

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 13 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 2%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 30
Tithi: Thuvudhiyai
Star: Rohini
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam: 6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.31 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.40 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.37 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.59 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.49 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,22,902)	(+3,529)
2,36,63,494	2,57,754

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+30,355)	293
TN: 14,68,864	16,471

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

16,08,47,352

DEATHS

33,39,015

219

worldometers.info

Govt bans photography at Central Vista site

New Delhi: Amid criticism over the Central Vista Redevelopment Project, the Central Public Works Department has prohibited photography and video recording at the construction site near India Gate. Sign boards have come up at the redevelopment site of the Central Vista Avenue, which read: 'No photography', 'No video recording'. An official in the CPWD, which is executing the project, did not comment on this when contacted.

COUNTER POINT



Everyone in the party should use cow dung, which is more powerful than a PPE Kit!



CITY | 2

Plea to allow Pasteur Institute of India to produce Covid vaccine



WORLD | 5

China, Russia using digital tech to sabotage, steal: UK

SPORT | 8

TT legend Chandra is no more



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Give jabs free, oppn tells PM

■ **Stop Grand Vista and fight Covid, 12 leaders write to Modi**

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

Stepping up their attack on the NDA government for its alleged failure in handling the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19, leaders of 12 opposition parties on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a free mass vaccination campaign against Covid-19, and a suspension of the Central Vista project and divert the money to aid the fight against coronavirus. Claiming that the Covid-19 pandemic has turned into an 'apocalyptic human tragedy' in the country, the opposition leaders, including Congress president Sonia Gandhi and some chief ministers, also demanded the Centre provide food grains to the needy, and give ₹6,000 per month to all the jobless people.

"Procure vaccines centrally from all available sources - global and domestic. Immediately begin a free, universal mass vaccination campaign across the country. Invoke compulsory licensing to expand domestic vaccine production. Spend budgetary allocation of Rs 35,000 crores for the vaccines," the leaders said in their letter.

"Stop Central Vista construction. Use the allocated money for procuring oxygen and vaccines, instead. Release all money held in the unaccounted private trust fund, PM CARES, to buy more vaccines, oxygen and medical equipment required," they also told the Prime Minister.

In their joint letter in which they make nine suggestions to the government, the leaders have also demanded a repeal of the three Central farm laws which, they claimed, will help protect lakhs of 'annadatas' (food-growers) from becoming the victims of pandemic. A large number of farmers are sitting in protest at three borders of Delhi, seeking the farm laws passed by Parliament in September last year be scrapped. ■ **P4**



Leader of the opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami and water resources minister Durai Murugan escort M. Appavu, who was elected Speaker of the state assembly, to the speaker's chair as Chief Minister M.K. Stalin watches in Chennai on Wednesday.

TN to buy vax from abroad, incentivise health workers

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 12

Intensifying its fight against the second wave of Coronavirus, the newly-elected M.K. Stalin government took a slew of path-breaking decisions such as importing vaccines through global tenders, giving incentives to medical personnel and holding an all-party meeting to chalk the future strategy. After a review meeting at his chamber on the Kalaiavanar Arangam assembly premises on Wednesday, the Chief Minister announced that the state would procure vaccines through global tenders with a view to vaccinating its population between 18 and 45 years expeditiously.

The supply of vaccine from the Centre was inadequate and that the Centre itself had given the go ahead to the states to procure vaccines on their own, he said.

Renewed Vigour

To float global tender to buy vaccine for inoculating people aged between 18 and 45

To pay ₹25 LAKH to families of doctors who died while on duty

All party meeting today

Similarly, he also ordered the industry, health and social welfare departments to ensure that supply of medical oxygen to the hospitals in the state was maintained by procuring it from other states. Though the supply of oxygen to the state was increased from 280 tonnes to 419 tonnes, there was still a shortfall, he said.

