



Pages 12 | ₹ 5 | Lc

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



'SWEARING-IN CEREMONY  
WILL BE SIMPLE'

## WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 39 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 61% Min: 25%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 39.7°C (+1) Min: 24.3°C (-1)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:38 hrs 18:58 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

02:13 hrs 12:21 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



People above 18 years of age queue up for vaccination against Covid-19, at a centre in the Capital on Monday. ■ SNS

Manipur HC to rescue of Myanmarese refugees: The Manipur High Court on Monday came to the rescue of seven Myanmarese Citizens who had entered India defying a Government of India's standing order that no Myanmarese citizens should be allowed to enter Indian territory in view of the recent coup in that country and in the wake of the massive civil uprising there which has costed hundreds of lives till date. ■ P4

Modi to hold virtual summit with UK PM today: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a virtual summit with his British counterpart Boris Johnson tomorrow. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the summit will be an important opportunity to elevate multi-faceted strategic ties and enhance cooperation on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Both leaders will also discuss Covid-19 cooperation and the global efforts to fight the pandemic. A comprehensive "Roadmap 2030" will be launched during the summit. ■ P5

## O2 shortage kills 24 Covid patients in Karnataka

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Twenty four patients, many of them young, who were getting treated for the Covid-19 virus in Chamarajanagar district, near Mysuru, died yesterday after the hospital ran out of oxygen.

According to the officials, about 23 deaths occurred in the district Covid hospital while another passed away at a private institution.

The deaths have triggered anxiety and panic among the relatives of patients in general, troubled as they are over the scarcity of oxygen in the hospitals. The incident has also led to allegations that the district administrators of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar had failed to initiate a coordinated approach,

The deaths were reported after there was a fall in oxygen supply level on Monday

DISTRICT HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

resulting in the loss of lives.

In fact, oxygen supplies that were due to reach Chamarajanagar from Mysuru did not arrive on time, to go by a local official. The Mysuru authorities, on their part, claimed that about 250 oxygen cylinders were despatched and that there was no delay on their part.

Even as Opposition parties slammed the government, seeking a judicial probe into the incident, chief minister B S Yediyurappa, sent health minister K Sudhakar, to Chamarajanagar. He has also convened a cabinet meeting tomorrow.

## India clocks 3.68L new cases; PM reviews Covid staff strength

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

In a significant move, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced a slew of measures aimed at ramping up availability of doctors and medical staff to deal with surging number of Covid-19 cases in the country.

The decision came during a review meeting held to assess the requirement of adequate human resources for responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The daily Covid-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Monday.

"It was decided to postpone NEET-PG for at least 4 months and the exam will not be held

### ON WARFOOTING

► To postpone NEET-PG for at least 4 months. This will make a large number of qualified doctors available for Covid duties

before 31 August 2021. Students will also be given at least one month of time after announcement of exam before it is conducted. This will make a large number of qualified doctors available for Covid duties," a note from Prime Minister Office stated here.

Accordingly it was also decided to allow deployment of Medical Interns in Covid Management duties under the supervision of their faculty, as part of the Internship rotation.

"The services of Final Year MBBS students can be utilised for providing services like

tele-consultation and monitoring of mild Covid cases after due orientation by and under supervision of Faculty. This will reduce the workload on existing doctors engaged in Covid duty and provide boost to efforts of triaging," the PMO note further added.

The services of Final Year PG Students (broad as well as super-specialities) as residents is also proposed to be utilised until fresh batches of PG Students joined. B.Sc./ GNM Qualified Nurses is also to be utilised for full-time Covid nursing duties under the supervision of Senior

Doctors and Nurses. Accordingly, individuals providing services in Covid management will be given priority in forthcoming regular Government recruitments after they complete minimum of 100 days of Covid duty."

To ensure safety, the medical students/professionals sought to be engaged in Covid related work will be suitably vaccinated. "All health professionals thus engaged will be covered under the Insurance Scheme of Government and be given the Prime Minister's Distinguished Covid National Service Samman from Government of India," the note further added.

Bengal cases: West Bengal registered 17,501 fresh Covid cases and 98 deaths today. Kolkata recorded 3,990 cases and 21 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total Covid case count is 8,80,894 and death

toll is 11,637 in the state till now while there are 1,19,961 active cases.

## SC rules out media gag, demoralising HCs

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Batting for "free flow of dialogue" in courts, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would neither restrain the media from reporting oral observations made during proceedings in public interest, nor demoralise high courts - "vital pillars of democracy" by asking them to refrain from raising questions.

The apex court said however that its order would take into account Election Commission's submission that wanton charges levelled against it by the Madras High Court were unwarranted and would try to strike a balance between two Constitutional bodies.

court proceedings. A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah reserved its order on the EC appeal against the Madras High Court's "critical" remarks holding it responsible for surge in Covid-19 cases in the country and fastening responsibility on its officials with the murder charge.

It assured the poll panel that the high court's remarks were not meant to "run down" a Constitutional body but may have been made momentarily in the flow of discussions and that's why it was not in

► The apex court said however that its order would take into account Election Commission's submission that wanton charges levelled against it by the Madras High Court were unwarranted and would try to strike a balance between two Constitutional bodies.

► EC plea on media too far fetched, it can't be restrained from reporting court discussions

SUPREME COURT

said. It said that the media is a powerful watchdog of unfolding of the process in court of law and we cannot object to that reporting by media.

Justice Chandrachud said that judges ask questions to elicit response from lawyers and it does not mean that the court is against that person or body.

We have an Indian pattern of arguments in our courts. It's not a monologue that one person will speak and then judges will speak. We have discussions here and there is an aspect of application of mind, the bench said.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for ECs said it is not objecting to the observations made by the High Courts but it has to be in the context of matter in hand and there should not be any off-the-cuff remarks.

munication with the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

Sources close to the BCCI spoken to by The Statesman were inclined to think it was too early even to talk about taking the World Cup away from this country but the sceptic high-ups elsewhere on the sub-continent disagreed.

They negotiations with television tend invariably to take a lot of time nowadays, it was pointed out.

You also have to take into account the fact that a few Australian cricketers left the IPL this time around even as their team played matches and they had very few good things to say about the situation in India. And it isn't as if India will have to cling on to even its left palpably overwhelmed as its second coronavirus surge wreaks havoc," it was said.

(SEE ALSO PAGE 12)

sources close to BCCI were inclined to think it was too early to talk about taking the WC away from India

take an unpleasant decision.

"It's extremely doubtful that they can take the tournament off India, which wields a lot of clout because it bankrolls the game," he said, adding that precious time was being lost even though it was clear that given the magnitude of the Indian Covid-19 situation, a recovery fast and enduring enough might be an unrealistic hope.

The competition is fixed for October-November.

ICC media manager Rajsekhar Rao told The Statesman the global authorities were monitoring the situation and were also in com-

(SEE ALSO PAGE 12)

# The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

twitter.com/TheStatesmanLtd  
facebook.com/thestatesman1875



P5

NEPAL PM TO SEEK  
CONFIDENCE VOTE  
ON 10 MAY

P9

BIDEN RECALLS RAID  
ON BIN LADEN IN 2011

P10

'PERSONA NON  
GRATA IN THE  
TEAM HE LED'

P12

## Mamata to take oath as WB CM on 5 May

Banerjee called on the Governor and said oath-taking ceremony for her third consecutive term as CM would be a low-key affair

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

Mamata Banerjee will be sworn in as the chief minister of West Bengal for the third time on 5 May, her party announced on Monday.

The newly-elected MLAs of the Trinamul Congress unanimously elected Banerjee as the legislative party leader at a meeting here, its secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said.

The TMC legislators elected the speaker in the outgoing House, Biman Banerjee, as the pro-temp speaker in the new Assembly. "The newly-elected members will take oath in the Assembly from 6 May," Chatterjee told reporters at the party headquarters here

after the meeting of the legislators. Miss Banerjee today declared that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the oath-taking ceremony would be a low-key affair in keeping with Covid protocols.

She also said her party would arrange a grand celebration after the pandemic is over and would organise the meeting at Brigade Parade ground where other chief ministers and Opposition leaders of different states would be invited.

Mentioning that all the national leaders, including Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik, Punjab CM Amarinder Singh, Bhopinder Singh Hooda and Akhilesh Yadav called



Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee meets West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan, on Monday

her to congratulate her on the electoral success, Banerjee said, "There is a lot of

time to think on this. This is a time when we should fight Covid and I am only

'Nandigram RO did not order recounting as he feared for life'

SNS/PTI  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee alleged on Monday that the returning officer of Nandigram feared for his life and so he did not give a recounting order.

Addressing a Press meet, Banerjee reiterated that she will move court over the election result in Nandigram where she lost to BJP's Surendu Adhikari.

focused on that. The Prime Minister didn't call me. That doesn't matter though. He might be busy, but he

had called me before."

"At the same time, I would like to remind the BJP that what it is doing is not

correct. One of the supporters has been killed in East Burdwan. They are torturing our supporters in Cooch Behar," she said, adding, "I also want to tell the police that some of them have worked in favour of the BJP. But this is the time when we should work together to save people from Covid."

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee met West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan today evening and tendered her resignation as chief minister of the present government staking claim to form the government.

Party's secretary-general Partha Chatterjee and Trinamul Youth Congress president Abhishek Banerjee accompanied her to Raj Bhavan.

They may also consider imposing a lockdown to curb the virus in the second wave in the interest of public welfare, Justice Chandrachud, writing the order for the bench, said.

The apex court said that it was cognizant of the socio-economic impact of a lockdown, specifically, on the marginalized communities. Thus, in case the measure of a lockdown is imposed, arrangements must be made beforehand to cater to the needs of these communities, it said.

The bench on 22 April had taken note of the pandemic situation due to sudden surge in Covid cases and said it expected the Centre to come out with a national plan to deal with the distribution of essential services and supplies.

## Covid battle rages on



Tankers with medical oxygen gas for Covid patients, arrive in Ghaziabad on Monday



toll is 11,637 in the state till now while there are 1,19,961 active cases.

► SC directs Centre to revisit vaccine policy: The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to revisit its Covid-19 vaccine pricing policy, saying the differential pricing would prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health. (P5)

► Very early signs of plateauing in some states: The Centre on Monday said some states are showing very early signs of plateauing in daily new Covid-19 cases, while some remain a cause of concern. 13 states, including Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Punjab are showing signs of plateauing while Bihar, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal are showing an increasing trend in daily cases.

► SC directs Centre to prepare buffer stock of O2: The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to prepare a buffer stock of oxygen for emergency purposes in collaboration with states and decentralise the location of the stocks so that it is immediately available if the normal supply chain is disrupted. (P5)

► 30 people on board Air India flight found positive: At least 30 people on board Air India's Amritsar-Rome flight last Wednesday were found Covid positive on arrival. At least two of the 30 are flight crew members, they added.

## 'Let's get the World Cup out of India'



Destructive politics has come to an end in the Hills

ANIT THAPA, LEADER, GORKHA JAN MUKTI MORCHA (BINOY TAMANG FACTION)

ON HIS PARTY'S ONE-SEAT WIN AND LOSS OF THE BIMAL GURUNG CAMP OF THE MORCHA

# Delhi govt rolls out Covid vaccination for 18-44 yrs

301 jabs centres set up in 76 schools see 100% turnout, all slots said to be booked for 2 days

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

With the national capital continuing to reel under a ferocious Covid storm that has overwhelmed its hospitals, health-care system, crematoriums and graveyards amid acute shortage of beds, oxygen and essential medicines, the Delhi government today launched the Covid-19 inoculation exercise for people in the 18-44 age group—who comprise more than half of the city's population—with all the 301 vaccination centres witnessing "100 per cent turnout". These 301 vaccination centres have been established in 76 schools.

Around 92 lakh people are eligible for the jabs in the 18-44 age group. According to the 2011 census, Delhi's population is 1.68 crore.

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said all these centres witnessed "100 percent turnout" on the first day.

"All slots are booked for the next two days," an official said.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal tweeted, "I am glad that the vaccine process for 18+ has started smoothly. It's heartening to see that youngsters are coming out in large nos to get vaccinated. Get your elders vaccinated too. Encourage ur friends and relatives also to get vaccinated."

Sisodia, who visited a vaccination centre in west Vinod Nagar, said people informed him that they did not face any trouble getting vaccinated at the centres.



People aged above 18 are standing in a queue to get a jab in the Capital on Monday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

However, they faced difficulties getting an appointment.

"This is because we have only 4.5 lakh vaccines now, but we will resolve these challenges as we continue to expand our centres," he said.

Sisodia, who is also the nodal minister for Covid management in Delhi, said the Kejriwal government wants to increase the number of vaccination centres per location to 10.

"Our target is to establish 3,000 such centres in 300 schools, subject to the availability of vaccine," he stated. "We are in constant touch with companies and will continue to receive more doses."

More than 45,000 beneficiaries

in this category can get jabs at the 301 centres in a day, the official said. The government set up the vaccination centres in schools to accommodate the large number of beneficiaries in this phase, another official said.

Till now, vaccines were being given to those aged above 45 at around 500 centres in the national capital. Around 60,000 people aged above 45 can be inoculated in the capital every day, officials said.

Pre-registration is mandatory for vaccination in the 18-44 age group, and there are no walk-ins under this category for now, the official said.

While Delhi's Max Hospital started vaccinating people in the 18-44 age group at limited centres from

1 May, Fortis Healthcare began the exercise from yesterday.

The Delhi government has placed orders for 1.34 crore vaccine doses, which will be delivered over the next three months. Of these, 67 lakh doses are of Covishield vaccine, which are being procured from the Pune-based Serum Institute of India, officials said. "Cumulatively, more than 33 lakh doses have been administered since the initiation of Covid vaccination in Delhi. More than 7 lakh beneficiaries have been given 2 doses," an official said.

The CM had on 30 April told an online press briefing that the Covid vaccination process for people in the 18-44 years age group, which was to begin from 1 May, would get delayed by a day or two as Delhi did not have vaccine supplies required for it.

Kejriwal had said the Covid vaccines might be received in a couple of days from their manufacturing companies and then the exercise of vaccination of 18-44 age group—who get registered for it—will get underway.

"We are trying our best so that within the next three months the entire population of Delhi gets vaccinated. We have formulated a plan and even the infrastructure needed for this is in place. Now it will depend on the two companies as to how swiftly they provide us with the vaccine. We aim to vaccinate everyone in the next three months if a sufficient quantity of vaccines is supplied by the companies," the CM had then said.

CM holds review meeting on home isolation system for Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday held a review meeting with the Deputy Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and Principal Secretary (Health) to strengthen the home isolation system for the treatment of Covid-19 positive patients. During the meeting, he informed that the people undergoing treatment in home isolation would get a call from a government doctor within 24 hours of being detected positive and their counselling would also begin.

According to officials, he directed those present at the meeting that a clear record should be kept of how many Covid-19 positive patients are going to hospitals and how many are being treated in home isolation.

Kejriwal said the patients in home isolation who do not have an oximeter will get it along with a Covid kit. Kejriwal held this review meeting in connection with the home isolation system to ensure better treatment of coronavirus patients. Senior officials like the Divisional Commissioner also attended the meeting. The Chief Minister took several decisions related to home isolation.

Kejriwal instructed the authorities concerned on the need to strengthen the home isolation system so that such patients can get good treatment with timely counselling. He directed that a very clear and clean record should be kept of daily Covid reports, which should also show how many of those found positive need hospital admission for treatment and how many of these patients are undergoing treatment in home isolation. During the meeting, Kejriwal gave instructions to officials to keep in touch with the patients undergoing treatment in home isolation. He said those under home isolation should receive a call from the government's team of doctors within 24 hours of being tested positive so that counselling can begin as soon as possible.

Delhi hospitals scramble to refill oxygen stocks amid acute shortage

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Authorities at several private hospitals in the national capital on Monday scurried to refill their oxygen stocks as the lives of many COVID patients hang by a thin thread amid an acute shortage of the life-saving gas.

Dr Pankaj Solanki, head of 50-bed Dharmaveer Solanki Hospital in Rohini, said he is tired of making SOS calls and "feels dejected". "Most of the times, there is a crisis (of oxygen). It has become difficult to manage even 10 patients now," he said. Several people also took to the social media seeking help for the hospital.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Raghav Chadha said the city government has allocated four D-type oxygen cylinders to the hospital from the Rajghat Response Point in the afternoon.

"We shall spare no effort to address each and every SOS. But we at the Delhi Govt are raising #SOS too. Please give us our allocated share of oxygen," he tweeted. Sudhanshu Bankata, executive director of Batra Hospital, which had stopped patient admissions on Sunday, said they are planning to further cut down the number of beds.

Twelve COVID-19 patients, including a senior doctor, had died at this south Delhi hospital after the facility ran out of medical oxygen for around 80 minutes on Saturday afternoon. "We have reduced the number of beds from 307 to 276. We will further bring it down to 220 to match the oxygen con-

sumption," he said.

A K Daur, whose mother is admitted at the MKW Hospital in Rajouri Garden said, "My mother is admitted here. It's a non-COVID hospital and they don't have much oxygen left they are facing difficulty in getting oxygen." A doctor from Hamdard Institute of Medical Science and Research (HAMC) tweeted at around 4.50 pm on Monday saying they had an hour of oxygen left and their supplier was refusing to deliver the life-saving gas. "Last LMO (liquid medical oxygen) received at 6 am today (Monday). No cylinder backup available," the doctor tweeted as he highlighted that more than 100 patients were on oxygen support. The doctor further said that the hospital was allotted 1.4 metric tonnes of oxygen as against the required 3.08 metric tonnes. However, at around 7.10 pm, the doctor tweeted that oxygen had arrived at the hospital but stressed that the delivery been a few minutes late, people would have died. "Also tank capacity is half ton capacity. Lasts just 5-6 hours. We are hanging by a thin thread every few hours," the doctor tweeted.

Meanwhile, the IBS Hospital in south Delhi's Lajpat Nagar said their oxygen supply would last for another six hours. "There are 37 patients in our hospital and six are on ventilator support and rest on oxygen support. We have oxygen left for only six hours and have informed the authorities but to no avail," said a hospital official requesting anonymity.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT**  
(Order, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)  
**Ms. Raj Rani Mitra**  
**District Judge (Comm-02), (South-East)**  
Room No. 613,  
Saket Courts, Complex,  
New Delhi  
CD/JD/949/18  
M/s. Agarwal Agencies Pvt. Ltd.

—Plaintiff  
Versus  
M/s. Phasin Infotech & Infrastructures & Ors.—Defendant

To,  
Sh. Harpreet Singh, Bhasin Infotech & Infrastructures 28, Raja Garden, New Delhi-110015  
Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 20th day of May, 2021, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 7th day of April, 2021.

