed that CSK skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni would leave for his hometown Ranchi in the afternoon once all his team members head for their respective bases.

— PTI

## Blues blank Madrid to set up all-English final

**London, May 6:** Chelsea set up an all-English Champions League final against Manchester City as goals from Timo Werner and Mason Mount beat Real Madrid 2-0 in a dominant display on Wednesday to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory at Stamford Bridge.

If anything, the scoreline flattered Madrid as the 13-time European champions had no response to Chelsea's greater strength and speed.

The Blues should have ran out far more convincing winners as they toyed with the tired visitors in the second half.

However, Werner's cushioned header into an empty net on 28 minutes after Kai Havertz's initial effort came back off the crossbar and Mount's tap-in five minutes from time were enough to seal their place in Istanbul on May

## THE RESULT

Chelsea 2  
(Werner 28, Mount 85)  
Real Madrid 0  
(Chelsea win 3-1 on aggregate)

29. "To never lose the concentration, focus and positive energy on the pitch — it was a huge performance and well deserved," said Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel, who has masterminded a huge turnaround in Chelsea's season since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

Backed by Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's £220 million spending spree last summer has been rewarded with a first Champions League final since they lifted the trophy for the only time in 2012.

"We never lost the hunger, the desire to defend," added Tuchel. "In the second half we had even better structure to defend and it was a fantastic performance."

"We could have scored so much earlier and more to be safe, but it's no time for criticism now. It's a fantastic achievement and big congratulations to the team."

Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane welcomed back captain Sergio Ramos for the first time in six weeks, while Eden Hazard was handed a rare start in an injury-hit season on his return to Stamford Bridge.

But the Belgian was again a peripheral figure as Madrid's over-reliance on Karim Benzema to provide a goal threat was exposed. "We needed to be better going forward," said Zidane.

— AFP



Chelsea's Timo Werner (right) scores against Real Madrid in their Champions League second leg semifinal match at Stamford Bridge in London on Wednesday.

— AFP

## Major blow for Saina, Srikanth

**New Delhi, May 6:** London Olympics bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal and men's star Kidambi Srikanth's last hopes of Olympic qualification hang in balance as the Indian government negotiates for their participation in the Malaysian Open amid a ban on flights from India in that country.

Following the postponement of the India Open (May 11-16), Saina and Srikanth's hopes of qualifying for the Tokyo Games hinge on the (May 25-30) Kuala Lumpur event followed by the Singapore Open (June 1-6).

In the wake of an unprecedented Covid-19 surge in India, Malaysia and Singapore have banned flights from the country effective April 28. "The Sports Ministry, through the Ministry of External Affairs, has approached the Malaysian Government requesting to grant permission to the

Indian Badminton Team to travel to Malaysia to participate in the Malaysian Open scheduled from May 25 to May 30," the Sports Authority of India said.

"This is in light of a temporary travel ban that has been imposed by Malaysia on travellers from India, owing to the rising Covid-19 cases in India," it added.

After an initial request made earlier this week, the Indian High Commission in Malaysia "received information from the Malaysian Government that the travel of the team may not be possible immediately."

The tournament is one of the last events that contribute to Olympic qualification which ends on June 15. All top players like P. V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Kidambi Srikanth, Sai Praneeth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki Reddy are due to participate in this.

— PTI

## Anti-Olympic petition gains tens of thousands of signatures

**Tokyo, May 6:** An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled has gained tens of thousands of signatures since being launched in Japan only days ago.

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 state of emergency is to expire on May 11, but some reports in Japan say it is likely to be extended.

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

The petition is addressed to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who has tentative plans to visit Japan later this month. He is expected to meet the Olympic torch relay on May 17 in Hiroshima, and perhaps also travel to Tokyo where small anti-Olympic are protests being planned.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Tokyo

organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto, and Bach have repeatedly said the games will go on as scheduled.

Organizers and the IOC unveiled so-called Playbooks last week, explaining rules for athletes and others to show how the Olympics can be held in the middle of a pandemic. Several test events have been conducted in the last few days, and organizers have reported few problems.

The Olympic torch relay has been crisscrossing Japan for a month. Organizers say that eight

● Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen.

people working on the relay have tested positive for the virus.

The Tokyo Olympics have become a face-saving exercise for Japan, which has officially spent \$15.4 billion to prepare them. For the IOC, the Tokyo Olympics are critical since

73% of its income comes from selling television rights.

Organisers say the Olympics will be "safe and secure," though this has been challenged by local media specialists, and in an editorial last month in the British Medical Journal. It said mass events like the Olympics are "neither safe nor secure."

Organisers say they will need 10,000 health workers to support the Olympics. They have also requested 500 additional nurses — a nurses' federation balked at the request — and 200 sports

medicine specialists.

The petition was organized by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. It registered about 50,000 signatures in the first 24 hours after being launched.

"Government policies are being set with the Olympics in mind, and measures to curb the coronavirus pandemic are being neglected," Utsunomiya told The Associated Press.

"Hospital are stretched thin, and some people are dying at home."

The headline in English

over the petition reads: "Cancel the Tokyo Olympics to protect our lives."

The petition suggests the Olympics cannot be held safely and says the games have drained finances away for other needs such as the rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine. "In order to host the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in July, we must devote a large number of medical professionals, valuable resources such as medical facilities and medical equipment, and various other resources," the petition says.

— AP