To encourage and motivate the medical professionals to help the state continue the fight against

TO ENSURE supply of medical oxygen to all hospitals

TO PAY AN INCENTIVE of ₹30,000 to doctors; ₹20,000 to nurses, PG students and medical interns and rs 15 to staff such as lab technicians, CT scan operators, ambulance workers and sanitary staff for three months

Coronavirus, he announced an incentive ranging from Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 to different categories of health workers for the months of April, May and June in the second wave of the pandemic.

While doctors would get ₹30,000, nurses, PG students and medical interns would get ₹20,000 and all other medical staff such as lab technicians, CT scan operators, ambulance workers and sanitary staff would get ₹15K each. ■ **P2**

TALLY DIPS BUT DEATH TOLL IS RECORD 4,205

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

With 4,205 fatalities, India on Wednesday set a new world record in the number of deaths in a single day from Covid-19. Ten states account for 73.17 per cent of these deaths out of which Maharashtra recorded the maximum fatalities (816), followed by Karnataka (517) and Delhi (300) in the last 24 hours. The Maharashtra government is now contemplating extending the lockdown for another 15 days. Assam too has decided to go for stricter restrictions as 5,657 people tested positive in the state on Wednesday.

While India on Wednesday recorded 3.48 lakh new cases, it also had a high number of recoveries as 3.55 lakh people got cured of Covid in the last 24 hours. India's recovery rate - 83.04 per cent - and cumulative number of recoveries - 1,93,82,642 - are now the highest in the world.

However, in the last one week about 30 lakh new infections have been recorded.

CENTRE TO BUY 1.5 LAKH OXYCARE SYSTEMS OF DRDO

New Delhi, May 12: The government on Wednesday approved the procurement of 1,50,000 units of 'Oxycare' system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to help in the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Oxycare is an oxygen supply system based on SpO2 (oxygen saturation) level. The DRDO has already transferred the technology to multiple industries in India for large-scale production of the Oxycare system.

The "Oxycare" systems will be procured for Rs 322.5 crore using the PM-Cares Fund, according to the defence ministry.

"The Oxycare system delivers supplemental oxygen based on the SpO2 levels and prevents a person from sinking into a state of hypoxia which can be fatal," the ministry said. — **PTI**

● **Nominating MLAs without consulting CM, who is in hospital, has raised suspicions in the Union Territory**

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 12

The bid by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to capture the government in Puducherry by nominating three members to the territorial assembly even before the elected house was sworn in has drawn flak from various quarters with DMK general secretary and Tamil Nadu Water Resources Minister Durai Murugan terming it an attempt to gain power through the backdoor.

While the NR Congress of Chief Minister N. Rangaswamy had won 10 seats in the 30-member house, the BJP and the opposition DMK had won 6 seats each in the elections held on April 6 this year. The centre nominated three members to the assembly as per the Constitution.

Condemning the nomination of MLAs when the Chief Minister was admitted in hospital, Mr Murugan said it was painful to see the attempts to desecrate the people's verdict by the BJP.

Nominating the MLAs without consulting Mr Rangasamy, who is also the leader of the alliance in which the BJP faced the election, has made the people of the Union territory suspicious of the BJP's intentions, he said. Dravidar Kazhagam president K. Veeramani said the DMK alone could do something about sav-

ing the situation in Puducherry, where the BJP was indulging in horse-trading to change the political arithmetic and form its government.

Of the six independent MLAs who have been elected to the House - the strength has been raised to 33 through the nominations by the Centre - three have been bought over by the BJP, Veeramani said, adding that it would increase its strength to 12, making it the single largest party.

"Even if the NR Congress, which has strength of 10 in the House, is allowed to form the government now, the BJP will start playing games by first demanding the post of a deputy chief minister for its nominee," he said. "Subsequently, it may overthrow the government and install its own." Mr Veeramani recalled the manner in which the earlier Congress government was pulled down by making MLAs resign and said he feared a repeat of it. Even now, of the three MLAs nominated by the BJP, one had defected from the DMK, another from the Congress and the other had joined the BJP just before the elections. ■ **P2**

WAR FOOT



'Your visit to violence-hit area violates norms'

A day before West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was scheduled to begin his tour of areas affected by post-poll violence, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday advised him to 'desist' from undertaking 'field trips' and follow the established government protocol.