The 14th day of July, 2021 has been fixed for hearing of the application for injunction. It is hereby given to General Public that if any other relative/friends. Kinsman or well

wisher of the aforsaid minor/desire to adopt be appointed/declare as guardian of the person and property of the said minor/Lunacy of desire to opposed the application of the petitioner aforsaid he/she should enter appearance in persons in this court on the aforsaid date and be prepared to adduce on that day and documentarily prove his/her claim to the matter to adduce in support of his/her claim to such adoption appointment od declaration of in support his/her opposition of the application of the petitioner aforsaid.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 13th day of April 2021.

Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.

State  
—Petitioner  
Versus  
State

The Petitioners abovenamed having applied to be adoption/appointed the guardian of the person and property of minor(s)/Lunacy Baby Kavya Makkar, d/o Sh. Mukesh Makkar, r/o 202, Indira Vihar, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 7th day of April, 2021.

Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.

Seal of the court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. RAJINDER KUMAR

Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Room No. 317, Third Floor  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.

Case No. GP/05/21

Sh. Mukesh Makkar, s/o Sh.  
D.S. Makkar, r/o 202, Indira  
Vihar, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-  
110009.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 7th day of April, 2021.

Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.

Seal of the court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. RAJINDER KUMAR

Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Room No. 317, Third Floor  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.

Rohini Courts, Delhi.

Seal of the court

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*This win testifies the victory of Bengali women, the victory of Bengali culture, the proof of the love of people of Bengal*



WINNING TMC CANDIDATE FROM BARRACKPORE RAJ CHAKRABORTY

CLAIMING HIS PARTY'S WIN IS A TESTIMONY OF MAMATA BANERJEE'S HARDWORK

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 04 MAY 2021

03

# Pb may see total lockdown if situation doesn't improve: CM

Capt says he might be forced to impose a harsh, sweeping lockdown in Punjab if people do not strictly comply with current restrictions put in place to curb the surging Covid wave

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Monday said he was not in favour of a complete and harsh lockdown, but if the Covid-19 situation did not improve in the state he would be forced to consider a total lockdown.

The CM said he had so far refrained from ordering a sweeping lockdown in the state because it will hurt the poor the most and would lead to exodus of migrant labourers, plunging industries into chaos again. However, if the people do not strictly comply with the restrictions in place to curb the Covid surge, harsher steps might have to be taken, he added.

The state is currently in a soft lockdown situation, with strong curbs in place, with additional restrictions



imposed by the government on Sunday.

Chairing a high-level virtual meeting to review the Covid situation, Capt Amarinder Monday also

ordered a stop on all take-away deliveries from restaurants, which was being used by youngsters as a pretext to move out of their homes.

Asserting he will not allow

Punjab to go the way of some other states, where patients could be seen lying out on the roads, CM said industry should be encouraged to use their CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds for vaccination and treatment of their labour suffering from mild or moderate illness, so that they can stay at home, thus reducing pressure on hospitals.

Underlining the need to step up preparedness amid projections of a peak in the coming days, the CM ordered a 20 per cent increase in bed capacity in the next 10 days.

He directed the health and medical education departments to get stadiums, gyms,nasiums and other such places ready to house patients. Tent-camps should be set up, gyms and halls should be converted into health facilities, he said, adding that "we have to be prepared for the worst".

The directives came as health minister Balbir Sidhu said the situation was grim with only 300 beds now available at L3 level in the state. Hospitals were getting overwhelmed, he added.

Health secretary Hussan Lal said the state's positivity rate had on Sunday stood at 12 per cent, with the Malwa region showing an increase in cases in the last seven to ten days.

With L3 occupancy 90 per cent and in some cases 100 per cent, the situation was grim, he said, adding the case fatality rate (CFR), a ratio of deaths to the total number of cases recorded, was close to two per cent and higher (at 2.7 per cent) in rural areas. Home deaths currently were also at two per cent. The worrying factor was 17 per cent of all deaths had no co-morbid conditions, he said.

## Punjab also hit by Covid vaccine crisis, prioritises doses for high-risk groups

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

With the state getting an allocation of only 3.30 lakh vaccines for the 18+ age group from the Serum Institute of India for the month of May, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Monday ordered 70 per cent of the doses to be reserved for individuals with co-morbidities, and the remaining 30 per cent to high-risk category of employees and workers in this age group.

Chairing a high-level virtual review meeting, the CM announced within these groups, district-wise allocation has also been prioritised based on population index, mortality and density.

Given the severe supply constraints, it has been decided to limit the vaccination for 18-44 age group in this phase to major urban centres, he said, expressing concern over the fact that even for the 45+ age group, the state was in short supply, as a result of which only a few vaccine centres were currently functioning.

The state expects two lakh

doses to arrive tomorrow for vaccination of 45+ category. Of the 3346500 Covishield doses received so far, a total of 32910450 has already been utilised.

In the 18-44 age group, for the month of May, the maximum allocation of 50 per cent has been prioritised for Group A of the most affected districts of SAS Nagar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Bathinda and Patiala.

Another 30 per cent has been reserved for the Group B districts of Hoshiarpur, Pathankot, SBS Nagar, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Gurdaspur, while 20 per cent will be utilised in the other districts that have the least cases at present.

Allocation has been made proportionate to the population of major urban areas of Zones A and B, while for Zone C, an equal distribution of doses across has been allocated for each district.

These decisions have been taken in accordance with the vaccine strategy recommended by the state's vaccine expert committee for May, an official

spokesperson said after the meeting. Accepting the recommendations of the committee, the CM received expansion of the list of comorbidities to include obesity, disabilities (e.g. spinal cord injury) and multiple co-morbidities determined to increase risk by a treating physician, in addition to those specified by the Central government.

For the remaining 30 per cent, the CM said that while the strategic roadmap contains a list of professions at risk, given the limitation of vaccine availability, for the month of May, the top three categories have been chosen. These are government employees, construction workers, teachers and other staff at government and private educational establishments.

The Punjab government has placed an immediate order of 30 lakh doses with Serum Institute of India Ltd. for the 18 to 44 age group category, but has been informed that the allocation will be 3.30 lakh doses only for the 18-44 year age group for the month of May.

## Haryana govt warns strict action against hospitals overcharging Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

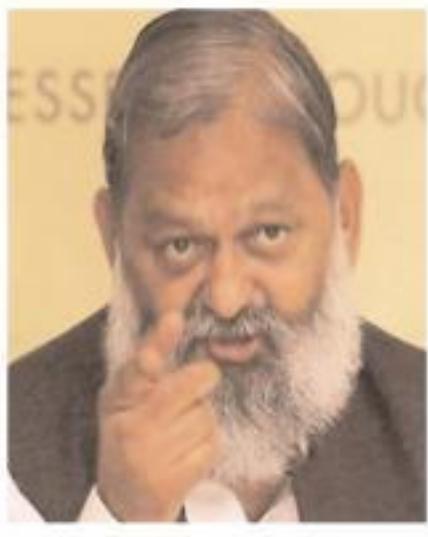
Haryana health and home minister Anil Vij on Monday warned strict action against hospitals overcharging for facilities or any other medical assistance from Covid patients in the state.

Vij said that the rates of beds and other facilities have been fixed for the corona patients undergoing treatment in private hospitals of the state. Currently 42 private hospitals in the state are treating Covid-19 patients.

The government has fixed rates of Rs 10,000 for isolation beds in accredited hospitals, Rs 15,000 for ICU (intensive care unit) beds without ventilators and Rs 18,000 per day for ICU beds with ventilators.

Similarly, in non-accredited hospitals, the rates have been fixed at Rs 8,000 for isolation beds, Rs 13,000 for ICU beds without ventilators and Rs 15,000 per day for ICU beds with ventilators.

The health minister said the private lab has also fixed



the rate for conducting the Covid test, under which Rs 450 have been fixed for RT-PCR, Rs 500 for rapid antigen and Rs 250 for ELISA test.

He said that strict action will be taken if any hospital is charging more than these fixed rates from the Covid patients.

A three-member committee has been constituted for distribution of tocilizumab injection as per the requirement for patients admitted to government and private hospitals.

Covid-19 state nodal officer Dr Dhruv Chaudhary has been appointed as the Chairman of the committee. This

committee will set the criteria regarding the delivery of injections and other related matters.

These injections will be made available to local hospitals through local civil surgeons at the purchase price and these injections will be given free of cost to government hospitals and medical colleges.

The health minister said about 70 per cent of patients admitted in Haryana hospitals are from Delhi and other adjoining States, who are also being treated in the same way.

The government will soon start the process of new recruitment to meet the shortage of doctors and paramedical staff in the State.

Around 1,400 students of PG and MBBS finalists studying in various medical colleges of the state have been ordered to serve in the hospitals of the state in the midst of this pandemic crisis.

Along with this, teams of high level officials are working 24 hours to supply oxygen in all the hospitals of the State.

## 4 arrested for selling oxygen concentrators at higher rates

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Anuj and Shekhar Kumar inside a car at Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar.

"Anuj agreed to sell one oxygen concentrator for Rs 1,10,000 and accepted Rs 5,000 as token money, following which police apprehended both the accused.

The police have recovered 115 oxygen concentrators, machines used for treatment of COVID patients, from their possession.

The accused were selling these equipments for Rs 1.10 lakhs, police said.

The accused have been identified as Anuj Jain and Anil Jain, both residents of Janakpuri, Shekhar Kumar, a resident of west Sagarpur, and Keshav Chaudhary, a resident of Vaishali Extension, they said.

The police got a tip-off that Anuj was selling oxygen concentrators at higher prices.

"Thereafter, head constable Arun Kumar was sent as a decoy customer to purchase the machine. He found

them from going to other districts for treatment," he added.

Thakur stated that there was no dearth of oxygen in the state and only issue was empty gas cylinders and the government had urged the Central government to provide additional D-type cylinders.

Besides, the PSA Oxygen plant in Chamba will start functioning within a week which would meet the demand of oxygen in the district, he said.

The CM further stated that in order to facilitate smooth transportation of cylinders, districtwise mapping of oxygen manufacturers would be done so that oxygen could be supplied to the

## Jai Ram stresses on mechanism for aggressive Covid testing, tracing

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 3 MAY



required district from the nearest point.

This would not only save precious time in transportation but also ensure timely supply of oxygen, he added.

The CM called for ensuring adequate staff in health institutions of the district by outsourcing the staff and said Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru Government Medical College, Chamba will be strengthened by providing adequate men and machinery.

"The state government is committed to strengthening the mechanism of home isolation as about 90 per cent patients of Covid-19 were in home isolation," he said.

He urged the medical fraternity to ensure constant vigil and regular monitoring of health parameters of the patients in home isolation so that if need arises, they could be shifted to hospitals immediately.

He also urged the elected representatives of PRIs and ULBs to extend their full support in taking care of these patients.

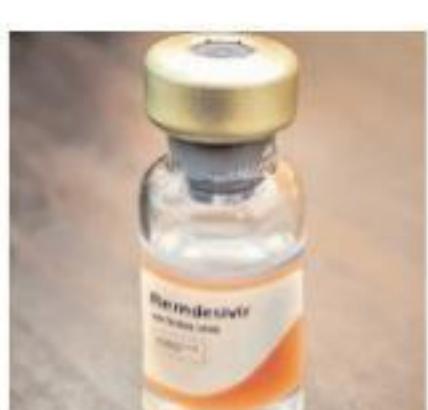
## Remdesivir blackmarketing 'kingpin' held in Panipat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

Haryana Police on Monday claimed to have arrested the kingpin of a racket in connection with black-marketing of Remdesivir drug, which is in high demand for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, from Panipat district.

Giving this information today, a Haryana Police spokesperson informed the primary probe reveals that arrested accused used to buy injection from an Uttarakhand resident at the rate of Rs 12,000 per vial and then sold the same between Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000.

During investigation, it



also came to light that the wrapper of the seized vials is quite different from company's injection and seems these were not original. The public is requested to beware of such gangs involved in black-marketing and immediately inform the police.

The accused had already

carried out black-marketing of 650 injections out of 750 vials brought so far. Of these, the arrested accused gave 100 injections to his nephew Sumit, 150 to Saksham and 40 injections to Keshav for black-marketing. Arrested accused was identified as Pardeep, a resident of Sector-13/17, Panipat. He was running a medical store at a hospital in Panipat.

Acting on a tip-off, police on 27 April, had nabbed three youths from Panipat on the charges of black-marketing of Remdesivir injection and recovered 19 vials from their possession. They were taken on police remand.

During the course of the

remand period, the accused

revealed that they had purchased the seized vials from Pardeep, who runs a medical store at a hospital located on Sanoli road.

Based on the information, the police team immediately nabbed him and when interrogated, the accused

confessed to having committed the black-marketing.

On completion of the police

remand of accused Sumit,

Saksham and Keshav, they

were produced in the court

and sent them to judicial custody.

Accused Pradeep is on four-day police remand

for intensive interrogation,

the spokesperson said.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Monday appealed to the Centre for more oxygen tankers to be made available to the state, which did not have enough tankers to transport the critical commodity for saving lives of seriously ill Covid patients.

The CM, at the Covid review meeting, said the state urgently needs more tankers, as it currently had only 15 at its disposal, with two more likely to come in by tomorrow. These, he said, were not enough to

handle the requirement for

transporting the oxygen supplies coming in from other states.

Punjab has a 195 metric tonne (MT) allocation from

various plants in other states,

but the actual supply received

over the past seven days has

been around 110-120 MT daily,

which has also been erratic,

the CM noted.

In this period, the number

of patients on oxygen support

has gone up from 4000 to

around 9000, and though

the state government's steps to

monitor and streamline sup-

plies through its control rooms

has helped in keeping things

stable, the situation remains

fluid and a matter of concern, he added.

The current consumption of oxygen in the state is more than 225 MT daily, while the average increase in demand every day is around 15 to 20 per cent.

The chief secretary Vini Mahajan told the meeting that in addition to the shortage of trucks available with transporters in the state, the fact that a tanker takes around four to five days to bring the 90 MT quota allocation from Bokaro plant has made things worse.

Unless the state gets more tankers, the situation

could aggravate, she added.

In addition to 90 MT from Bokaro, the state's current allocation is: 60 MT from plant in Baddi, 20 MT from plant in Panipat, 15 MT from plant in Roorkee and 10 MT from plant in Dehradun. Besides, around 80 MT is generated daily from the state, and steps are being taken to increase production on a continuous basis, she said, adding, however, that this was not sufficient to meet the increasing demand.

Medical education minister OP Soni said more oxygen cylinders were also needed at Government hospitals to meet the growing requirement of the patients.

*It is imperative that we receive adequate oxygen and increase our capacity of beds.*



ON DELHI RECEIVING 440 MT OF OXYGEN, MUCH LESS THAN ALLOCATED 590 MT QUOTA

Kerala CM: UDF, BJP entered into secret vote trade



Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan with Governor Arif Mohammed Khan at Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram, on Monday. ■ AGENCY

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 3 MAY

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday alleged that the Congress-led UDF and the BJP entered into a secret vote trade in at least 90 constituencies in the state.

Speaking to media persons here on Monday, chief minister Vijayan said that UDF was confident to win the polls till the counting day as they were engaged in vote trade. The election results show that the vote share of BJP decreased in 90 constituencies, he said. "The UDF confirmed victory in over 10 seats with vote trade. If they were not engaged in vote trade, UDF will face a big debacle in the polls," Vijayan added. Coming out against the BJP, chief minister Vijayan said the poll results showed that the voters of Kerala have disengaged the politics of the saffron party. "They took national leaders and a huge amount of money for the election campaign. But when the election results declared, it is proved that the voters of Kerala have rejected the politics of BJP," he said. ■ SNS

# Nandigram poll officer feared for his life: Didi

BJP attacked TMC men in certain areas, asked to report to police, TMC chief said

SNS & PTI  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged on Monday that the returning officer of Nandigram feared for his life and so he did not give a recounting order.

Addressing a press meet, Miss Banerjee reiterated that she will move court over the election result in Nandigram where she lost to BJP's Sudendu Adhikari.

She said Trinamul workers are already staging a sit-in demonstration in front of Haldia SDO office demanding all EVMs, VVPATs be kept in a safe place for recounting. Miss Banerjee made public a purported SMS from the Nandigram Returning Officer to a CEO official, claiming that if he ordered recounting he would face serious consequences, and may even have to die by suicide.

"How come EC reverse Nandigram result after formally announcing it? We will move court against this," she said.

"Why was the server down for four hours? We are willing to accept people's mandate but if the result of one place has anomalies, there may be something beyond what appears. We have to seek the truth," she added.

Banerjee urged her sup-



porters to maintain peace amid reports of violence from some areas, asking them not to fall prey to provocations.

Miss Banerjee said many police officers and DMs, SDOs acted at the behest of BJP especially Cooch Behar SP who instigated firing at Sitalkuchi and helped BJP.

She alleged EC had acted in a partisan way otherwise BJP could have been restricted at 50 seats.

She declared all reporters as Covid-19 warriors as many reporters have to go out and cover the pandemic. Many reporters had succumbed to the virus.

The central forces com-

mitted many atrocities on TMC supporters during the elections, she alleged.

"Even after the results were announced, BJP attacked our supporters in certain areas but we ask our men not to get provoked and instead report to the police," she said.

The chief minister again demanded that every citizen of the country should be given free vaccines by the Centre.

"They are sending vaccine and oxygen to two-three states. Why so? Every state should get its due. I have heard that in Gujarat, vaccine is being given from the BJP party office. Does they (BJP) have any expertise in giving vaccines?"

she claimed.

Replying to a question, Miss Banerjee said her priority is fighting the pandemic and would think about her role in the national elections of 2024 once the Covid-19 crisis is over.

"I am just a street fighter. I can boost the morale of the people, so that we can fight a strong fight against the BJP. One cannot do everything alone and it should be a collective effort. If collectively we can take a decision, together we can fight the battle of 2024. But, first let us fight this Covid crisis and then we will decide on this. Now is not the time," she said.

Miss Banerjee also claimed that the Left was unable to get back the votes that it lost to the BJP, leading to its further downfall.

"I may have political differences with them (Left) but I did not want to see them getting zero. It would have been better if they got the votes back from the BJP. They favoured the BJP so much that they became a signboard. They need to think about this. Dipankar Bhattacharya (CPIM-L) did not do this," she said.

The chief minister said that she did not get the customary call from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on her victory in the elections. "This is the first time I saw a prime minister not calling. It is ok, he may be busy. I did not take it in sentiment," she said.

Thousands of party workers fled their residences to save their lives and took shelters in different places and they don't know what happened to their families, he said.

Ghosh said chief minister Mamata Banerjee has shunned responsibility to stop the violence, which he claimed are perpetuated in front of the police.