■ **REPORT ON PAGE 4**

'NAVLAKHA CAN BE PUT UNDER HOUSE ARREST'

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

The Supreme Court Wednesday rejected a plea for default bail by human rights activist Gautam Navlakha, one of the accused in the January 2018 Bhima Koregaon violence case, over his alleged links with Maoists.

Rejecting Mr Navlakha's bail plea, a bench of Justices Uday Umesh Lalit, Indira Banerjee and K.M. Joseph suggested that the lower courts could put him under house arrest, given the need to stop overcrowding of jails in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic's second wave. They said that using the provisions of Section 167 CrPC, an accused can be put under house arrest when sent to judicial custody instead of sending him to jail as is ordinarily done.

Indicating the criteria, Justice Joseph said an accused could be sent to house arrest given factors like "age, health condition and the antecedents of the accused, the nature of the crime, the need for other forms of custody and the ability to enforce the terms of the house arrest".

RETAIL INFLATION DOWN, IIP UP

New Delhi, May 12: With easing of food prices, India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index or CPI, slowed to 4.29 per cent in April 2021, while industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production or IIP, grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year-ago. — **FC**

Israeli airstrikes kill Hamas leaders as unrest brews at home

Gaza City, May 12: Israel killed a string of senior Hamas military figures on Wednesday and pounded three multistorey towers as it hammered the Gaza Strip with airstrikes and militants in the territory fired rocket barrages. Dozens have died in the worst violence since a 2014 war, with no resolution in sight.

The fighting has taken on many hallmarks of that devastating 50-day conflict between Israel and Hamas, but with a startling new factor: a burst of fury from Israel's Palestinian citizens in support of those living in the territories as well as counterviolence by Jewish Israelis.

In response, Israel deployed border guards in two mixed Arab-Jewish cities that saw unrest in previous days, including the burning of a Jewish-owned restaurant and a synagogue, the fatal shooting of an Arab



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, the Gaza Strip, Wednesday. — **AP**

man and attacks on Arab-owned cars. It was a rare use of the paramilitary force, which normally puts down protests by Palestinians in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Palls of gray smoke rose in Gaza as Israeli airstrikes struck apartment towers and blasted multiple Hamas security installations. In Israel, hundreds of rockets fired by Gaza's Hamas

rulers and other militants at times overwhelmed missile defences and sent air-raid sirens and explosions echoing across Tel Aviv, Israel's biggest metropolitan area, and other cities.

The death toll in Gaza rose to 53 Palestinians, including 14 children and three women, according to the health ministry. At least 320 have been wounded, including 86 children and 39 women. Seven have been killed on the Israeli side by rocket fire, including the first death of an Israeli soldier in this round of conflict. The other deaths have been civilians, including three women and two children, one of them a 6-year-old killed in a rocket strike on an apartment building in city of Sderot. Dozens in Israel have been wounded.

There was no sign that either side is willing to back down. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to expand the offensive, saying it "will take time." Hamas has called for a full-scale intifada, or uprising. The last such uprising began in 2000 and lasted more than five years. ■ **P5**

Kerala nurse killed in Israel by Hamas

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

An Indian woman from Kerala, identified as Soumya Santosh, 31, was killed in a rocket attack in Israel carried out by militant group Hamas, after which New Delhi assured all assistance to the family and also condemned the violence that has broken out, urging restraint by both Israel and Palestinian militant groups.

The victim, who is survived by her husband and nine year-old son who are living in Kerala, was working as a domestic help at a house in the

Israeli city of Ashkelon when a rocket fired by Hamas militants hit the house. Both minister of state (MoS) for external affairs V. Muraleedharan and Israeli Ambassador Ron Malka spoke to the family of the victim and paid their condolences.

According to media reports, the victim hailed from Keerithodu in Idukki district and had been working as a domestic help in Israel for the last seven years.

She was reportedly killed in the rocket attack as she was talking to her husband Santhosh back home in Kerala over a video call.

SHORT TAKES

VIT DONATES ₹1.25 CR TO CM'S PUBLIC RELIEF FUND

Chennai, May 12: The Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) on Wednesday May 12, 2021) donated ₹1.25 crore to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (TNCMPRF) to help the State Government in its efforts to combat Covid-19 pandemic. VIT founder and chancellor Dr. G. Viswanathan said that ₹1.25 crore provided to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund comes from the one day salary donated by faculty and staff of Vellore Institute of Technology (Vellore and Chennai campuses) and the contribution made by the management of VIT.

VIT registrar Dr. K. Sathyanarayanan and Director of Centre for Sustainable Rural Development & Research Studies (CSRSD) Dr. C.R. Sundara Rajan handed over the online transfer receipt for VIT's contribution to Vellore District Revenue Officer on Wednesday.

VIT BUSINESS SCHOOL GETS GLOBAL ACCREDITATION

Chennai, May 12: VIT Business School, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has been accredited by Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the top accrediting body for business schools globally. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), USA accreditation places VIT Business School among the prestigious global business schools that have received this recognition. It joins the league of only 901 business schools across 58 countries that are AACSB accredited. VITBS is the 15th accredited business school in India and 2nd in Tamil Nadu. The business school that operates out of Vellore and Chennai campuses has achieved this coveted recognition. On achieving this accreditation, Dr. G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor, VIT said, "It is a prestigious moment for Vellore Institute of Technology. We thank AACSB for recognizing VIT Business School's academic rigor, research excellence, social, industry and global connectivity. I congratulate Team VITBS, for achieving AACSB's global accreditation. The team shall strive to reach newer heights in serving the students and society."

SATHYABAMA VARSITY DONATES ₹50 LAKH TO RELIEF FUND

Chennai, May 12: Dr. Mariazeena Johnson, chancellor, Dr. Marie Johnson, president, Ms. Maria Bernadette Tamilarasi Johnson, vice president of Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Deemed to be University, greeted M.K. Stalin for being sworn in as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. The university donated ₹ 50 lakh to CM's Relief fund of Tamilnadu, according to a press release.

NURSES DAY OBSERVED IN MANNARGUDI

DC CORRESPONDENT MANNARGUDI, MAY 12

The world Nurses Day was observed at the government headquarters hospital at Mannargudi in Tiruvallur district on Wednesday.

The nurses under the leadership of superintendent of the hospital Dr Vijayakumar took a pledge for selfless service to the needy.

Call to permit PII to produce Covid vaccine

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MAY 12

The Nilgiris unit of the CPI(M) has called for urgent steps to give licence to the century-old Pasteur Institute of India (PII) in Coonoor to produce vaccine for Covid-19. PII is a pioneer in Rabies vaccine production.

V.A. Bhaskaran, the Nilgiris district secretary of the CPM, said that PII is also involved in the production of DPT vaccines to check diseases like diphtheria and whooping cough.

Though this premier institute faced some troubles a decade ago, the CPM along with its allies then opposed the move to close down this unit. Eventually the union government gave its nod to upgrade the vaccine manufacturing infrastructures in PII-Coonoor as per the World Health Organisation norms. Good water and power facilities have been added to the PII campus.

Now, when the country is struggling to combat the Covid-19 second wave and shortage of Covid vaccines, the TN government should take immediate steps to obtain necessary nod from the Centre under the compulsory licensing mode to help the PII-Coonoor produce Covid vaccine. The PII with its expertise in vaccine production and skillful work force can take up Covid vaccine production, he noted.