"Septuagenarian Sovaram Mondal, mother of the BJP worker was killed while she was trying to save her son at Jagaddal. Other BJP workers like Uttam Ghosh (48), from Ranaghat, Avijit Sarkar from Beleghata, Haren Adhikari (41), from Sonarpur and another from Sitalkuchi were beaten to death. In each case

victims' families were unable to get any help from police despite calling several times to their respective local police stations for help," he said.

"Even several hundred family members, who were calling up police as their residences were being gutted by the TMC-backed miscreants, did not get any response. I don't know what is in the mind of the chief minister. Did TMC workers unleash such terror thinking about the upcoming civic bodies and panchayat polls?" he said.

The BJP leader said that his party will learn from its mistakes and is now already gearing up for 2026 polls.

"We'll look into what went wrong. In the last election we won 3 seats and this time it's nearly 80. We had put a big target in front of us but we didn't achieve it. However, what we have got is no less," he said.

The BJP MP also said that even though his party has not been able to achieve their desired goal, they indeed have made a big leap from last elections.

"We were unsuccessful in claiming the confidence and credibility of the voters. Thanks to our workers who have been with us for so long," Ghosh said.

**Report sought:** The Union ministry of home affairs today asked the West Bengal Government for a report on the post-election violence targeting "Opposition political workers" in the state.

This was stated in a tweet by the MHA Spokesperson this evening. ■ SNS

Post-poll violence claims four

BURDWAN, 3 MAY

After Trinamul Congress swept Burdwan (east) four have died in the ensuing political violence in the two neighbouring Assembly seats-Raina and Jamalpur.

In Raina, a TMC supporter Ganesh Malik (61) was hacked to death at Samaspur village allegedly by a group of armed BJP cadres near a club.

Malik was declared dead at Burdwan Medical College and Hospital.

The police arrested six BJP cadres from Hijolna area in connection with the attack today. At Hijolna too, six TMC supporters were injured when BJP cadres attack them. Police have booked three cadres.

At Nabagram village in Jamalpur, Kakoli Kshetrapal (45), mother of BJP's local Shakti Kendra head Ashis Kshetrapal, was butchered allegedly by TMC-backed goons. Aminul Islam, SDPO, Burdwan (Sudder) said: "We have made some arrests in Nabagram incident today."

In retaliation, two TMC supporters-Bibhas Bag (27) and Sajahan Sheikh (30) were grievously injured. "Both died before being shifted to the BMCH," said Prosenjit Das, district TMC spokesperson. ■ SNS

# Stop violence against BJP workers: Dilip urges Mamata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI 3 MAY

BJP state president and MP Dilip Ghosh today said that the state party has lodged complaint with the Election Commission, Union home minister Amit Shah, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and state chief secretary regarding the alleged wave of violence against BJP workers, in which six saffron party workers were killed.

Addressing a Press conference at state BJP headquarters, he said that unprecedented violence has been taking place since yesterday in which not only their party workers died and also numerous residences, shops, factories of the BJP workers were ransacked, demolished and set on fire by the TMC-backed hooligans.

Thousands of party workers fled their residences to save their lives and took shelters in different places and they don't know what happened to their families, he said.

The BJP MP also said that even though his party has not been able to achieve their desired goal, they indeed have made a big leap from last elections.

"We were unsuccessful in claiming the confidence and credibility of the voters. Thanks to our workers who have been with us for so long," Ghosh said.

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# BJP displayed audacity of ambition: Malviya

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The BJP could not achieve its goal of 200 seats in West Bengal Assembly election, party's National IT head Amit Malviya on Monday came out with clarification, saying the target displayed "audacity of ambition" and it gave the electorate confidence that drove the party to do more.

Malviya termed the BJP's move in West Bengal Assembly elections a "good start" despite the saffron party could not achieve its target of 200 seats in the Trinamool Congress (TMC) ruled state.

The senior BJP leader made the remarks a day after the West Bengal Assembly results were declared. The BJP secured victory in 77 of 292 seats in the state, being the second largest party. The TMC secured 210 seats in

the state.

The BJP in Bengal, when it set itself a target of 200, displayed audacity of ambition. An ambition that gave the electorate confidence, unnervered opponents (political and ideological), an ambition that drove us to do more. We may not have finished first but this is a good start," Amit Malviya tweeted.

As the Trinamool Congress managed to attain nearly a three-fourth majority in the Assembly elections in West Bengal, three of the five heavy weights of the BJP fell prey to the deluge of the ruling party.

Star BJP candidates and MPs Swapnil Dasgupta, Lockert Chatterjee and Babul Supriyo have all lost in the elections, while MP Nishit Pramanik has won by a slender margin of 57 votes. Another Lok Sabha member of the BJP, Jagannath Sarkar, also won the elections.

# Mukul likely to be Leader of Opp

TIRTHANKAR MITRA  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

One of the most formidable strategists to shape election outcomes, BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy is being considered by saffron party leadership as the leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly.

When most turncoats are in tatters after Trinamul tornado, Roy has won from Krishnanagar (north) constituency and is seemingly a surprise choice as the leader of the Opposition.

He didn't create ruckus and interrupt the proceedings of the House when he was a Rajya Sabha member of the Trinamul Congress and focused on planning taking into consideration even the trivial elements.

Once the number two in Trinamul hierarchy, Roy hit the headlines for his capability in engineering defections from other political outfits and contested as BJP candidates changed their political alle-



party. He has persuaded leaders of other parties to change localities, the acumen he exercised in both TMC and BJP.

One cannot help wonder whether Roy will utilise his talents to chip away at the ranks of Trinamul legislators once he becomes leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly. Several Trinamul leaders who switched sides and contested as BJP candidates changed their political alle-

giance on his advice.

Though Roy had no inkling of his new role in the Opposition when he joined the poll fray, he left no stone unturned in his campaign.

Having established his connect cutting across party lines,

strangely enough he did not venture outside the constituency he was seeking to represent and was thus not a part of the cohort of BJP leaders criss-crossing the state in election period for which any blame for the poll reversal cannot be laid to his door.

Almost consigned to the boondocks when he joined the saffron camp, 2019 Lok Sabha polls and 2021 Assembly elections ensured Roy a place in the sun. And if made the leader of the Opposition, a position held by political luminaries like Jyoti Basu and Siddhartha Shankar Ray, he will be matching his wits with his one-time leader, Mamata Banerjee with whom he had built the Trinamul from scratch.

# Memes galore after results

NISHAT NIZAMI  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

After Mamata Banerjee's massive win in the Assembly elections, social media platforms today were taken by storm of political memes. The netizens celebrated the victory and failure of various political parties with a bout of hilarious photos, GIFs and posters sending their messages camouflaged with funny jokes and images.

The "# of didi\_o\_didi" was trending as number two on a social media platform till late afternoon today, slipping a rank later. The memes targeted both TMC and BJP and their chiefs were the focal point of sarcasm. As Miss Banerjee's wave swept the polls, a meme on social media depicted her standing in a jungle with women of different classes including farmers, tribals, indigenous Bengali, hermits, feeding mothers, rural vil-

agers and those in modern attire with the TMC chief's one leg on a football.

The netizens did not spare anyone including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. One of the netizens even went to the height of posting a meme with Miss Banerjee depicted as Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty and Modi as Sunil Shetty in the iconic song, "Tum Dil Ki Dhadkan Mein Rahte Ho, Rahte Ho." A widely circulated meme was Miss Banerjee kicking a football with her injured leg while sitting on her wheelchair and Modi falling on the steps after being hit by the ball. Another meme was that of BJP leader Dilip Ghosh depicted as the conductor of a bus calling out "Dilli, Dilli, Gujarat, Gujarat. Ashu Ashu," to Shah, in the attire of a commuter while three passengers including Modi, BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya and superstar, Mithun Chakraborty looked out of the window.

Poking fun at TMC, a section of social media users shared an image showing several party leaders being garlanded while Miss Banerjee jostled for space.

# Pandemic spells doom for budding journalists

SIMRAN SRIVASTAVA  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

The virus has plagued many sectors of the country while aspiring journalists are staring at a bleak future.

In an industry where practical field exposure is mandatory, students are grappling to gather that knowledge and are sceptical about their placements and upcoming life.

The calamity created by the pandemic on young journalists has got on their nerves and left them in a state of anxiety.

"Pursuing such a sensitive subject of journalism during this uncertain time is affecting my mental peace",

says Devanshi Pandey, a Journalism student at IIM, Calcutta. "Being a student of IIM-C gives me a lot of expectations regarding my placement. But at the same time hiring freshers during this havoc seems a far away topic" she added.

Hritam Mukherjee, a third-year mass communication student at St. Xavier's College says "Although I will be graduating this year, but not in a true sense because my graduation is coupled with a pandemic which throws me in the lap of uncertainty".

Meanwhile, Nancy Gupta, who is now placed at Greenhonchos solutions, freshly faced repercussions of Covid-19 on her career said, "I never thought Covid-19 would hit us so badly, final examinations and recruitment online was surreal. The majority of us were scared about our future because placements had suddenly shifted online and many of the students were either stuck in lockdown or had no set-up for online mode. Only a few companies came on board due to pandemic".

"I am aspiring to be an automobile journalist and for that, I need hands-on experience in the field. This pandemic is snatching away our opportunities," says Samarth Uppal, a student of mass communication at IIM-C.

# Manipur HC directs state to provide safe passage to 7 Myanmarese refugees

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
IMPHAL 3 MAY

Union minister Babul Supriyo's post on social media has drawn flak from all corners after being trounced in Tollygunge Assembly seat by Aroop Biswas. In a Facebook post last evening, he wrote: "Neither will I congratulate Mamata Banerjee for her win in Bengal nor do I wish to say that I respect the people's verdict, because I sincerely think that people of Bengal made a historic mistake by not giving BJP a chance and by electing this corrupt, incapable, dishonest

government and a cruel lady back to power!! Yes, as a law abiding citizen, I shall obey the decision taken by the people in a democratic, autocratic party, can't accept people's mandate if it goes against it," adds Ghatak.

Supriyo deleted the post later in the day after being slammed.

However, the BJP local leadership said the party has failed to achieve its target despite having two MPs in Burdwan (west), losing six out of nine seats, because



The BJP government did nothing in past four years and remained in isolation due to which it has put entire state in isolation now...

SAYING FRIGHTENING PICTURES COMING FROM HOSPITALS WERE EXPOSING TALL CLAIMS OF UP CM

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 04 MAY 2021

05



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY



Oxygen being provided to Covid patients on spot by Sikh organisation Gurudwara Damdama Sahib, at Nizamuddin, in the Capital, on Monday. ■ SUBRATA DUTTA

**UP panchayat polls:** One person was injured in a firing incident in a village in Pratapgarh when counting was underway for panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh, police said on Monday. According to police, supporters of Dinesh Mishra, a village head candidate, opened fire after he lost polls to Vishnu Tiwari alias Sonu. ■ PTI

**NWR's achievement:** The North Western Railway has completed electrification work on 566 kilometers, officials said on Monday. The department aims to electrify 980 km broad gauge lines in the region by 2022, NWR Spokesperson Shashi Kiran said in a statement. ■ PTI

**ISRO espionage case:** The CBI has registered an FIR against Kerala police personnel in a matter of alleged framing of space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the 1994 ISRO espionage case on the Supreme Court's directions, officials said on Monday. ■ PTI

**IAF brings 4 cryogenic oxygen:** An Indian Air Force heavy-lift transport aircraft on Monday brought four empty cryogenic oxygen containers from Frankfurt in Germany. ■ PTI

**Covid +ve mother-daughter found dead:** The decomposed bodies of a woman and her daughter, both Covid patients, were found in a home in Samudrapur tehsil of Maharashtra's Wardha district. They were living separately from the rest of the family, police said on Monday. ■ PTI

**Pak Rangers def** renewed ceasefire agreement, open fire at BSF patrol  
JAMMU, 3 MAY

After a lull of two months on the International Border (IB), Pakistani Rangers on Monday defied the recently renewed ceasefire commitment by resorting to unprovoked firing at a BSF patrolling party in the Ramgarh sector of Jammu.

This is the first ceasefire violation after February when India and Pakistan agreed to strictly enforce the ceasefire agreement of 2003.

A spokesman of BSF said: "Today morning Pakistani Rangers resorted to unprovoked firing at 06:15 hrs in Ramgarh sector on BSF patrolling party ahead of fencing. No loss injury to own troops."

Pakistan Rangers opened unprovoked small arms fire at BSF personnel who were doing maintenance work at the border fence, said a BSF officer. However, the BSF patrol escaped unhurt, he added.

Reports said that 10 Wing of Pakistan's Chenab Rangers manning their Tipu and Hussain posts fired about 20 rounds of small weapons at the BSF's working party of border outpost Majra near mound number 8/36 and pillar number 81 which is being manned by BSF's 176 battalion.

The BSF exercised restraint and there was no retaliation from the Indian side, he added.

The Director General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan had held a telephonic conversation on 22 February 2021, the statement of which was issued two days later, stating that both sides had agreed to abide by the 2003 ceasefire agreement. ■ SNS

# Prepare buffer stock of O2 for emergency: SC

A three-judge bench said emergency stocks will be created within next four days and replenished on a day-to-day basis



A medic administers the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine to a young beneficiary at a vaccination centre in a government school, in New Delhi, on Monday. ■ AGENCY

**T**he Supreme Court has directed the Centre to prepare a buffer stock of oxygen for emergency purposes in collaboration with states and decentralise the location of the stocks so that it is immediately available if the normal supply chain is disrupted.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud said the emergency stocks shall be created within the next four days and replenished on a day-to-day basis, in addition to the existing allocation of medical oxygen supply to the states.

"We direct the central government in collaboration with the states to prepare a buffer stock of oxygen to be used for emergency purposes to ensure supply lines continue to function even in unforeseen circumstances. The location of the emergency stocks shall be decentralised so as to be immediately available if the normal supply chain is disrupted to any hospital for any reason," the bench said.

"The central government and state governments shall notify all chief secretaries, directors-general of police, commissioners of police that any clampdown on information on social media or harassment caused to individuals seeking help on any platform will attract coercive action."

"The emergency stocks shall be created within the next four days. The replenishment of the emergency stocks will also be monitored on a real-time basis through the virtual control room in active consultation with each state/UT. This is in addition to the day to day allocations," it added.

Noting that the situation on the ground in Delhi is heart-rending, the top court also directed the Centre to ensure that the deficit in the supply of oxygen to the national capital is rectified before May 3 midnight.

"The protection of the lives of citizens is paramount in times of a national crisis and the responsibility falls on both the central government and the GNCTD to cooperate with each other to ensure that all possible measures are taken to resolve the situation," the bench also comprising justices LNageswara Rao and Ravindra Bhat said.

On the issue of treatment in hospitals, the top court directed the Centre to formulate within two weeks a national policy on admissions to hospitals in the wake of the second wave of Covid.

"Till the formulation of such a policy by the central government, no patient shall be denied hospitalisation or essential drugs in any state/UT to ensure supply."

for lack of local residential proof of that state/UT or even in the absence of identity proof," the bench said.

It also directed the Centre and the state governments to notify that any clampdown on information on social media or harassment caused to individuals seeking help on any platform will attract coercive action.

"The central government and state governments shall notify all chief secretaries, directors-general of police, commissioners of police that any clampdown on information on social media or harassment caused to individuals seeking help on any platform will attract coercive action."

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## SC directs Centre to revisit current vaccine policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to revisit its Covid-19 vaccine pricing policy, saying it would prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health.

A bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud said as of date, the manufacturers have suggested two different prices, a lower price which is applicable to the Centre and a higher price which is applicable to the state governments.

The apex court said that compelling state governments to negotiate with manufacturers on grounds of promoting competition and making it attractive for new vaccine manufacturers will result in a serious detriment to those in the age group of 18 to 44 years, who will be vaccinated by state governments.

The social strata of this age group also comprises persons who are Bahujans or belong to other underprivileged and marginalised groups, like many in the other population age groups. They may not have the ability to pay.

"Whether or not essential vaccines will be made available to them will depend upon the decision of each state government, based on its own finances, on whether or not the vaccine should be made available free or should be subsidised and if so, to what extent. This will create disparity across the nation. The vaccinations being provided to citizens constitute a valuable public good," the bench said.

The bench also comprising Justices LNageswara Rao and Ravindra Bhat said, discrimination cannot be made between different classes of citizens who are similarly circumstanced on the ground that while the Central government will carry the burden of providing free vaccines for the 45 years and above population, state governments will discharge the responsibility of the 18 to 44 age group on such commercial terms as they may negotiate.

"Primafacie, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central Government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with vaccine manufacturers," the court said.

The apex court said that once quantities are allocated by it to each state government, the latter would lift the allocated quantities and carry out the distribution. At present, the two coronavirus vaccines Covishield and Covaxin are in use.

The directions were passed in a suo motu case for ensuring essential supplies and services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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EC to SC: Covid management not our prerogative

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Election Commission, rattled over the strong high court observations related to conducting of just concluded Assembly elections, told the Supreme Court on Monday that Covid-19 management was not its prerogative and it does not run the governance of the state.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah told by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the EC, that remarks of murder charges made by the Madras High Court against the Constitutional body were unwarranted and such conclusive remarks should not have been made without hearing the poll panel.

Election commission is not running the governance of the State. "We only issue guidelines and directives. We don't have CRPF or any other force with us to check the people in rally. State Disaster Management Authority has to issue orders for limiting the people. There is a presumption that EC has responsibility for all this. We have nothing to do with Covid management," he said.

The high court had on 26 April castigated the EC for the surge in Covid-19 cases during the second wave of the pandemic, holding it "singularly" responsible for the spread of the viral disease, called it the "most irresponsible institution" and even said its officials may be booted under murder charges.

**Plea to debar candidates:** ECI told the Delhi High Court that since the Assembly polls were over, the plea to debar campaigners and candidates from campaigning for repeatedly violating the mandatory guidelines, including wearing of masks, has become infructuous.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh, asked the ECI to file its reply to the petition and listed the matter for hearing on 3 June.

The Centre, in its reply to the petition, has said that it had in March this year asked all state governments and UTs to ensure compliance of Covid-appropriate behaviour in all gatherings. ■ PTI

## AT A GLANCE



Police arrests rule-breakers during a curfew imposed to control the spike in Coronavirus, in Jodhpur, on Monday. ■ AGENCY

**Andhra imposes partial curfew during daytime:** Andhra Pradesh has imposed partial curfew during daytime for the next two weeks starting from 5 May in view of the sharp spike in Covid-19 cases in the state. All shops and commercial establishments will shutdown at noon and only emergency services will be allowed to run beyond 12 pm. The state has already imposed night curfew between 10 pm and 5 am and further decided to impose section 144 from noon at a meeting today which was chaired by chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. According to the latest health bulletin a total of 1.15 lakh samples were tested out of which 18,972 people tested positive and 71 deaths were reported. ■ SNS

**Remdesivir blackmarketing 'kingpin' held in Panipat:** Haryana Police on Monday claimed to have arrested kingpin of a racket in connection with black-marketing of Remdesivir drug, which is in high demand for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, from Panipat district. Giving this information today, a Haryana Police spokesperson informed the primary probe reveals that arrested accused used to buy injection from an Uttarakhand resident at the rate of Rs 12,000 per vial and then sold the same between Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000. ■ PTI

**Night curfew extended to more areas in Tripura:** With the surge in coronavirus cases in Tripura, the state government on Monday decided to extend night curfew to all local and urban bodies and nagar panchayat areas as well as the number of hours under it, officials said. The government on Monday decided to clamp the night curfew in all civic body areas of the state from 6 pm to 5 am the next day. Emergency services like medical services and the media have been exempted from the purview of the night curfew, the order said. ■ PTI

## Singular triumph

In terms of electoral success, Mamata Banerjee has already joined the pantheon of West Bengal's most successful post-Independence leaders, a space hitherto occupied by Dr B C Roy and Jyoti Basu. But in popular imagination, she may well have soared ahead because her party's triumph on Sunday was in the face of odds that often seemed overwhelming, and against an opponent significantly more potent than any Roy or Basu had confronted in their third bids for power. Confronted with a party that has the deepest pockets in India, and the will to use every trick in the political – and administrative – book, Miss Banerjee was able to return to power with more legislators than she had on the day elections were announced. This is a singular triumph, and one that will etch her place in the state's history. That it came on the back of a gruelling, and, in the view of some, an unnecessarily prolonged election schedule, and in the face of defections of several key lieutenants, makes it even more special. While Miss Banerjee's governance record is not without blemish, her political savvy is matched by few and her reading of Bengal's pulse is immaculate. By reaching out to Bengali sub-nationalism, and appealing in a sense to the iconoclasm that marks the state, she was able to blunt the BJP's stress on the benefits that could accrue from the same party ruling both at the Centre and in the state. For even as the BJP juggernaut threatened to crush anyone who came in its way, the party made several errors in its campaign and strategy. First, its leaders were seen often to slight Miss Banerjee, even lampoon her; this was both unnecessary and counterproductive. When added to the size of the BJP's mammoth campaign machinery, this had the effect of projecting a sitting Chief Minister as the underdog. Next, it failed to appreciate that it is necessary in Bengal to pay obeisance to each of the state's icons, and not just to some. While it sought to appropriate Subhas Chandra Bose, it did not embrace Satyajit Ray with the same fervour and appeared even to slight Amartya Sen. To compound matters it took the ill-advised step of renaming the B C Roy Institute of Medical Science and Research in Kharagpur after Syama Prasad Mookerjee. Third, and especially in the last few phases of the campaign, it appeared to place political ambition above public health considerations more conspicuously than its opponent. Finally, while the BJP packed significant national muscle into its campaign, it was not able to project the same strength locally, and may even have faced discord within its Bengal unit over the preference given to recent entrants.

In the days to come, this election will be analysed extensively. For now, it will be enough to say that Miss Banerjee has returned to power with renewed strength, but with great challenges ahead of her. As she said on Sunday, the state faces the daunting prospect of an epidemic that is threatening to spiral out of control. In the longer term, she must prepare to face a single Opposition party that will relentlessly attempt to build on an agenda that has seen it grow exponentially in the past few years. More than political skills, Miss Banerjee will have to display sober and focused administrative skills in her third term, even as she seeks to play the role that anti-BJP parties will expect of her nationally in the years leading up to 2024.

## Continuity in Assam

Fairly predictably, the Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam has been afforded another innings with its victory in the state assembly election. And yet the party will have to rule with a reduced margin. Prima facie its attempt to polarise the electorate in a state bordering Bangladesh, its populist policies and development initiatives have effectively trounced the welfare guarantees articulated by the Opposition, helmed by the Congress. The victory in the 126-member House has been convincing enough. Despite the spirited protests last year against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the state has voted for continuity rather than change. For all the turmoil over the cut-off date to qualify as a citizen of India, not the least because of the relentless influx from across the eastern flank, people have reposed faith in the ruling alliance. Not surprisingly the Chief Minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, has greeted the outcome as a "people's victory". He himself has won the Majuli seat. To expedite growth and development, he has, in the moment of triumph, pledged to function more enthusiastically for all sections of society, on the basis of a holistic paradigm. One major factor behind the predicament of the Congress was its lack of leadership, while the other was polarisation. The pitch towards polarisation had intensified ahead of the elections when the Congress aligned with the AIUDF. The latter was accused by the BJP of promoting the interests of infiltrators. A vote for the mahajot, the ruling party contended, would be a vote for AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who has been criticised by the BJP for his eloquent sympathy towards the infiltrators.

The Congress threw its hat into the electoral ring as late as February. As the ruling party with its inherent advantages, it is pretty obvious that the BJP has exploited the time factor to its advantage. Congress infighting, the absence of an acceptable leader of the party's state unit, and the rather controversial alliance with the AIUDF may have done the party in. In the psephological stakes, the discord over citizenship has not caused a swing against the BJP. Among the prominent losers are the Assam Congress president, Ripun Bora and the Assam Jatiya Parishad chief, Lurinjyoti Gogoi. As it turned out, the party's alliance with the AIUDF helped the latter more than it did the Congress. In the context of an extremely sensitive issue, the Congress has shot itself in the foot. It is fervently to be hoped that the BJP will not initiate a high-voltage campaign on citizenship.

# Debt in distress

Most big defaulters are well-connected tycoons and have the money to employ legal eagles who can play the judicial system ~ it is here the law flounders. India has some of the most draconian laws in books; they are ineffective against powerful dodgers. We keep producing new laws when the existing ones are adequate and just need more teeth to obtain results

The Indian banking system is beleaguered by a mounting pile of troubled loans. The proportion of bad debts, where the borrower is not making interest payments or not repaying any principal, has surged to such horrifying levels that the banks are creaking under the strain. Several financial storms have rumbled on in the financial system, a third of which is on crutches.

The perverse behaviour of promoters of ailing businesses has led to a situation where precious money of taxpayers has to be used to clean the poison that has leached the financial system. The question is ~ why should ordinary people bear the burden of the fat cats? These free loaders are remorselessly winnowing scarce bank capital. The government has to dress up balance sheets of banks to make them apparently healthy so that they can lend again. Ironically, instead of being chastised, the wayward borrowers are lauded as captains of the industry.

Most borrowers seem to have a deep aversion to repaying bank loans. In several cases, they have adequate assets and capital to redeem the debt but avoid doing it. Things have turned so bad that whether it is an individual or institution, getting back any money at all is a reason for celebration. We have seen several business leaders splurging on lavish extravaganzas and misdirecting capital into expensive vanity projects, but renegeing on loan promises. The reason why we have been trying to protect the borrower against the creditor so far is that the cruel moneylender has always loomed large in our collective psyche. The scene now is totally different. Large borrowers are not like helpless illiterate villagers and the lender today is not the sahukar or predatory lender who charged stratospheric interest rates. Loans are now offered by banks and are quite affordable. Added to this is the government subsidy. A distinction can be made between unscrupulous debtors who invested unwisely or selfishly and general debtors – the latter group may have genuinely tried to use their loans sensibly but cannot make repayments, either because of the economic downturn, or because they had no choice in taking on such debt, such as by having to pay for essential medical care. A willful default takes place when a loan isn't repaid even though resources are available, or if the money lent is used for purposes other than the designated purpose, or if a property secured for a loan is sold off without the bank's knowledge or approval. One wouldn't like to resurrect the "genuine" versus "wilful" trope, but blanket, no-questions-asked write-offs can be hardly useful for solving such complex problems.

Borrowers turn into wilful defaulters by exploiting weak governance structures. When borrowers become insolvent, their loans are added to an existing mountain of debt. Each time that happens, banks have to make heavy write-downs, sloughing the bad loans like rotten potatoes and wiping off profits, thus weakening their balance sheets. The net result is that most banks are suffering from conse-



quences of bad lending and have become averse to any kind of lending-related risk. Instead of taming the loan dodgers the government is hounding bankers for so-called wrong credit decisions. The entire financial sector is wary of lending. Most big defaulters are well-connected tycoons and have the money to employ legal eagles who can play the judicial system ~ it is here the law flounders. India has some of the most draconian laws in books; they are ineffective against powerful dodgers. We keep producing new laws when the existing ones are adequate and just need more teeth to obtain results. Noble Prize winning French economist Jean Tirole writes in his book Economics for the Common Good:

"The state often fails. There are many reasons for these failures. Regulatory capture is one of them. We are well aware of the friendships and mutual support that create complicity between a public body and those who are supposed to be regulating it."

Repayment ethics have been deeply ingrained in Indian culture, but have become foul words on account of the perverse behaviour of borrowers. The sanctity of repayment and its moral obligation has been instilled since the time of Manu ~ no matter how deceptively the debt was contrived and how cruel were the costs. Manu listed 18 main categories of law for the king to decide on. Of those, wrote Manu, "The first is non-payment of debts." He held: "By whatever means, a creditor may be able to obtain possession of his property, even by those means may he force the debtor and make him pay."

What about disputes and debt recovery? Manu specified the punishments to be handed out in case of the 18 types of disputes arising from loan repay-

ment. When a creditor sued the debtor for recovery of money, it was the duty of the king to ensure that the creditor got his money back. Manu permitted the king to employ all means, fair or foul, to recover the dues, which included killing the debtor's wife, children and cattle or obstructing his movements. Manu emphasized that a defaulter could not absolve himself of his debt burden even by death.

The great statesman Chanakya believed that sons should pay with interest the debt of a deceased person or co-debtors or sureties. Was a spouse responsible for the debts incurred by a person to whom they were married? Yes and no. A wife was exempted from the debt burden of her husband if she had not consented to his borrowings. However, for the debt incurred by a wife, her husband was liable for repayment. Crony politicians are equally guilty of undermining the stability of banks. They have used public banks as political milch cows and stacked the decks with populist sops. Banks became spigots for burnishing election credentials and have been forced to shovel huge loans to the buddies of politicians. The nexus of politicians and creative business schemers has stoked a forest fire that spread quickly, singeing many in the financial sector. In every business venture, the equity holders take the risks. In India lenders take the risks while the promoters have much less skin in the game and are essentially playing with other people's money. The cozy nexus between tycoons, few bank executives and politicians has held back a much needed shake-up of a moribund, scandal-prone sector. Scams are a product of greed and immorality. However, abuse of the financial system has been made possible because of

the system's weaknesses. In an age which heralds technology as the silver bullet, we should not overlook the most important source of competitive advantage ~ the people. Compliance and controls are dependent on people running them. A process is only as good as the people managing it. The most agile auditors will also have to struggle to stop managers who are determined to hide their dirty laundry from view. In several cases the bankers have themselves fudged the accounts and contributed to the malaise.

The turmoil has prompted calls for improvising risk management models, which seem to have created an illusory sense of security. However, models and machines cannot act as a surrogate for human expertise. Money management is no more a genteel world. In a prophetic warning, way back in 1913, John Maynard Keynes wrote in Indian Currency and Finance: "In a country so dangerous for banking as India, (it) should be conducted on the safest possible principles." Our departure from the time-honored metrics has come at a heavy cost. The government has already decided to set up a bad bank to spin off stressed loans to experts who can focus on recovery. However, a bad bank is not a magic wand that will resolve the issues of India's soured loans.

Finance is a wild animal and made up of so much human drama and passions that it needs the most sophisticated minds to read and leaven the nuances that shape its contours. The biggest misconception about banking is that people think one should have a degree in business or finance to do well in this industry.

Banking is a generalist profession dealing with diverse industries. An educational background in economics or finance may help one understand banking concepts in the beginning. But in the long run it is the person with the right mix of personal qualities and leadership skills who will rise above the rest. These include the ability to learn quickly and continuously, openness to new challenges, a disciplined professionalism, an outgoing and inquisitive nature, an analytical and systematic mind, negotiating savvy and personal integrity. Any achieving banker will soon find himself thrust out of a comfortably known field into an unfamiliar one. He must be open to challenges. He must learn the ropes by himself before he can guide others. A banker must master and micromanage details. A banker knows the surface of many disciplines but depths of none; he should be ready to unlearn certain theoretical assumptions if his life experience warrants him to do so. India's financial community has a lot on its plate: demographic changes, structural changes, and operational changes. It is now all playing out. The most important thing at this juncture is financial stability. It has become extremely difficult to assess which parts of the loan book could develop into default hotspots. We need a new generation of bankers with vigilant eyes and firefighting abilities to ensure robust and resilient financial health of the system. This alone can keep the economy continually perked up.

A MEMBER OF THE



ASIAN VOICES

## Underwater wave sunk sub

A strong underwater wave might have been what caused an Indonesian submarine to descend quickly and sink to a depth of 850m in the north of Bali last week, killing all 53 crew members on board. Two senior naval officers said the movement of a strong internal wave in the spot where the submarine was reported missing was on the image report of Japanese weather satellite Himawari-8 as well as a European one.

Internal waves, or underwater waves, are hidden entirely within the ocean. The difference between an underwater wave and the water around it is their densities because of different temperatures or salinity. "If we are hit by an internal wave (coming from above), that would be nature we are up against. We would be dragged by the waves, sending us to a quick descent. No one can fight nature," Rear-Admiral Iwan Isnurwanto, a former submariner, told a media briefing in Jakarta on April 27. The commander of the Navy Staff and Command School explained that there is a seawater density difference between the Lombok Strait and the much deeper waters in the north of Bali, where the KRI Nanggala-402 submarine was found.

On April 21, the day of the accident, there was a massive movement due to density difference - from high to low - that spawned an enormous internal wave coming from Lombok Strait, between 200m and 400m deep, to waters in the north of Bali, where the depth is generally more than 1,000m. Rear-Admiral Iwan, citing the satellite image report, said: "We are talking about two million to four million cubic metres of water hitting you. Could anyone overcome that? The Nanggala

## THE STRAITS TIMES

submarine descended 13m and could have been caught in the internal wave," Rear-Admiral Muhammad Ali, the planning and budget assistant to Indonesia's navy chief, said such weather phenomenon will be taken into account in future operations and the navy will encourage further research into it. "An investigation is still ongoing. It would take a while. We will invite submarine experts, not only from within, but perhaps also from overseas. We have international submarine conferences. The Asia-Pacific submarine conference is held every two years and has been attended by all submariners worldwide," he said at the media briefing. Indonesian navy spokesman Julius Widjojono had earlier said contact with the submarine had likely been lost at 600m to 700m underwater, while by design, the vessel could withstand a depth of up to 500m. The 44-year-old submarine was due to carry out a torpedo drill after it asked for permission to dive early on April 21, but contact was then lost. The navy also said earlier that a possible power blackout during the static dive may have caused the submarine to lose control and made it unable to perform emergency procedures. The navy has not ruled out this possibility.

Singapore's MV Swift rescue vessel on April 27 helped in salvage efforts, Rear-Admiral Ali said. Torpedo missiles the submarine was carrying, each weighing about two tonnes, were also located. "Efforts now are focused on retrieving smaller items, as the remotely-operated underwater vehicle deployed is capable of lifting materials up to 150kg. Arrangements to lift heavier items are being made," he added. Meanwhile, the families of those who died in the incident have called for the authorities to retrieve their bodies from the sea. "We understand it may take time," Wahyudi, 52, the father of 22-year old torpedo shooter Pandu Yudha Kusuma, told The Straits Times in Banyuwangi.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Star on national firmament

SIR, This refers to the front-page report, 'Didi's day' (3 May). In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee mobilized Bengali sub-nationalism that stopped the rampaging march of Hindutva, at least for now. This was the first serious bid of the BJP for power in Bengal. Though it fell far short of its boasts, the BJP's rise is remarkable ~ from three seats in 2016 to 81 now. With the Left and the Congress nearly obliterated, the BJP is now a force to reckon with in the State.

In fact, the popular reaction against the BJP's crude communalism and deployment of its workers from other States was so intense that people left aside all their complaints against the incumbent Trinamool Congress government. The scale of her success has overnight turned Ms. Banerjee into a star in the national political firmament. Even her personal loss from the Nandigram seat tells the story of a

gritty woman who took the battle to the enemy camp. The BJP's strategy for West Bengal has been costly in terms of public health, institutional credibility, social harmony and even bilateral ties with a

friendly neighbouring country, Bangladesh. Though the BJP lost, the damage caused by its maximalist campaign cannot be easily undone. The State is staring at an explosion in Covid-19 infections, and Ms. Banerjee has her task cut out, entering into her third term as Chief Minister. She must take seri-

ous note of the public resentment against her party rather than read this victory as public approval of its high-handedness and corruption. The style and substance of Trinamul's politics and governance must change for the better.

Yours, etc., SS Paul, Nadia, 3 May.

### SPARKLING WIN

SIR, I refer to today's headline, 'Didi's day'. The results of the elections to four of the five assemblies were largely not unexpected, and only one of them had defied firm predictions. The outcome of that unpredictable contest in West Bengal turned out to be most stunning and remarkable - as the Trinamool Congress led by chief minister Mamata Banerjee registered a sparkling victory though she herself lost her seat. The results in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry are on expected lines, but it happened with varied victory margins.

Yours, etc., Chandan Kumar Nath, Guwahati, 3 May.

state is important to that state, from a national perspective the present round of assembly elections was much about West Bengal. The Trinamool Congress government was thought to be vulnerable on many counts because it was in power for 10 years with no great record in crucial areas of governance and development. Corruption was a major issue. Because the Congress and the Left, the main opposition parties could not make use of the opportunity, the BJP thought it could fill the vacuum, and it did. However, all credit goes to Mamata Banerjee as she protected her territory. But the BJP can derive solace from becoming a principal opposition party in the state at the expense of the decimated Congress and Left parties. While this verdict cheers the regional satraps across the country, the distress in Congress has deepened further.

Yours, etc., N Sadasiva Reddy, Bengaluru, 3 May.



### NO PLANNING

SIR, The government should have known better after last year's experience. Its knee jerk reactions have again put the public into a state of confusion and inconvenience.

First, the vaccination for senior citizens is announced and then the 45 plus people are asked to line up. But even before 10 per cent of them have been vaccinated, the government issues another order to extend vaccination in the midst of a vaccine shortage and inadequate centres. Why can't the government plan first, and then issue orders?

Yours, etc., Chandan Kumar Nath, Guwahati, 3 May.

Though the election in every

## The future of Afghanistan

HARSHA KAKAR

A report says that talks sponsored by Turkey, the UN and US, aimed at reaching a power-sharing agreement in Afghanistan, scheduled to be held last month in Istanbul, have been pushed to May, as the Taliban indicated its unwillingness to attend. There is a likelihood that these may not be held at all as the Taliban remains defiant. This despite the US and NATO announcing their withdrawal from Afghanistan by September 11.