As a humanitarian gesture, the Masjid Javeed at 3rd Avenue in Anna Nagar has opened a quarantine centre for people who are Covid-19 negative and need a place to stay for a few days. M. Mohammed Yousuf, the mosque committee secretary, told DC: "We have made arrangements for people who want to isolate themselves for quarantine. It's absolutely a place for peace of mind and to relax. He added, "people keep asking us if we can accommodate Covid-19 positive persons, which we can't. We have approached the Chennai corporation for protocol permission. Based on people's needs, bed, oxygen and other facilities will be provided. During the Covid-19 first wave lockdown, Masjid Javeed contributed food and money to the needy."

—N. Sampath

Lockdown may lead to drop in cases: Govt

G. SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, MAY 12

There is a possibility of Corona cases coming down due to the two-week lockdown in Tamil Nadu, said K. Phanindra Reddy, Commissioner for Revenue administration, here on Wednesday. He inspected the urban primary health centre at Kallukulam at Thanjavur.

He told the media that the government has given the bitter pill of lockdown to control Covid-19. He sought the cooperation of people in bringing down Corona cases by following the preventive measures during lockdown.

Corona is under control in Thanjavur if we consider the overall situation in the state. At the state level also, the cases have come

down to 200 to 300. If this trend continues, cases will come down further, Reddy said.

Vaccination is going on in full swing. Government hospitals and Covid care centres are maintained well in Thanjavur.

The effectiveness of Covidshield and Covaxin vaccines has been tested and proved. The government also certified them.

Administration of the vaccines to people are managed based on availability. Those who took the first dose are given the second dose on a priority basis, Reddy said.

Dr. Subbaiyan, monitoring officer for Thanjavur district and director of horticulture, and M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, were also present.

40-bed centre for Covid treatment

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUVARUR, MAY 12

A 40-bed centre for providing treatment exclusively to Covid-19 patients was launched at the Government hospital at

Nannilam in Tiruvallur district on Wednesday.

According to a government press release, 40 persons including a 12-year-old girl were admitted there. Yesterday alone, in Tiruvallur district, 270

new cases of Covid-19 were reported.

Every day as many as 2,800 to 3,000 RTPCR tests have been conducted of which more than 150 were positive. On May 11, 2,800 tests were conducted of

which 270 were positive. Three persons lost their lives on May 11 in the district due to the Covid-19 and another 227 were discharged from the hospitals.

From April last, 5,930

were infected with Covid-19 of which 24 lost their lives. So far 51,234 persons have been administered vaccines and 95 places are declared as contaminated zones across the district.

HUTS DESTROYED IN FIRE, THREE INJURED

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 12

Three persons including a fire-fighter were injured while trying to put out the fire caused by a cylinder blast at a house in Asthinapuram in Chromepet on Tuesday night.

The cylinder exploded on Tuesday night at the house of Saravanan (53) – Jeyakodi (44) in Nethaji Nagar in Asthinapuram and two huts including their suffering damage, the police said.

After an alert about the fire, fire and rescue services personnel from the Tambaram fire station rushed to the spot. While they were trying to douse the flames caused by the cylinder in the house's kitchen, another cylinder kept in the house burst unexpectedly. Ravikumar (28), a firefighter suffered injuries. Two other persons living nearby, identified as Ajith Venkatesan (26) and Selvakumar (28) suffered severe burns due to the blast.

They were rescued and sent to the Chromepet government hospital. Police said Ajith was shifted to the Kilpauk Government medical college and hospital. When the Chitlapakkam police enquired about the accident, they came to know about the leakage in the gas cylinder. Police sources said that Jeyakodi turned on the gas stove and left the house forgetting she had switched on the gas.

When she came back after a few minutes and tried to light the stove, it triggered a huge blast. The house was completely wrecked. However, she escaped. The Chitlapakkam police registered a case and begun an investigation.



People in Vellore were in for happiness as they witnessed rain on Wednesday, giving them the much-needed respite from heat. Surrounding villages also witnessed showers.

—K.Senthil Nathan

Stalin must take interest in saving Pondy from being tainted by saffron: Veeramani

From P1

On the opposition side, the DMK has 6 MLAs and Congress 2. Mr Veeramani said DMK president M.K. Stalin must take interest in saving Puducherry from being tainted by saffron as it was also the land of Periyar.