Possibly, the Taliban leadership is sensing blood and hopes to take over the country after the exit of foreign forces. The Taliban released a statement mentioning that a media campaign has been launched with expectations of a peace deal being signed during this planned 10-day conference. It has also criticised the US decision to delay its withdrawal from 1 May to 11 September.

The US military had envisaged reluctance of the Taliban to come to a peace agreement and its intention to launch operations against the Afghan forces. They had therefore demanded a conditional withdrawal which would enable them to support the Kabul government employing air power, in case the Taliban increased attacks without reaching an agreement. This was turned down by President Biden. In this emerging scenario, there is a need for all stakeholders seeking peace in Afghanistan to reconsider their strategy.

After the withdrawal of the Soviets in February 1989, Kabul was taken over by rebel forces only in 1992. This was a result of disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, blocking equipment and monetary support. Internally there was a strong anti-communist wave, and the populace was willing to support any group which opposed Kabul's communists. The Afghan army was largely untrained leading to mass desertions. The Taliban finally came to power in 1996 and established an Islamic state. Currently, the scenario is vastly different.

The populace largely supports the Kabul government as it has witnessed years of freedom and progress. The Taliban is no longer as popular as it was in the 1990s. Even in areas under its control, its power stems from its brutality. The Taliban's inter-



pretation of Islamic laws and punishment is no longer acceptable to the public as it may have been in the 1990s, when anything seemed better than communism.

The Afghan army is also reasonably well trained and equipped. It has been able to hold ground, despite setbacks, and currently controls 33 per cent of the country against 19 per cent with the Taliban. The balance remains disputed. It has a trained and motivated leadership and the capability to withstand Taliban attacks.

The major strengths of the Taliban are suicide attacks and IEDs. These can cause casualties and fear, but are not battle winning factors. Intelligence reports state that the Taliban has 80,000-1,00,000 troops, while the Afghan army possesses over 200,000. Parts of Afghanistan are controlled by other groups and militia opposed to the Taliban. It is reported that the Taliban deployed its soldiers around foreign bases to protect them from these groups post the agreement, to secure its side of the bargain. The Taliban can add to its military power only if sup-

ported by the Pakistan army.

In case the Taliban seeks to launch a civil war to regain Kabul, it would face strong resistance. While current talks and global recognition have led to the Taliban believing it has an easy entry into Kabul or that the world would hand over Afghanistan to it on a platter, the reality appears different. The Afghan armed forces are determined to deny it a free run. A stalemate in operations, with pressure on Pakistan to stop support, could push the Taliban into talks, where the global community has failed or split the country into two or more parts.

Considering this, nations with a desire to promote stability in Afghanistan need to reconsider their strategy before the US and NATO troops leave the country. These must include strengthening the capability of Afghan forces to counter the Taliban and application of pressure on Pakistan to deny any form of support to it. The Afghan forces need weapons and ammunition as also air support in operations. While Afghan forces can be equipped, arrangements to

provide air support must remain. The US government must reconsider its military's demand of a conditional withdrawal to enable air support to Afghan forces in case the Taliban is unwilling to come forward for talks.

Reports state that Pakistan is attempting to convince the Taliban leadership to re-join the peace process, otherwise it may lose its support. Pakistan realises that the road to Kabul for the Taliban is dotted with pitfalls. The longer civil war rages within Afghanistan, the larger would the influx of refugees into Pakistan be. Pakistani security agencies are claiming that they are discovering links between the Taliban and groups affiliated to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an anti-Pakistan terrorist group. The TTP targets the Pakistani army and has vowed revenge for killing of Pashtuns. Baluch rebels would find instability in Afghanistan an ideal opportunity for enhancing operations against the CPEC.

More importantly, an Islamic government in Afghanistan and Iran would enhance the standing of radical clerics

in Pakistan. There would be demands for a similar form of Islamic government within the country. The recent uprising by the TLP, where it gained support even from elements within the Pakistani army, is an indicator of the depth of radicalisation which exists in the country. Pakistan's only logical hope is either an inclusive government in Kabul or a democracy. The Pakistani leadership must comprehend this scenario. The impact of instability in Afghanistan will also be felt on Russia and China as terrorist groups alienated from them would find space to grow amidst the civil war. Once these groups gain strength, eradicating them may not be easy.

Therefore, it would be ideal if the Afghan government and Taliban come to a peace agreement of power sharing, rather than push the country towards a civil war. A civil war would be detrimental for all neighbours of Afghanistan. For a civil war to be prevented and to force the Taliban to talk, the Afghan army must be strengthened.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

**POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR**

## Poll reforms need political will

Of late, the Election Commission has become the whipping boy of the judiciary and opposition political parties as high court after high court has blamed the commission for the current second wave of Covid. The Madras high court observed last week, "Your institution is singularly responsible for the second wave of Covid-19. Election Commission officers should be booked on murder charges probably." The court called the commission the "most irresponsible institution" and chastised it for not stopping election rallies in poll-bound states when the situation "now is of survival and all else comes next."

Early last month, the Calcutta High Court also rapped the Commission. "The Election commission is empowered to act, but what is it doing about polls in these Covid times? The EC is just passing circulars and leaving it to the people. But the EC has implementing authority," the court said. It observed that the Commission "is not doing one-tenth of what TN Seshan (a former CEC) had done". The judges warned that if the Commission did not take action, the court would. The Supreme Court also was critical of the Commission.

Besides the judiciary, the Commission has come under the scanner of experts and analysts. They too have criticized the Commission with the Opposition alleging that the EC is doing the ruling party's bidding. A group of retired bureaucrats and diplomats had written a letter to the President of India on 8 April 2019,



terming the EC as "weak-kneed" and "suffering from a crisis of credibility".

What exactly is the Election Commission? It is an autonomous body created by the Constitution to conduct free and fair polls. The Commission controls the entire process. It grants election symbols and also recognises political parties. It issues a model code of conduct and keeps an eye on the election expenditure of

candidates. There have been allegations of EVMs malfunctioning and not registering votes which corrode public trust in the institution. Its most important function is to ensure there are free and fair elections and the political parties get a level playing field.

There had been many upright Election Commissioners who withstood political pressure. For instance,

R.V.S. Peri Sastri (1986-1990) is credited with reforms like the introduction of EVMs and the reduction in the voting age to 18 years. Rajiv Gandhi who had an uncomfortable relationship with him made the commission into a multi-member body for a brief period but it was P.V. Narasimha Rao who revived the multi-member commission in 1993. Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan (1990-1996) implemented the model code of conduct, reining in muscle and monetary power in elections and also prohibited election propaganda based on religion and caste-based hatred. He kept an eagle eye on a candidate's expenditure. Many former Chief Election Commissioners like S.Y. Qureshi feel there was a need to provide more teeth to the commission.

The opposition points a finger against the commission for being partial. It has also not been able to contain money power and muscle power. Today those who come to parliament and legislatures are mostly moneyed candidates.

Secondly, the EC has no power to regulate political parties and party finances. Some political parties want transparency in the selection of the EC. It is the government that chooses the election commissioners. The second administrative reforms commission had recommended a collegium headed by the Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Law Minister, and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha as members. Late Prime Minister Chandrashekhar

introduced a bill to this effect but his regime was too short.

At a time when the electoral discourse has dipped to such low levels, there is a need for the EC to assure the public about its impartial nature. The EC has sent around 50 reform recommendations to the government, including on rules to decriminalize politics, transparent party funding, paid news, and empowering the EC to countermand an election in cases of bribery.

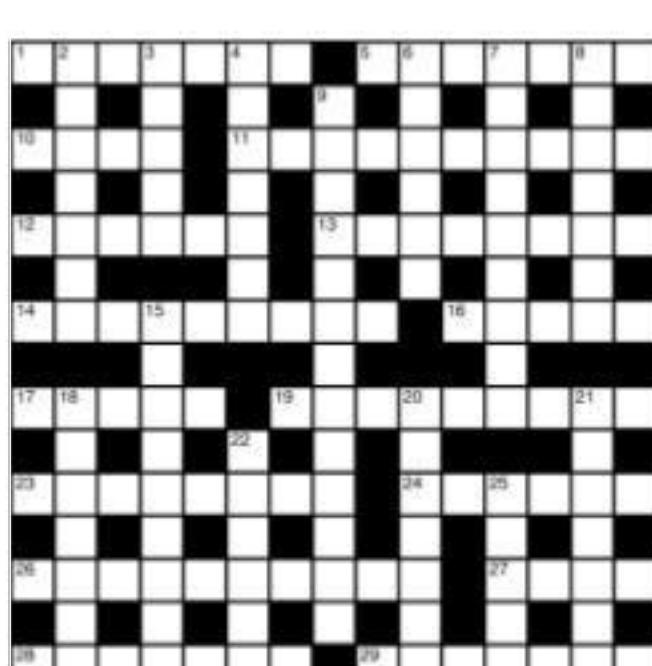
The use of money power has not come down. Total expenditure on the 2019 parliament election is estimated at a staggering Rs 60,000 crore, making it the most expensive poll in the world, more than double the expense in the 2014 polls, according to the Centre for Media Studies (CMS).

It is not all bad as the poll body has taken several new initiatives in the recent past. They include a scheme for use of State-owned Electronic Media by political parties, computerisation of electoral rolls, providing Voter Identity Cards, and various measures for strict compliance with the Model Code of Conduct.

An impartial election commission can go a long way in serving the biggest democracy in the world effectively. To be fair, many of those who presided over the Nirvachan Sadan had been upright and pragmatic officers. Sadly the perception is that it has not remained so and gradually yielded to political pulls and pressures as the courts point out. There is a crisis of credibility. The political parties are reluctant to enforce electoral reforms. What is needed is political will and this is lacking.

NO 28902

**CROSSWORD**



### ACROSS

- Perhaps King is rejected; likewise, the odd bits of Pullman novel (7)
- Salacious dancing leaving us out? (7)
- Instrument with which old boy regularly trimmed novel (4)
- First section of novel copper initially labelled as rather peculiar (10)
- Defraud a character shipwrecked in novel for seafood (6)
- Independent parliamentarian to back hospital department without effect (8)
- Hotel to show former president (4)
- embracing reading? One may go into shock ... (9)
- ... Novel abandoned, he hit "Tweet" (5,5)
- Novel Methuselah's written about himself? (5)
- Informal academic and university fellows taking time with special papers (9)
- Possibly be artful as a novelist (8)
- Talk of young affirming their truth enrages right-wing leaders (6)
- Where suits might be heard ... or certain cases? (10)
- Insiders made money in jazz age Fitzgerald novel (4)

### 28 Comedian's debut novel after leaving the Fringe read aloud and reviewed? (7)

- Pitch a second Plath novel (7)

### DOWN

- Novel about second wife being turned queen by dictating Boris? (7)
- Substance ultimately covered by jam? (5)
- Fresher wants a little paperclip piercing (7)
- Short novel acquired by agent (6)
- Short novel repeatedly describing love for women's footwear (5,4)
- Opposing sides on Armstrong's cycling disgrace (7)
- Novel's pathetic protagonist losing ring but winning old cash (13)
- Endlessly greedy duck caught rowing team and coach again (2-7)
- Modernist novel which introduces a certain Bloom (7)
- Doctor Seuss' extremely loopy novel (7)
- Royal starts to moan about libel after article produced by Heat (7)
- Very European city on the coast is novel's deadly location (6)
- See 16 Across

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

The Commissioner of the Central Division of Bombay Presidency, in addressing the members of the Malegaon Municipality, laid the blame for the recent tragedy at the right door - the seditious propaganda which has attained a currency and an audacity more and more incompatible with the public peace. The question must now be knocking at the conscience of every educated man who, from whatever motive, has permitted himself to be carried away by the propaganda of hatred which has received so great a stimulus from the agitation associated with the name of Mr. Gandhi. It is probable that this ghastly object-lesson has not been lost upon considerable numbers of the Mahatma's followers, and that it will increase the tendency for the educated classes to fall away from the revolutionary movement. Unfortunately the mischief has to a very large extent been done, and those who are now prepared to throw in their lot with the cause of order will find it a good deal more difficult to disabuse the masses of their present delusion than it was to infect them. Nevertheless it is the bounden duty of every person who has anything to lose, whether it be property, money, self-respect, or life itself, to take an active part in combating a movement which must have serious results for all, and may have disastrous results for the poorest and most helpless among us.

### NEWS ITEMS

### BURMA RAILWAY STRIKE SPREADING

Rangoon, May 3  
The railway strike is spreading to stations on the Mandalay and Prome lines, while men employed at Mandalay and other places have joined in. Many loco and traffic subordinates and menials of the Insein, Kemmendine, Banktaw and Pegu yards have also ceased work. A few goods trains are running and the expresses are mostly on time. The suburban service is being run on an emergency time-table. Mr. James Mackenna, Development Commissioner, arrived yesterday from Maymyo to hold an inquiry into the strikes on the Burma Railways. An informal conference was held in his office in the Secretariat building. The Burma Railways Co. have issued a notice stating that owing to the strike the booking of all goods to and from Rangoon is stopped until further notice.

### DARJEELING EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION

At the general meeting of the European Association, Darjeeling Branch Mr. E. Scarth, acting chairman, who presided, welcomed the members present especially the ladies. He said ladies could help by recruiting members, and mentioned what Mrs. Lloyd George had done in Wales. Ladies could also help by writing true accounts of events happening in India to their friends at home, and by sending cuttings from newspapers. It was resolved that the general meeting of the Darjeeling European Association strongly opposes any alteration in the criminal law which would take away the birthright of Britons to be tried by British judiciary and juries, but agrees that the corresponding privilege be granted to Indians of being tried by Indians.

### TRIVIAL EXCUSE FOR HARTAL

Darjeeling, May 3  
A case which was responsible for a hartal, was decided today by Mr. Goode, Deputy Commissioner. Two boys, one of whom is a Hillman, were arrested by the police for restraining on the road a moothi (cobbler) who was going to a wine shop. They were sent up for trial before the Deputy Commissioner, and at once hartal was declared. Today on an application made by the cobbler complainant the case was withdrawn and the accused discharged. The Deputy Commissioner today issued a notice under section 144, Criminal Procedure Code, prohibiting the holding of public meetings in Darjeeling town for a week from date.

### SEDITION CHARGE AGAINST DR. CHOKKAR

Nagpur, May 3  
The cross-examination of Mr. Gajanan Ali, Deputy Superintendent of Police, in Dr. Chokkar's sedition case, is not yet finished. Mr. Abhyankar, barrister, put in a fresh application for the release of the accused on bail. Mr. Dick, Government Advocate, opposed on the ground that the lengthy cross-examination had not affected the merits of the case. The court held that there was no reason to disallow bail as accused was not likely to abscond and there had been at least seven adjournments, for which Dr. Chokkar was not responsible. Dr. Chokkar was released on bail on security of Rs 2,000 and his personal recognisance for an equal amount.





The situation in India is heartbreaking and has the attention of the whole world. It is important that countries and companies pool their resources.

ADITYA MITTAL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ARCELORMITTAL

## THUMBNAILS

# Barclays cuts GDP growth forecast

It estimates 10% GDP growth in FY 2021-22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 3 MAY

**B**laming the slow pace of vaccinations and uncertainty around the number of those infected and dead in the second Covid-19 wave, global brokerage firm Barclays cut India's FY'22 GDP growth estimate to 10 per cent from earlier 11 per cent.

If the ongoing localised lockdowns continue till June, it will lead to economic losses of \$38.4 billion, it said.

In a more pessimistic scenario of the pandemic not being brought under control soon and mobility restrictions continuing till August, the growth can fall to 8.8 per cent, Barclays warned.

The country's economy is estimated to contract by 7.6 per cent in financial year 2020-21 as the pandemic-induced lockdowns led to chilling of economic activity, hurt jobs and demand. The lower base is set to help the economy in posting a faster growth in financial year 2021-22, but the ongoing second wave and resultant localised lockdowns have led many analysts to revise downward their forecasts. The RBI is maintaining that the economy will grow at 10.5 per cent this fiscal.

"As India's second Covid-19 wave continues, there is growing uncertainty around the number of cases and fatalities. Slowing vaccinations are also hurting India's recovery prospects. We lower our FY 2021-22 GDP growth forecast by 1 per cent to 10.0 per cent to reflect this uncertainty," analysts at Barclays said.

India is in the "unwelcome position" of being the centre of the global pandemic now, with infections rising at over 4 lakh a day, it said, pointing out that the geographical area of infections is widening with positivity rates surging in many states.

"At the same time, India's vaccination programme has slowed, toll collection, GST e-way bills volume and railway freight loading have been impacted in the last few weeks, it said.

## ANALYSTS AT BARCLAYS

constraints and logistical challenges," it said, adding that the move to liberalise vaccinations is unlikely to have any impact in the short term.

The economic costs of the current surge in cases are much lower than during last year's national lockdown, but the bill is rising, it said, estimating economic losses of \$38.4 billion, with restrictions likely in place until the end of June.

Meanwhile, analysts at rating agency Crisil said the second wave is closing in on rural India from being concentrated on the urban centres, with nearly a third of new infections coming from the suburban areas now as against 21 per cent in March.

The leading rating agency also feels that daily vaccinations are slowing as vaccine supplies are choked, and the week to 2 May was the third consecutive one with a decline in vaccinations.

As a result of the localised lockdowns, retail mobility, toll collection, GST e-way bills volume and railway freight loading have been impacted in the last few weeks, it said.

# Corporate revenue to grow 21.2% in FY'22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 3 MAY

With the second wave of the pandemic disrupting supply chains for most industries, India Ratings has projected an overall 6 per cent median revenue growth for corporates this fiscal over financial year 2019-20.

However, this will be a high 21.2 per cent over FY'21, the year of the pandemic when half of the year was almost lost in lockdowns; and the forecast is more than its own earlier assumption of 4.4 per cent, though.

The service-oriented sector is the worst hit so far when it comes to supply-side disruption from the second wave of the pandemic, the report said today, adding this has pushed back their recovery beyond the current fiscal.

While FY'22 is likely to be better than FY'20 for most of the sectors due to an improvement in revenue benefiting

largely from elevated prices and pent-up demand resulting in higher volume growth, volatile commodity prices along with interest rates reversal and the rupee fall are likely to cap profitability, the report added.

"Given these, we expect an overall median revenue growth of 6 per cent for corporates in FY'22 over FY'20 and 21.2 per cent over FY'21," India Ratings said, and pointed out this is an increase from its earlier estimate of a median growth of 4.4 per cent, though.

The gains in FY'22 is primarily a result of some level of consolidation resulting in bipolarisation, meaning larger companies growing faster than smaller ones, it said.

Moreover, excess cash used for deleveraging across sectors will result in higher operating leverage supporting the overall credit profile of corporates, the agency noted.