The BJP started eyeing Puducherry perhaps to turn it into the party's gateway to the South a few years back and started the mission to capture power by first appointing

Kiran Bedi as the Lieutenant Governor.

After engineering defections from the Congress, which was in power, and also nominating three MLAs, a new practice introduced by the Narendra Modi regime at the Centre, it wreaked havoc with the elected government just before the elections.

Now that the BJP has created a situation in which it has an upper hand arithmetically and may even lure the remaining three inde-

pendent MLAs to its fold, thus increasing its strength to 15 and then ask the N R Congress, having just 10 MLAs, to be relinquish the leadership role in its favour.

To prevent the BJP from installing its own government, the only option left to Mr Rangasamy is to seek help from the DMK and the Congress, which has a combined strength of 8 MLAs. With his 10 MLAs and the 8 from DMK and Congress he can have a majority in the 33 member House.

CBI officer who probed Rajiv assassination case passes away

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 12

Former CBI officer K. Ragothaman, who was the Chief Investigating Officer in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case and had penned books on sensational assassinations in India died of Covid-19 here on Wednesday in Chennai.

K. Ragothaman (76) was admitted to a hospital here last week for Covid-19 treatment and breathed his last this morning, hospital sources said.

Ragothaman was the Chief Investigating Officer in the CBI's Special Investigation Team that probed the killing of Gandhi on May 21, 1991, at Sriperumbudur by a female LTTE suicide bomber during an election rally. Ragothaman had spent more than 10 years investigating the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. In recognition of his meritorious service, Ragothaman was awarded Police Medal in 1988 and President Medal for distinguished service in 1994.

He had also penned a few books, including the assassination of Mahatma - Indira - Rajiv Gandhis' Conspiracy to Kill Rajiv Gandhi from CBI Files.

Autos double up as ambulances

Chennai, May 12 : At a time when oxygen is on high demand amid the second wave of covid-19 in the country, with people scampering for hospital beds with oxygen supply, a city-based NGO is reaching out to the needy in makeshift ambulances with the life saving gas.

This "emergency auto ambulance" is also being used by patients home quarantined and in dire need of it. City-based Kadamai Educational and Social Welfare Trust is operating innovative auto ambulances, albeit in a smaller radius in the northern parts, but is fast turning out to be a much sought after service.

"A jumbo hospital oxygen cylinder from the clinic we run and another cylinder that we obtained from an industrial unit, both of 47 lt capacity, were fitted to two autos to provide oxygen to the people in north Chennai area, round the clock," T C Kumaraswamy, head, education department of the trust, told PTI. These emergency auto ambulances are operated by six persons on shift basis and they respond promptly to callers who seek medical oxygen to improve their oxygen levels.

"Presently, we operate only within 15 km radius in north Chennai alone and we don't discourage callers seeking oxygen," Kumaraswamy said. On an average, the trust receives about 150 to 200 calls a day. On Monday night, an ambulance ferrying a coronavirus patient ran out of oxygen and its driver approached the trust for help. "The 64-year-old patient from Royapuram was administered oxygen from our auto and he was taken to the hospital later," he added. The service is restricted to patients who could sit comfortably in the auto, Kumaraswamy said. "We have been running the service successfully for the twelfth day today. We respond to requests also from people who have no access to ambulances or oxygen cylinders at home," C Vasantha Kumar, founder secretary of the trust said. Further, another metro-based volunteer organisation has launched a "Help Chennai breathe" campaign, aimed at crowd-funding a sum of Rs three crore to provide equipment like 420 oxygen cylinders and 240 oxygen concentrators to five government hospitals in the city. Gayathri Suryanarayanan of 'Samarpana' said she launched the initiative after her own experience with oxygen issues. The effort has helped the organisation raise about ₹25 lakh. —PTI

Stalin invites leaders of all political parties to come up with ideas to tackle second wave of pandemic

From P1

Mr Stalin also remembered the sacrifices of the medical community in the last one year and announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the families of doctors who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Displaying an immediate priority to come up with more efforts to overcome the challenges thrown by the second wave of the pandemic, Mr Stalin called for the all-party meeting at the Secretariat

premises on Thursday 5 pm.