But sectors like pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cement

and steel may witness some capex on account of higher liquidity cushion with them, it added.

Lower revenue growth is likely to test the credit profile in FY'23 due to the moderation in consumption and investment demand outlook and smoothing out of sup-

ply chain issues, and the consequent possible moderation in prices, the rating agency said.

Noting that discretionary bucket is the worst hit, the report says within the essential bucket, telecom is likely to benefit from consolidation while improvement in fer-

tilisers is likely to be driven by expected subsidies, thereby reducing working capital needs.

Within the non-discretionary bucket logistics and ports are likely to see growth on account of expectation of strong GDP growth, the oil and gas sector is likely to witness contraction due to higher commodity prices, and IT and paper sectors are likely to witness an improvement on the back of higher demand, the report said.

Industrials, goods and services, and cyclical sectors like steel, logistics, cement, construction, commercial realty are likely to be marginally better off and may see a recovery in the first half from FY'20 levels.

Within these, iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, cement and engineering, procurement and construction are likely to do better largely benefiting from higher prices and pick-up in volume.

## 75 lakh people lose jobs in April: CMIE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 3 MAY

Covid-19 pandemic has led to a slew of pockets going under lockdown-like situation with only essential activities being allowed, which result in a chill in a bulk of economic activities and a resultant impact on jobs.

I do not know about the peaking of the Covid wave, but I can see stress on the employment front, Vyas said.

What is likely to happen is that unemployment can remain at high levels, he said, adding that the labour force participation rate can also fall. In worst situation, both can happen, Vyas said.

In the month of April, compared to March, we have lost 75 lakh jobs. That is what has caused the jump in the unemployment rate, he said.

The national unemployment touched 7.97 percent as per the Centre's proprietary data, with urban areas witnessing higher stress at 9.78 per cent and rural joblessness at 7.13 per cent.

The country is reporting around 4 lakh new infections a day and over 3,000 deaths. In an address to the nation last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had advised states to look at lockdowns as a last resort, because of its impact on economic activity.

## INDIA RATINGS REPORT



► While FY'22 is likely to be better than FY'20 for most of the sectors due to an improvement in revenue benefiting largely from elevated prices and pent-up demand resulting in higher volume growth, volatile commodity prices along with interest rates reversal and the rupee fall are likely to cap profitability, India Ratings said.

► "Given these, we expect an overall median revenue growth of 6 per cent for corporates in FY'22 over FY'20 and 21.2 per cent over FY'21," it said.

## Ad hoc IGST exemption on import of Covid relief items

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

As the Covid-19 cases are growing rapidly in India, the Central government today decided to give ad hoc exemption from IGST on imports of specified Covid-19 relief material donated from abroad.

In a notification, the government said it is exempting basic customs duty and/or health cess on imports of a number of Covid-19 related relief materials, for a limited period. These materials include Remdesivir injection/ API and Beta Cyclodextrin (SBE-BCD), Inflammatory diagnostic (markers) kits, imports of which have been exempted from customs till 31 October 2021.

The government said the exemption shall apply till 30 June 2021 and it will also cover goods already imported but lying uncleared on the date of its issuance of exemption.

However, the government placed various conditions for the states governments, including appointing of a nodal authority in the state for the purpose of this exemption.

ber of representations from charitable organisations, corporate entities, and other associations/ entities outside India seeking exemption from IGST on the import of Covid-19 relief material

The nodal authority will authorise any entity, relief agency or statutory body, for free distribution of such Covid-relief material.

The said goods can be imported free of cost by a state government or, any entity/ relief agency/ statutory body, authorised in this regard for free distribution anywhere in India. The importer shall before clearance of goods from customs produce a certificate from the said nodal authority that goods are meant for free distribution for Covid relief.

"After imports, the importer shall produce, to the deputy or assistant commissioner of customs at the port within a period of six months from the date of importation or within such extended period not exceeding nine months, a simple statement containing details of goods imported and distributed free of cost. This statement shall be certified by the said nodal authority of the state government," reads the Press release of the finance ministry.

The government said the exemption shall apply till 30 June 2021 and it will also cover goods already imported but lying uncleared on the date of its issuance of exemption.

However, the government placed various conditions for the states governments, including appointing of a nodal authority in the state for the purpose of this exemption.

## IDBI Bank back in black in FY'21 after five years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Gross NPA (non-performing asset) ratio improved to 22.37 per cent as on 31 March 2021 as against 27.53 per cent in the year-ago period. Net NPA improved to 1.97 per cent from 4.19 per cent, IDBI Bank said.

The bank said its recovery from technically written off accounts improved to Rs 269 crore in Q4 FY'21 as against Rs 105 crore in the third quarter FY'21.

Provisions for bad loans and contingencies were raised to Rs 2,457 crore during the reported quarter as against Rs 1,584 crore.

The bank said it has made Covid-related provisions of Rs 363 crore at the end of March 2021.

IDBI Bank shares traded at Rs 36.25 on BSE, up 2.69 per cent from the previous close.

## Stock markets recoup initial losses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 3 MAY

## SENSEX MAKES U-TURN

► After plunging over 750 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE index made a U-turn to finish 63.84 points or 0.13 per cent lower at 48,718.52 points.

► In similar movement, the broader NSE Nifty closed 3.05 points or 0.02 per cent higher at 14,634.15 points.



Bank. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, HUL, Maruti, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, NTPC and Nestle India were among the gainers, climbing up to 3.98 per cent.

"Domestic equities recovered sharply from day's low despite weak global cues. While growing uncertainties about collection efficiency and asset quality of banks/NBFCs dragged heavy weight financials, strong buying in FMCG and metals sup-

ported recovery in markets," said Binod Modi, head strategy at Reliance Securities.

While persistent rise in second wave of Covid-19 cases has weighed on investors' sentiments, steady corporate earnings with positive management's commentaries offered support to markets, he noted.

Sectorally, BSE consumer durables, energy, bankex, oil and gas, realty and finance indices fell up to 1.99 per

cent, while telecom, metal, FMCG, industrials and basic materials closed in the green.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices outperformed the benchmark, spurring as much as 1.57 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Seoul ended on a negative note. Stock exchanges in Shanghai and Tokyo were closed for holidays.

European markets were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.63 per cent lower at \$66.34 per barrel.

In the forex market, the rupee pared its initial losses to settle higher by 14 paise at 73.95 against the US dollar following losses in the American currency in the global markets.

A fall in crude oil prices and positive economic data helped the local unit pare early losses.

## Volvo increases car prices by up to ₹2 lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

India's manufacturing sector activity was largely flat in April, as rates of growth for new orders and output eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

Lima also noted that "the surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices."

The daily Covid-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union health ministry data updated today.

"The headwinds facing manufacturers cannot be ignored, however. The surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when

eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

Lima also noted that "the surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices."

The daily Covid-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union health ministry data updated today.

"The headwinds facing manufacturers cannot be ignored, however. The surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when

## COVID CRISIS HITS OUTPUT

"The PMI results for April showed a further slowdown in rates of growth for new orders and output, both of which eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis. The surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices."

POLLYANNA DE LIMA  
ECONOMICS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT IHS MARKIT

firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices," Lima said.

On the prices front, survey participants also signalled a steep increase in input costs,

and upward revisions to selling prices.

"April saw the steepest increase in input costs for nearly seven years drive the sharpest upturn in output charges since July 2014.

"► The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 55.5 in April, little changed from March's reading of 55.4.  
► In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Data for the coming months will be important at verifying whether client demand is resilient to these challenges or if producers will have to further absorb cost burdens themselves to secure new

work," Lima said.

The survey, however, noted that while output and sales increased at the slowest rates since last August due to an intensification of the Covid-19 crisis, there was a faster upturn in international orders.

New export orders increased for the eighth consecutive month in April and at the fastest rate since October 2020. The rise was associated with a pick-up in international demand for Indian goods, the survey said.

On the job front, although manufacturing employment continued to fall, the rate of contraction recorded in April was marginal and the weakest in the current 13-month sequence of job shedding, it noted.

## Factory production growth at 8-mth low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA, 3 MAY

factory output growth for April was 55.5, little changed from March's reading of 55.4.

We're bringing more vaccines; no matter how much money is required, we'll bring more vaccines.

BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA  
WHILE INAUGURATING THE DISBURSEMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MARGINALISED FAMILIES

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 04 MAY 2021

09

# Nepal PM Oli to seek vote of confidence on 10 May

Oli's decision comes at a time when Nepal is grappling with second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 3 MAY

**N**ePAL's embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli will seek a vote of confidence from Parliament on 10 May in his bid to stay in power.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, on the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, summoned a Parliament session on 10 May to obtain a vote of confidence in his government, according to an official statement on Sunday.

The 69-year-old, requires at least 136 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament, to win the confidence motion as four members are currently under suspension.

During a Cabinet meeting on Sunday, Oli said that he would try to win the trust of Parliament to stay in power.



Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli waves after casting his vote in an election for Nepal's new president in Kathmandu. ■ AP

Oli's decision comes amid the current chaotic state of political affairs in the country that emerged since the Prime Minister's controversial move to dissolve the House of Representatives in December last year.

The Prime Minister will seek a vote of confidence on 10 May, Lila Nath Shrestha, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, told

ty for other parties to form the government otherwise the country will move in the direction of the snap poll, he said.

Prime Minister Oli's decision to seek a confidence vote comes at a time when Nepal is grappling with the effects of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The country on Sunday reported a record 7,137 new cases of the coronavirus, the highest daily surge. The national tally has crossed 329,000-mark. The death toll now stands at 3,325.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on 20 December last year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on 30 April and 10 May at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Oli's move to dissolve the House sparked protests from

a large section of the NCP led by his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', also a co-chair of the ruling party.

In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House of Representatives, in a setback to embattled Prime Minister Oli who was preparing for snap polls.

A five-member Constitutional bench led by Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher JBR annulled the government's decision to dissolve the lower house of Parliament and ordered the government to summon the House session within the next 13 days.

Oli repeatedly defended his move to dissolve the House of Representatives, saying some leaders of his party were attempting to form a "parallel government". As many as 13 writ petitions were filed at the apex court seeking the restoration of the lower house of Parliament.

## Bangladesh speedboat crash kills 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, 3 MAY

An overcrowded speedboat ferrying over 30 passengers and defying the Covid-19 restrictions capsized after hitting a stationary sand-laden cargo vessel in the Padma River on Monday, leaving at least 26 people dead, a senior Bangladesh police officer said.

The accident occurred at the old Kanthalbari ferry terminal in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur at around 8 am.

The boat, driven by an inexperienced driver, overturned in the Padma River in central Bangladesh while heading for Madaripur district from Munshiganj dis-



enclosed under age boy.

demic situation, the report quoted Madaripur Deputy Commissioner Rahima Khatun as saying.

Bangladesh is under lock-down until Wednesday to stem the spread of coronavirus.

The accident occurred as there was not sufficient light in the morning and also the driver was not skilled enough, Khatun said.

Asix-member inquiry com-

mittee has been formed to investigate the accident.

Hundreds of people die each year in maritime accidents in Bangladesh, a low-lying country that has extensive inland waterways and lax safety standards.

## B'desh extends lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DHAKA, 3 MAY

Bangladesh on Monday extended ongoing nationwide lockdown till May 16 to contain the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bangladesh clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown on 5 April, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country. The restrictions were later extended till 28 April, then till 5 May.

"The Cabinet has decided to further extend the lockdown

till 16 May," Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told a media briefing here.

Islam said inter-district bus, train and ferry services would remain suspended until that timeline but public transports would be allowed to operate within cities maintaining health guidelines after 5 May, when the latest round of the lockdown was scheduled to end.

The government will also monitor shopping centres and malls for strict compliance to health safety guidelines, put in place to contain Covid-19 spread, he said.

## Philippines protests patrol ships 'blocking' by China

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MANILA, 3 MAY

The Philippine government has protested the Chinese coast guard's harassment of Philippine coast guard ships patrolling a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Monday.

It was the latest of dozens of recent protests by Manila's foreign affairs department, along with increasingly acerbic remarks by the country's top diplomat and defense chief about Chinese actions in the disputed waters.

The high-profile feud has escalated despite President Rodrigo Duterte's friendly stance toward China. Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. used an obscene phrase in a tweet demanding China to get out of Philippine-claimed areas. "What are you doing to our friendship?"

Locsin asked. "You're like an ugly oaf forcing your attentions on a handsome guy who wants to be a friend," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana rejected China's demand that the Philippines end its patrols in the disputed region.

While we acknowledge

that China's military capability is more advanced than ours, this does not prevent us from defending our national interests and our dignity as a people with all that we have, Lorenzana said in a video message on late Sunday.

In the latest incident, the Department of Foreign Affairs said it has protested the shadowing, blocking, dangerous maneuver and radio challenges by the Chinese coast guard of Philippine coast guard vessels conducting legitimate maritime patrols and training exercises from 24 April to 25.

## Myanmar's Kachin rebels shoot down military helicopter

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
YANGON, 3 MAY

Arunachal Pradesh state informed that the helicopter was brought down by rebel anti-aircraft fire at Momauk in Kachin state at 10.20 am local Myanmar time on Monday.

The unit's chief liaison officer Naw Bu said the direct hit on the helicopter scared away two Burmese air force jets which were strafing the KIA base in the vicinity.

He said that helicopter crashed near Konglaw village after getting hit by anti-aircraft fire in its tail rotor.

## Pakistani journalists' group vows to fight for press freedom

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISLAMABAD, 3 MAY

The media is facing growing censorship, attacks and harassment in Pakistan that are threatening freedom of the press, a committee of journalists said Monday.

The government said there are no curbs on journalists in the country.

But Pakistan has long been a dangerous place for journalists. There were 148 documented attacks or violations against journalists in Pakistan from May 2020 to April 2021, an increase over previous years, according to The Dawn, the country's English-language newspaper.

It said these incidents included six murders, seven attempted assassinations, five kidnappings, 25 arrests or detentions of journalists, 15 assaults and 27 legal cases registered against journalists.

In an editorial marking World Press Freedom Day, the paper said the space for journalists in Pakistan was shrinking, and a media in chains cannot hold the powerful account and serve public interest as it is meant to do.

Pakistan has long been a deadly place for journalists. In 2020, it ranked ninth on the Committee to Protect Journalists' annual Global Impunity Index, which assesses countries where journalists are

murdered regularly and their killers go free.

According to the CPJ, Bangladesh, Russia and India are ahead of Pakistan. Although the Pakistan government says it supports freedom of speech, rights activists often accuse Pakistan's military and its agencies of harassing and attacking journalists.

On Monday, President of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Shahzada Zulfiqar and Secretary-General Nasir Zaidi said freedom of the press is their hallmark and they will not surrender this cause at any cost. They said journalists were also facing cuts in pay and thousands had become jobless.

## Rhino poachers back after SAfrica eases lockdown restrictions

AGENCIES  
JOHANNESBURG, 3 MAY

Rhino poaching is on the rise again in South Africa since the government loosened coronavirus restrictions, following a year-long lull due to the pandemic, wildlife parks say.

The strict limits on travel, including international travel, imposed in March last year had the happy side effect of keeping poachers at bay. In 2020, 394 rhinos were poached, 30 percent fewer than the year before and the lowest yearly tally since 2011. But then South Africa began easing international travel restrictions in November.

"Since November, December last year and into 2021, this landscape and particularly

Kruger National Park has been experiencing serious numbers of rhino poaching incidents," said Jo Shaw, the Africa Rhino Lead for WWF International Network. She declined to say how many incidents had occurred.

"There is a very real and

realized threat as poaching pressure has increased since lockdown perhaps to meet the demand from the international markets," she said. Rhino poaching often involves both local poachers and international criminal syndicates that smuggle the high-value commodity across borders, often to Asia where demand

is high.

Their methods are cruel: Therhinos are usually shot with a tranquiliser gun before the horn is hacked off, resulting in the animal being left to bleed to death. Reserves, which have been battling tighter budgets amid a coronavirus-induced lull in tourism, have also been forced to cut back on anti-poaching patrols, compounding the threat to rhinos.

Some reserves use dehorning as one of the methods to prevent armed poachers from taking advantage of easier cross-border travel. Veterinarians cut the horn at the stub, rather than removing it all, which prevents the rhino from bleeding to death. Balule Nature Reserve, located in

the greater Kruger system has de-horned 100 rhinos since April 2019.

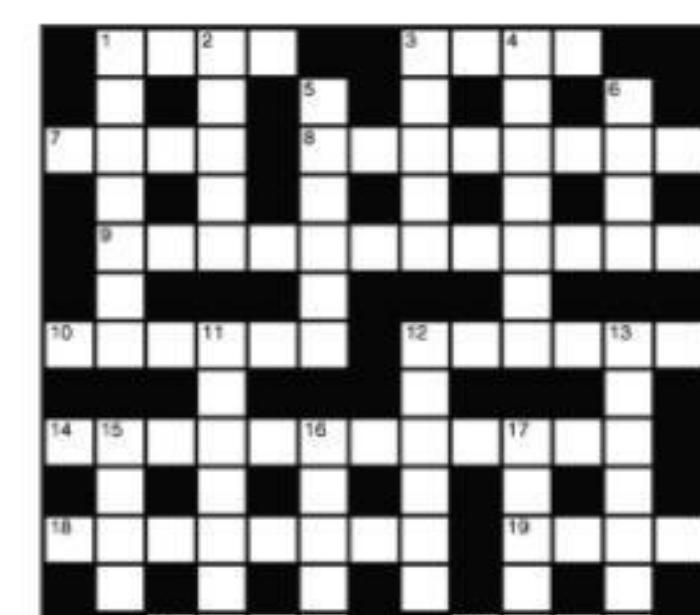
The country's environmental ministry is expected to release its 2021 half-year poaching figures at the end of June.

"As restrictions over time have become less, there has been an uptick in poaching as a result," said Julian Rademeyer, director of the organised crime observatory for East and Southern Africa at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime.

South Africa has about 16,000 rhinos located within its borders, Frances Craigie, chief director of enforcement at the environmental ministry said.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

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*What we've witnessed over the last several years is China acting more repressively at home and more aggressively abroad*

US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN  
ON US-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

## THUMBNAILS



Farmers work in a tulip field in Meerdonk, Belgium on Monday. Most tulips in the region are grown specifically for the bulbs and not the flowers. AP

**Palestine attack:** Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank overnight, setting bank fires and hurling stones, Palestinian officials said Monday. Israeli security forces arrested 11 people and four people were wounded by rubber bullets. AP

**UN program links Moderna deal:** Moderna and vaccine promoter Gavi have announced a firm deal by which the pharmaceutical company will provide up to 500 million doses for the UN-backed program to ship coronavirus vaccines to needy people in low- and middle-income countries by the end of 2022. AP

**7 killed in Taliban attack:** Taliban insurgents attacked an army outpost in Afghanistan's south-western Farah province killing at least seven soldiers, local officials said on Monday, as the country braces for violence after May 1, a previously agreed deadline for foreign troop withdrawal. AP

**Mourners gathering for Andrew Brown Jr's funeral**

ELIZABETH CITY, 3 MAY

Mourners will gather on Monday for the funeral of Andrew Brown Jr., a Black man shot and killed by deputies in North Carolina, with eulogists planning to celebrate his legacy and reflect on his life.

The invite-only service at noon in a church in Elizabeth City follows public viewings the previous day.

The Rev. Al Sharpton will deliver the eulogy, and other speakers will include Brown's relatives as well as civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who's representing Brown's family, and the Rev. William Barber II, leader of the Poor People's campaign.

Brown, 42, was shot and killed on April 21 by deputies attempting to serve drug-related search and arrest warrants, sparking days of protests in the city in rural northeastern North Carolina.

An independent autopsy commissioned by his family said that he was shot five times, including once in the back of the head.

Family members have said that Brown was a proud father of seven, who was known for entertaining relatives with his stories and jokes.

Brown's family asked Sharpton to deliver the eulogy because they felt the civil rights leader would properly honour his legacy.

Sharpton recently delivered the eulogy for Daunte Wright, who was shot and killed by a police officer in Minnesota. AP

# Biden recalls Bin Laden raid, vows to prevent terror attack on USA

Bin Laden was hunted down and killed by US special operation forces on 1 May, 2011 in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 3 MAY

The US will never waver in its commitment to prevent another terror attack on the country and to keep the American people safe, President Joe Biden has vowed, as he marked the 10th anniversary of the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.

The Al-Qaeda leader who evaded justice for 10 years after the terror attacks of 11 September, 2001 met his end in a covert raid by US special operations forces on 1 May, 2011 in the Pakistani garrison city of Abbottabad.

In a statement on Sunday, Biden, then Vice President, recalled that he joined President Barack Obama and members of the national security team, crowded into the Situation Room of the White House in 2011 to watch as the US military delivered long-awaited justice to bin Laden.

"It is a moment I will never forget," Biden said, while praising the intelligence professionals who had painstakingly tracked Bin Laden down; the clarity and conviction of President Obama in making the call; the courage and skill of the American team on the ground.

"It had been almost ten years since our nation was attacked on 9/11 and we went to war in Afghanistan, pursuing Al-Qaeda and its leaders. We followed Bin Laden to the gates of hell and we got him."

"We kept the promise to all those who lost loved ones on 9/11: that we would never forget those we had lost, and that the United States will



never waver in our commitment to prevent another attack on our homeland and to keep the American people safe," the president said.

Biden noted that as a result of the efforts taken by the US, his administration was bringing to an end the country's longest war and draw down the last of the American troops from Afghanistan where al Qaeda is now a "greatly degraded" terror group.

The US and NATO formally began withdrawing their last troops from Afghanistan on Saturday, according to White House and military officials.

President Biden set May 1, 2021 as the official date on which the remaining troops would begin pulling out, although the military has been flying equipment out of the country in recent weeks, according to US media reports.

There are between 2,500-3,500 US troops and about 7,000 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) soldiers remaining in Afghanistan, the last of whom will leave the war-torn country by the end of September.

Under a deal signed last year between the Taliban militants and the administration of former president Donald Trump, foreign forces were

to have left by 1 May while the Taliban held off attacking international troops.

Biden last month pushed back the 1 May pullout, saying some troops would stay until September 11 this year, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, citing the security situation.

In his statement on Sunday, Biden said the US will "remain vigilant about the threat from terrorist groups that have metastasized around the world. We will continue to monitor and disrupt any threat to us that emerges from Afghanistan," he said.

Biden said the US will work to counter terrorist threats to "our homeland and our interests in cooperation with allies and partners around the world."

Some 2,442 American troops have been killed, according to the US Defense Department, along with an estimated 3,800 US private security contractors. Over 1,400 troops from NATO countries have been killed.

The US is estimated to have spent over USD 2 trillion in Afghanistan during the course of the war, according to the Costs of War project.

The US and NATO allies entered Afghanistan on 7 October, 2001, to find the al-Qaeda perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US who were being protected by the Taliban leaders in Kabul.

Two months later, al Qaeda leader bin Laden and his fighters were on the run. The world's most-wanted terrorist was finally located and killed in 2011 by US Navy SEALS in Pakistan.

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Otherwise Democrats may have to settle for a compro-

## US begins reuniting families separated at Mexico border

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SAN DIEGO, 3 MAY

The Biden administration on Monday said that four families that were separated at the Mexico border during Donald Trump's presidency will be reunited in the United States this week in what Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas calls just the beginning of a broader effort.

Two of the four families include mothers who were separated from their children in 2017, one Honduran and another Mexican, Mayorkas said, declining to detail their identities.

He described them as children who were three-years-old at the time and teenagers who have had to live without their parent during their most formative years.

Parents will return to the United States on humanitarian parole while authorities consider other longer-term forms of legal status, said Michelle Brané, executive director of the administration's Family Reunification Task Force. The children are already in the US.

Exactly how many families will reunite in the United States and in what order is linked to negotiations with the American Civil Liberties Union to settle a fed-

eral lawsuit in San Diego, but Mayorkas said there were more to come.

"We continue to work tirelessly to reunite many more children with their parents in the weeks and months ahead," Mayorkas told reporters. "We have a lot of work still to do, but I am proud of the progress we have made and the reunifications that we have helped to achieve this week."

More than 5,000 children were separated from their parents during the Trump administration going back to 1 July, 2017, many of them under a zero-tolerance policy to criminally prosecute any adult who entered the country illegally, according to court filings.

The Biden administration is doing its own count going back to Trump's inauguration in January 2017 and, according to Brané, believes more than 1,000 families remain separated.

While family separation under zero-tolerance ended in June 2018 under court order and shortly after Trump reversed course, Biden has repeatedly assailed the practice as an act of cruelty. An executive order on his first day in office pledged to reunite families that were still separated to the greatest extent possible.

## Britain hosts G7 foreign ministers' meeting

AGENCIES  
LONDON, 3 MAY

Foreign ministers of the G7 rich countries gather in London on Monday for their first in-person meeting since the Covid-19 pandemic began, with British host Dominic Raab opening with talks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Raab and Blinken are also expected to discuss ongoing trade talks with the United States as Britain seeks a so-far elusive deal, touted by PM Boris Johnson as one of the biggest opportunities opened by quitting the European Union.

**Girls' education, women's employment focus at G7** A commitment of \$15 billion to help women in developing countries access jobs and global targets to get girls into school will be the UK's focus for the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meeting, which begins in London on Monday.

Ensuring girls get 12 years of quality education and women can work and earn an income are some of the smartest investments we can make to change the world, transforming the fortunes not just of individuals, but whole communities and nations, said Dominic Raab.

In addition to the G7 members Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, Britain has also invited ministers from Australia, India, South Africa and South Korea this week. Meetings will kick off with dinner on Monday evening.

Before that, Raab and Blinken will meet to discuss shared goals. Britain is keen to capitalise on Biden's willingness to re-engage with global efforts to fight climate change, and to restore a nuclear deal with Iran.

Raab said on Sunday that the G7 would look at a proposal to build a rapid response mechanism to counter Russian disinformation, and in a reference to China, spoke of the need to stand up for open markets and democracy.

"On all of these areas we

want to be absolutely firm, and standing shoulder to shoulder not just with Americans, as important as they are, but also with our wider allies – that's why the G7 is so important," Raab said.

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"On all of these areas we

### BATTING FOR LIFE



Covid-19 patients rest at the Dr. Norberto Raul Placentini hospital, in Lomas de Zamora, Argentina, amid the new coronavirus pandemic. As Argentina experiences record Covid-19 tolls, hospitals struggle to keep up with the demand. AP

## Democrats seek narrow path to rein in cost of medicines

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 3 MAY

President Joe Biden's call for authorising Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices has energised Democrats on a politically popular idea they've been pushing for nearly 20 years only to encounter frustration.

But they still lack a clear path to enact legislation. That's because a small number of Democrats remain uneasy over government price curbs on pharmaceutical companies.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer will need every Democratic vote in a narrowly divided Congress.

Otherwise Democrats may have to settle for a compro-

mise that stops short of their goal. Or they could take the issue into the 2022 midterm elections. There is a path, said Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., one of Pelosi's lieutenants. But there's also a challenge, and the challenge is we've got razor-thin margins.

This is not a done deal, continued Welch. We've got a president and a speaker, but pharma's very powerful. Pharma is a nickname for the industry and for its main lobbying group, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA.

The industry thwarted President Donald Trump's multi-pronged efforts to constrain its pricing power. Even though Trump came into office accusing drugmakers and insurers of getting away with murder"



and vowing he'd put a stop to it, the companies emerged from his term with just a few nicks and cuts.

The industry lobbying group PhRMA is considered one of the most skilled operators in Washington. Its mission: to preserve a clause in the 2003 law that created Medicare's pharmacy benefit barring the government from interfering in price negotiations among drugmakers and insurers. That was enacted before USD 1,000 pills

became old hat.

PhRMA CEO Stephen Ubl served notice after Biden's speech to Congress last week that the industry stands ready to defend its prerogative.

Giving the government the power to arbitrarily determine the price of medicines is not the right approach, he said in a statement arguing that it would stifle innovation. Such measured language belies the group's clout. It's usually among the top five spenders on Washington lobbying and networks with allied groups in the states.

I don't think anybody is fully prepared for the onslaught we expect from PhRMA, said Margarida Jorge, campaign director for Lower Drug Prices Now, a coalition backing Medicare negotiations.

## New Zealand PM says, Differences with China becoming harder to reconcile

AGENCIES  
WELLINGTON, 3 MAY

Differences between New Zealand and its top trading partner China are becoming harder to reconcile as Beijing's role in the world grows and changes, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday.

The comments come as New Zealand faces pressure from some elements among Western allies over its reluctance to use the Five Eyes intelligence and security alliance to criticise Beijing.

In a speech at the China Business Summit in Auckland, Ardern said there are things on which China and New Zealand "do not, cannot, and will not agree", but added these differences need not define their relationship.

"It will not have escaped the attention of anyone here that as China's role in the world grows and changes, the differences between our systems and the interests and values that shape those systems are becoming harder to reconcile," Ardern said.

"This is a challenge that we, and many other countries across the Indo-Pacific region, but also in Europe and other regions, are also grappling with," she added.

In comments that sparked some reaction among Western allies, Foreign Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta said last month she was uncomfortable expanding the role of Five Eyes, which includes

China, which takes almost one-third of New Zealand's exports, has accused the Five Eyes of ganging up on it by issuing statements on Hong Kong and the treatment of ethnic Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang. New Zealand's parliament on Tuesday is set to look at a motion put forward by a small party to declare the situation in Xinjiang as a genocide.

Ardern said New Zealand would continue to speak about these issues individually as well as through its partners, noting that managing the relationship with China is not always going to be easy. China's Ambassador to New Zealand, Wu Xi, warned that Hong Kong and Xinjiang related issues were China's internal affairs.

## Tornadoes cause damage in Mississippi; Tupelo hit at night

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YAZOO CITY, MISSISSIPPI, 3 MAY

Multiple tornadoes were reported across Mississippi on Sunday, destroying homes and uprooting trees. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Just south of Yazoo City, Vickie Savel looked at the remains of her brand new mobile home, where she and her husband had just moved in eight days ago. It was her first new home in 40 years, and it had been lifted off its foundation, moved about 25 feet (7.6 meters) and was completely destroyed.

"Oh my God, my first new house in 40 years and it's

## SUCHETA CHATTERJEE

**I**t barely warrants mention that the pandemic has wrought umpteen uncertainties in the lives of students worldwide. With travel curbs in place across the globe, Indian students are finding it increasingly difficult to study abroad.

Given this situation, Stavi Baram, director of the office for international academic affairs, Ben-Gurion University International, Israel, says that her university is welcoming graduate students from around 75 countries to study in its vibrant campuses. With health insurance for spouses and family members, interesting courses like desert science and Israel studies, and various scholarships, the public research university is emerging as a prospective destination for students from these shores.

Baram was also the founding administrative director of BGU's Medical School for International Health in collaboration with the Columbia University Medical Center, U.S. Excerpts from an interview:

### Generally, students from India opt for universities in the West. Why should they look at your university to study abroad?

As a student, the main concern with studying overseas is the quality of the institution they will attend. With several universities ranked amongst the highest in the world, excellent colleges and research institutes, Israel offers a high-quality academic experience.

Our entire academic faculty at BGU have studied or completed their post-doctoral position overseas, the majority in leading institutions in North America. Thus, they have connections and research collaboration across the globe. They regularly publish their results in international scientific journals.

For students, studies in Israel are much more affordable than in the U.S., especially if we are looking at our international graduate students, who receive scholarships and, on completing their PhD, can easily find a place for a post-doctoral programme at leading universities across the globe.

The open and friendly atmosphere that characterises the university, along with the commitment to academic excellence and social involvement, encourages researchers and students to act creatively and freely to advance science, culture, and society, and push boundaries in research.

### How does the campus life of the university influence learning?

The university is at the heart of a unique ecosystem where higher education, advanced technologies, industry, business, healthcare, municipality and government come together to develop ground-breaking research

and new applications for the market.

International students from over 75 countries enjoy a full calendar of activities and events, and a variety of clubs and organisations. Besides, we provide Hebrew lessons, volunteering opportunities and a range of joint activities and courses with Israeli students. Living in on-campus housing with Israeli students as roommates, international students get to experience Israeli culture first-hand by forging friendship and building memories.

### What sort of student support is in place? Who are eligible for it?

All students are eligible to live in campus dormitories throughout the duration of their studies at subsidised rates. Additionally, various scholarships are available for students depending on the academic programme.

### Which are some of the more popular courses for international students?

BGU International students study a range of different topics, from desert science to engineering, as well as Israel studies and business and management. Several faculties of the university offer courses taught in English, including full-degree programmes for graduate students.

### What are the initiatives for spouse and family support at the university?

BGU International supports students coming with spouses and families by assisting them with all visas necessary for each member of the family for the duration of the studies. The university will also arrange for health insurance for all.

There is a day-care facility on the campus grounds, and students arriving with family will receive guidance in finding the proper schooling for their children. All university students are members of the university sports centre and their spouses can also receive discounted membership.

### How will international students be affected by the Covid situation in Israel? Are students from abroad also eligible to get vaccinated?

We set up vaccination stations for everyone at the campus late February and were able to achieve targets quite successfully. Our campus has reopened, including the labs and classrooms, for anyone who has a vaccine or a negative Covid test result.

### What are the unique activities that international students can take part in?

Above and beyond the general student activities that take place on campus and are open to all international students, BGU International organises a range of different activities throughout the year.

# 'Our university is at the heart of a unique ecosystem'

**In this interview, Stavi Baram of Israel's Ben-Gurion University of the Negev speaks about how students from abroad can work freely to advance science, culture and society**



The BGU Student Union has a liaison with international students, who organise specific activities for them, which are meant to bring together international and local Israeli students. All the activities are offered free of charge.

### How can students use their time at the university to make themselves more employable?

Students who conduct research or complete a degree programme at BGU will gain expertise to work in their field. In addition, they have ample opportunities to create experiences. Our campus community emboldens students to join extracurricular activities, including volunteer programmes, which can translate to valuable real-life experience when searching for employment.

### What is special about BGU's Medical School for International Health?

The Medical School for Interna-

tional Health at BGU offers a small and challenging four-year programme that prepares students to practice medicine in the U.S. and around the world as well as across cultural, geographic and technological boundaries. Our residency match rates parallel top medical programmes in the U.S., with 100 per cent students matched successfully in 2018.

We provide medical rotations and clerkships in Israeli medical centres serving patients from a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities and religious and socio-economic backgrounds. We also expose our students to challenging yet exciting eight week-long global health clerkships at sites around the world during the fourth year, with past sites including Ethiopia, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Canada.

The writer is a staff member, Features, The Statesman, Kolkata

## PLUS POINTS

### Medical innovation



Fore School of Management announced the development of a prototype, inexpensive nail-fold capillaroscopy for early detection of cardio-metabolic disease recently. The institution also shared that their innovation will help in the early detection of diabetes and that it has received a patent grant from IP Australia – an industry, innovation and science dedicated agency.

Assistant professor Vinayak Mishra, a faculty member of Fore, is the "ideator" of this device in association with a team of 12 proficient researchers and doctors. Understanding that the early detection of the disease plays a pivotal role in its management, Mishra was motivated to develop a tool with his expertise and experience that will help with diabetic retinal screening, that too at an affordable pricing.

### Unique house



Nirmala Sitharaman, Union minister of finance and corporate affairs, virtually inaugurated India's first 3D printed house constructed at IIT-Madras campus by Tvasta Manufacturing Solutions, a deep tech startup founded by IIT-Madras Alumni.

With a built-area of about 600 sq ft, the single-storey home has a functional space comprising a single bedroom, hall and kitchen, with the entire ensemble being designed, developed and realised by Tvasta's indigenous "Concrete 3D Printing" Technology. The house was developed in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Centre for Innovation in Shelter. A video of the 3D printed house can be found on this link – <https://youtu.be/3EHAeo0bm10>

### Promoting art



Ibentos – an event tech virtual platform – organised a national level workshop called Chitram, introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education and hosted by Delhi Public School, Nizamabad Secunderabad recently. The virtual event witnessed a turnout of 8,100 CBSE teachers from across India participating in the art workshop and 8,200 students participating in the art contest.

The event was streamed live for two days reaching out to thousands of teachers, students and art enthusiasts. Day one laid the foundation for the workshop by eminent artists followed by multidisciplinary group activities and presentations by teachers on various components of art. Day two witnessed the competition with hands-on demonstration-cum-training by renowned artists on various topics like still life, abstract art and landscapes.

### Exam stress

SkillingIndia – a new age employability and career growth skills development organisation – hosted a "Exam Stress Management" webinar series in association with colleges like Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College Udupi, VET First Grade College Bangalore, AVVM Sri Pushpam College Thianjavur, Besant College, MLA Academy of Higher Learning Bangalore and Guru Nanak Dev Engineering College Bidar recently. The objective of the webinar was to build skills among students to manage exam stress and develop a learning mindset.

More than 600 students across Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra benefitted from it.

The experts on counselling and psychology from SkillingIndia and Peakmind.in addressed students during the workshops. The sessions covered why and how stress happens, causes of stress, signs of being stressed out, coping strategy, awareness and relaxing techniques to deal with stress.

## MANAGING DATA AT WORKPLACES

**When it comes to automating business practices, content services platforms help with efficient information capture and transformation**

ISAAC RAJKUMAR

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic continues to drive digital initiatives, accelerating the growth of an exponential amount of information that is being created and consumed. A recent report by the International Data Corporation's Global Data Sphere predicted that more than 59 zettabytes of data would be created and consumed in 2020, with a 26 per cent compounded growth rate predicted till 2024. The next three years of data generation and consumption will eclipse that of the previous 30 years combined.

This growth in information is presenting organisations with new challenges in terms of its impact on employee performance and productivity. It's not just the sheer volume of digital information that is presenting challenges to organisations across India. There is value and risk in all of it. The value can only be realised if the information is analysed, classified and easily accessible to the workers who need it. The risk can only be minimised through comprehensive application of legally defensible governance and compliance policies.

It's a reality that's been gaining steam for a decade now, but one forced into sharp focus by the events of 2020. Entire teams and functional groups now work remotely, with many struggling to access the information they need to collaborate efficiently, make decisions, and keep processes moving smoothly.

Many of the tactics they're now utilising to do their jobs are beyond the oversight of organisational governance rules. Daily work is done on

unsecured personal computers, documents are shared via public file-sharing services, and sensitive intellectual property and personal information is circulated freely in the name of getting the job done.

This new world of work is here to stay. The onus is on organisations to transform digitally to meet the productivity and governance needs of changing work styles and evolving operational models. Fortunately, a new set of next-generation information management tools is available.

### Content services

Traditionally, most enterprises have implemented standalone enterprise content management platforms to aggregate and manage as much information as possible. The types and volumes of digital information, however, have grown exponentially and addressing its value and risk has become a critical priority. Hence business needs have outstripped the capabilities of traditional ECM. That is where content services technology comes in.

Content services technology is a series of platforms, applications and components, all designed to layer over an existing content management infrastructure. Together, they work to help enterprises achieve optimal information management, distribution and governance.

Implemented on an as-needed basis, such platforms and applications form a multi-faceted backbone that connects content to businesses through integration and information flows. Its technology builds bridges between central content management platforms and the applications



that power enterprise resource planning, business process management, supply chain management, customer relationship management and other critical processes.

The applications are purpose-built to perform specific tasks. Some are as wide-ranging as automated document management, records management, and workflow management. Others focus on specific tasks such as capture, analytics or archiving.

An important component of it is the simple integration with leading business applications that are instrumental in driving business processes. This integration creates information flows, allowing content and data to be automatically distributed to users who need it.

Instead of resorting to a separate system to access content, it is made available directly within the interface of the system workers are familiar with using. Thus, employees can work within their core systems, with more productive outcomes.

Through integration, the platforms can automatically classify content based on the process it relates to and enrich it with additional metadata from the lead business application. Surrounding content with rich metadata provides context, improving its

value to the organisation. Rich metadata provides a fertile landscape for analysis and automation. This integration also enhances enterprise governance, extending rules and protocols into previously isolated pools of content and data.

Finally, content services platforms are scalable and adaptable in ways legacy systems cannot be. They allow organisations to shift processes and information to the cloud at a pace that's comfortable for them. Development of custom-built applications becomes easier as users can focus on the specific capabilities needed to complete their task.

### Key capabilities

Today there is a far greater emphasis on delivering simple, intuitive user experience based around contextual and business-specific content delivery. The best content services platforms provide an easy-to-use, effortlessly configurable and role-based interface.

The platforms help in efficient content capture and transformation, not only from paper to digital but also from a wide range of electronic content sources and media types, including email, file shares, enterprise applications and social media. It is an

essential first step in automating business processes and simplifying traditional tasks like document management, records management and compliance.

A centralised, enterprise-wide records management policy applied to content in isolated applications provides efficient, structured and transparent governance from creation and capture through to disposition. It also ensures compliance and reduces audit and litigation risk.

Intelligent data classification allows content to be organised and tagged for quick retrieval, records management and compliance. Common, centrally managed data classification and categorisation features include intelligent metadata managers, optical character recognition/intelligent character recognition file tagging and policy or roles-based classification.

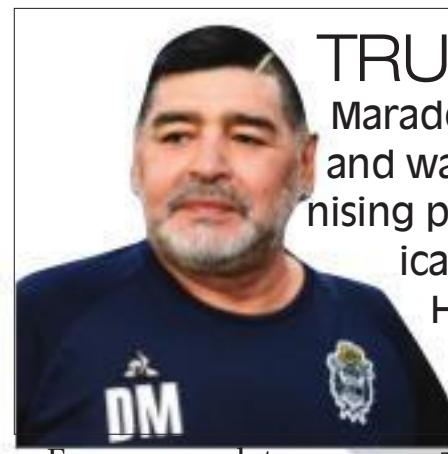
The platforms offer seamless integration into enterprise and line-of-business systems to increase productivity. This helps boost collaboration within the organisation and with partners and customers. Offering powerful, context-driven search functionality, they enable users to consume content on demand within the context of their business processes.

Today, every organisation – especially those in heavily regulated industries – are faced with an increasingly complex and expanding regulatory environment. A content services platform can easily adapt to the most stringent information of governance policies and procedures as well as ensure compliance according to industry standards and regulations.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and analytics has added a new dimension to what such platforms can deliver. For example, blending structured and unstructured data to achieve actionable insight to boost productivity and improve decision-making.

Organisations should be able to deploy content services in a way that best suits their needs and requirements, whether on-premises, cloud or via a hybrid combination of both. Such platforms should also be mobile-enabled to enhance access.

The writer is managing director, India, and vice president, engineering, OpenText



## TRUTH WILL OUCH

Maradona received inadequate medical care and was left to his fate for a prolonged, agonising period before he died last year, a medical panel has said in a 70-page document. He "started to die at least 12 hours before" the moment he was found dead in his bed.

[www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

For more updates

## THUMBNAILS

Match cancelled: A charity Twenty20 cricket match in Sri Lanka aimed at raising money to help fight the coronavirus pandemic was cancelled on Sunday as Upul Tharanga, former Test captain, had tested positive, the country's governing body for the sport said.

Relay victims: Six people who had helped with Japan's Olympic Torch relay were diagnosed with Covid-19, bringing the total number of participants in the event who got the coronavirus to eight. The six included a man in his 20s and another man in his 30s.

Covid substitute: Somerset's Jack Brooks became English county cricket's first Covid-19 substitute when he replaced Lewis Gregory on the third day of their Championship match against Middlesex. His girlfriend, a member of his household bubble, had felt unwell.

Proposal rejected: Boxing Federation of India high-performance director Santiago Nieva's proposal to shift the national camp to Italy to prepare the men and women's teams for this month's Asian Boxing Championships has not been okayed by the BFI executive board.

Abahani out: Abahani have expressed their displeasure and disappointment at not being able to participate in this year's Asian Football Confederation Cup as their continued inability to host Club Eagles resulted in the Maldives team being waved through.

Double delight: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice late to rescue a 2-1 win for Juventus at Udinese on Sunday hours after the Turin giants had lost their Serie A crown to Inter Milan. Inter broke Juve's streak of domestic dominance by clinching their 19th Scudetto.

Messi strikes: Lionel Messi missed a penalty but still scored twice as Barcelona edged a five-goal thriller with Valencia on Sunday to stay within touching distance of the top of La Liga. After Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid had won, there was no margin for error.

Bale hat-trick: Gareth Bale's hat-trick earned Tottenham Hotspur a 4-0 win over relegated Sheffield United to keep them in the hunt for a top-four finish in the Premier League on Sunday. The Welshman, on loan from Real Madrid, opened the scoring in the 36th minute.

Formula One: Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton delivered a flawless drive in his Mercedes to win the Portuguese Grand Prix for a 97th career win on Sunday to stretch his Formula One lead over Red Bull's Max Verstappen to eight points after three races.

## MIGUEL DELANEY

After a day of chaos around Old Trafford, and so many questions about what next, there is a simple driving truth: You can't try and disrupt the entire fabric of the game and not expect disruption in return.

Many might criticise the nature of the protest at Manchester United. Graeme Souness (in photo) certainly had a go. Many might find some of the elements distasteful or ugly, such as bottles and flares being thrown, as well as the stadium being invaded. Violence of course should not be tolerated, or condoned.

The pictures of officials with their faces slashed was a disgrace, and those responsible for such violence should be condemned. But that should not preclude the right of fans

## SNS &amp; AGENCIES

KOLKATA/AHMEDABAD/  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

**O**ne answer, should anyone ask you where the coronavirus is, could perhaps be, very, very truthfully and accurately be: the Indian Premier League's purported bio-secure bubble.

The league has quite bull-headed and completely insensitively gone ahead with the annual, money-spinning show even as the country watches an appalling tragedy unfold, ignoring well-meant advice from all quarters to call a halt, but it was obliged to blink today when tonight's Kolkata Knight Riders-versus-Royal Challengers Bangalore game came to be put off once Shah Rukh Khan's team reported two positive tests - said to be of spinner Varun Chakravarthy (in photo) and medium-pacer Sandeep Warrier.

There were unconfirmed reports of positive tests in the Chennai Super Kings camp as well. Others who would have come into contact with the duo would also be all of a doodah for very obvious reasons.

KKR's Nitish Rana and Delhi Capitals' Axar Patel had earlier been found Covid-19 positive too. That might - or mightn't - have influenced some Australians to flee the IPL in the very recent past but, quite apart from the rescheduling that would be necessary



after today's developments, the contact-tracing consequent upon these could saddle the tournament's big bosses with a bigger task in terms of re-fixing more matches than was imaginable now if self-isolation came to be mandated across the competitive spectrum.

Chakravarthy, it has been said, was in contact with his team-mates before his affliction became common knowledge. One of his peers is Pat Cummins, who donated a large sum of money to help Indians struggling with the pandemic. There were 400,000 infections reported in a recent

24-hour period and the death rates were officially stated to be around 3500 a day.

Adam Zampa, who cleared out of India last week, let it be known he had not felt safe in the IPL's bio bubble. Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, where KKR's game was to have been played, was set to host two more group stage matches - on Thursday and Saturday - before hosting the play-offs and the final from 25 May to 30 May, it was said. "The medical team is in continuous touch with the (KKR) duo, monitoring the health situation," said the Board of Control for Cricket

in India. KKR were said to have "moved towards" a daily testing routine to identify fresh infections.

The BCCI, though, shook it off with practised ease when some members of the ground staff at Wankhede stadium in Mumbai tested positive for the coronavirus. Last year, when the cash cow show was shifted to the United Arab Emirates, it bypassed senior sport medicine experts' opinion that it might have been going too fast, too far. Not that no one understood why: there is so much money in the IPL it will take everything in its stride for it.

## Why Taylor dismisses Lynn's flight demand

## INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

SYDNEY, 3 MAY

Former Australia Test captain Mark Taylor has disagreed with Chris Lynn's demand for Cricket Australia to order a chartered flight to bring Indian Premier League players home from India at the conclusion of the tournament.

Mumbai Indians batsman Lynn wants CA to use the 10 per cent of an Australian player's IPL pay to fly players back home from India which is reeling under the Covid-19 pandemic. The Australian government has suspended flights from India. "I think Lynn's comments were very rich," said Taylor while speaking on \*\*\*Channel 9\*\*\* before adding that CA deserved the cut since it invested in a player to make him ready for IPL.

"The 10 per cent that Cricket Australia does receive from a player's contract has surely got something with providing the cricketer with some coaching education along the way to become an IPL-worthy cricketer. I think his comments there are quite rich," Taylor added that he was surprised that many of the players decided to go to India and wanted to stay back despite their contract not very big.

According to him, someone like Pat Cummins (in photo) was justified in getting attracted to the money since he was paid Rs 15.5 crore but not Steve Smith. I've got to say I was a little surprised that so many Australians went over there.

Now, if you are Pat Cummins -- he's on something like



(15.5 crore) that's very hard to knock back for 12 weeks of playing cricket," Taylor said. "(But) Steve Smith was a bit interesting for me, because I believe his contract was worth Rs 2.2 crore, which was not to be sneezed at, but for a guy like Steve Smith it was not as big a contract as it should or could have been. I was surprised he decided to go," the 56-year-old Taylor added. He also said that the players or the coaching staff did not seem to be that desperate to come back and wanted to stay back in India till the end of the competition.

"But as I said these players -- Ricky Ponting is over there as former player, David Warner, Brett Lee are over there, good mates of mine Trevor Bayliss, Brad Haddin coaching over there. I haven't heard much from them apart from the fact that they are there till the end of the tournament."

Also, there are no immediate plans for England's

Indian Premier League contingent to leave the tournament despite a growing sense of unease at the surge of coronavirus cases in the country. The IPL has been carrying on against a grim backdrop of a public health emergency, with daily infections now topping 350,000 and reports of oxygen shortages and a lack of hospital capacity.

Three Australian players - Andrew Tye, Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson - pulled out over the weekend, with Australia reportedly ready to stop incoming flights from India. One high-profile India star, Ravichandran Ashwin, has also stood down to help support his extended family through the crisis.

There are currently 11 English players still involved in the competition and, while it is understood there is a rising nervousness about the situation, no withdrawals are thought to be imminent.

## Knights' match put back after positive tests

SNS & AGENCIES  
KOLKATA/AHMEDABAD/  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

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## Sri Lanka clinches Test series vs Bangladesh

AGENCIES  
PALLEKELE, 3 MAY

they came and bowled like experienced players, and performed their roles as they should," he said. "Praveen did his job perfectly well. He played like a bowler who had more than his 10 first-class matches.

"It's a great sign for the future of our test cricket. The seniors just gave them confidence. Some players can panic at times when they come into the test arena (but) Praveen absorbed pressure really well.

Bangladesh lost its last three wickets within eight balls with the total on 227.

Off-spinner Ramesh Mendis finished with four wickets, complementing the orthodox spin of Jayawickrama, who flouted the ball, found drift and lot of assistance from a crumbling wicket.

The two front-line spinners shared the bulk of the bowling, sending down 60 overs in the second innings and claiming nine wickets between them.

Jayawickrama said the test call up came as a surprise. It was childhood dream to play for Sri Lanka one day. Playing the test match was a dream come true and to get 11 wickets in the game is simply unbelievable, he said.

There was a bit of pressure leading into the game but there was lot of support from

the skipper and the senior players."

Bangladesh's batters struggled, with nobody scoring a half-century. Mushfiqur Rahim top scored with 40.

Bangladesh had been bowled out for 251 in its first innings in reply to Sri Lanka's 493-7. Despite a first-innings lead of 242, Sri Lanka did not enforce the follow-on, instead batting again and declaring on 194-9 to set Bangladesh a target of 437.

It was Sri Lanka's first test win in more than a year, ending a run of eight tests without a victory. The first test in this series had ended a draw.

Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque said the outcome of the toss proved crucial.

If we had batted first, it would have been a different story. Maybe they would have been in our position, and us in theirs," he said. But having said that, we should have scored more than the 251 we managed in the first innings. If we could have batted for three or four sessions, things would have been different.

**Brief scores:**

Sri Lanka 493 for 7 decl and 194 for 9 dec beat Bangladesh 251 and 227 in 71 overs (Mushfiqur Rahim 40; Jayawickrama 5/86, Mendis 4/103) by 209 runs.

## SunRisers in a spot of bother ahead of Mumbai match

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

South African fast-bowling great Dale Steyn said David Warner's (in photo) days with Indian Premier League team SunRisers Hyderabad might be coming to an end after he had been removed as captain and dropped from the team for their match against Rajasthan Royals.

"It's strange that he isn't a part of the playing 11. It's understandable if they want to change the ownership of captaincy for the next season, and keep Kane Williamson (in photo) there. But David is still a phenomenal batter and I would still keep him in the 11. But this might be the last time we see Warner in the Orange Army," Steyn told a website.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson was announced as Warner's replacement as SRH's skipper after the team had made a dismal start to the season, winning just once in seven matches. The team's director of cricket Tom Moody said the decision to drop Warner had been taken in view of team composition.

He also said the Australian opening batsman was "shocked" and "disappointed." Warner had earlier questioned the team's decision to drop batsman Manish Pandey after their defeat by Delhi Capitals on 25 April. Pandey opened the innings yesterday in place of Warner. "I don't know if David may have questioned some of the decisions, maybe when Pandey was left out.

Sometimes, the management doesn't appreciate that, I guess. The captain of the team also needs to take ownership of his squad and who's going out on the field. Seems like there's definitely happening something behind closed doors, the public is not aware of," said Steyn.

SRH face Mumbai Indians at Arjant Jaitly Stadium here tomorrow.

After seven matches, they have two points and are at the bottom of the table. While nothing seems to be going right for the Hyderabad franchise,

MI seem to have overcome the inconsistency they showed in the initial phase of the tournament they played in Chennai. They have taken to the Kotla pitch as a duck to water. Their batsmen, especially the power-hitters like Kieron Pollard, are back among big runs. Their openers, Quinton de Kock and skipper Rohit Sharma, too are looking fluent. They will obviously start as favourites against SRH.

Under Kane Williamson, their bowling came a cropper on a good batting surface against Jos Buttler, who hammered a big century. MI will present an even bigger challenge. They may decide to recall Jason Holder in place of Afghan spin bowler all-rounder Mohammad Nabi,

considering that their pace bowling looks a bit shaky. Nabi was picked in place of Warner and although he managed a few lusty blows, he was expensive in the only over he bowled.

MI's bowling too will be a challenge for the SRH batting that has plenty of holes in the middle-order.

## Orange cap

In Ahmedabad, Shikhar Dhawan returned to the top of the Orange cap table after his unbeaten knock of 69 in Delhi Capitals' seven-wicket win over Punjab Kings last night.

Dhawan anchored the chase of a target of 167, which DC managed to get to with as many as 14 balls to spare, thus helping him overtake Punjab captain KL Rahul, who did not play in Sunday's match. Rahul has been admitted to hospital and will need surgery. While Punjab have yet to say how long it will take for their captain to return, he could be absent from the matches in the immediate future.

Mayank Agarwal, who stood in as Punjab captain in place of Rahul last night, is now sixth on the table with 260 runs after his unbeaten 99. In the Purple cap standings, SRH's Rashid Khan is fifth with 10 wickets.

The sport's news cycle moves too fast. It is why these owners generally got their way.

It is why this may be another landmark. It might be crucial to perpetuating the momentum of the supporter response to The Super League, to continuing to show the supporters do have power. The Glazers and the other owners might well have just taken things too far. This is the new world they may have created.

THE INDEPENDENT

## Protests show what happens when you exploit the people's game too much

MIGUEL DELANEY

**A**fter a day of chaos around Old Trafford, and so many questions about what next, there is a simple driving truth: You can't try and disrupt the entire fabric of the game and not expect disruption in return.

Many might criticise the nature of the protest at Manchester United. Graeme Souness (in photo) certainly