He has invited leaders of all political parties to come up with ideas to tackle the situation effectively.

In his message on 'International Nurses Day' Mr Stalin referred to the Covid-19 crisis and assured nurses that their welfare would be taken care of by the government.

Reminding them that pandemic Covid-19 was not different from a war, he wanted the nursing community to stand by the govern-

ments' efforts, taken on a war footing, to fight the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the Greater Chennai Corporation has called for applications from final year MBBS students to fill 300 vacancies for the post of trainee medical officer. They would be recruited on contract basis for a period of three months, paid a consolidated salary of ₹40,000 per month and deployed in Coronavirus-related medical work.

Hosp dean equates nurses to Gods, prostrates before them

Coimbatore, May 12: Equating nurses to Gods, the Dean of ESI Government Hospital here on Wednesday prostrated before them for their services during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Dean M Raveendran's act, since gone viral, happened during a function organised to celebrate the World Nurses Day and received wide appreciation.

Officials and nurses had placed a photograph of Florence Nightingale, founder of modern nursing, to pay floral tributes on the hospital premises. A group of nurses gathered at the entrance to welcome Raveendran, who became so



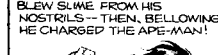



emotional that he suddenly prostrated before them. "At the present critical situation, you are the Gods," he told them. The photographs and video of the incident had gone viral receiving appreciation from the nurses in various hospitals and the general public.

Coimbatore is one of the districts in the state with a high caseload of coronavirus, reporting 2,636 new Covid cases on Wednesday, even as the state recorded a staggering 30,355 fresh infections. The western district has 15,178 active cases, including those under home treatment, according to government figures. —PTI



Nurses of Government Kilpauk Medical College take pledge on the occasion of World Nurses Day on Wednesday. Hospital Dean Dr P. Vasanthamani also present on the occasion.

—DC

<p>SNORTING AND PAWING, THE WILD-EYED BEAST SOUGHT ANOTHER NATIVE VICTIM—</p> 	<p>THE AYE-AYE, WITH HIS VOICE-GUANO CHATTER</p> 	<p>THE BUFFALO PAUSED AND GLEYS SLOWE FROM HIS HOOVES!—THEN, BELLOWING, HE CHARGED THE APE-MAN!</p> 
	<p>BUT TARZAN WAS ALERTED HE SPURD FORWARD, YELING TO DISTRACT THE BRUTE.</p> 	<p>THE BUFFALO PAUSED AND GLEYS SLOWE FROM HIS HOOVES!—THEN, BELLOWING, HE CHARGED THE APE-MAN!</p> 

SHORT TAKES

Oppn demands ₹6K to all jobless, free foodgrain

From P1

Apart from Congress president Gandhi, the signatories include former prime minister and JDS leader H.D. Deve Gowda, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, chief ministers Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena), Mamata Banerjee (TMC), M.K. Stalin (DMK), and Hemant Soren (JMM). Former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah (NC) and Akhilesh Yadav (SP) have also signed the letter, alongside Tejashwi Yadav (RJD), D. Raja (CPI) and Sitaram Yechury (CPM).

The leaders noted that they have in the past also suggested to the government the measures they believed were “absolutely imperative” for the Centre to implement to arrest the situation.

“Unfortunately, your government has either ignored or refused all these suggestions. This only compounded the situation to reach such an apocalyptic human tragedy,” they said.

Without going into all the “acts of commission and omission” by the Central government that have brought the country to such a “tragic pass”, the opposition leaders demanded that the new measures suggested by them be undertaken on a war footing.

The opposition leaders also demanded giving all jobless at least ₹6,000 per month and a free distribution of foodgrains to the needy, saying over one crore tonnes of foodgrains are currently “rotting in central godowns”.

“Repeal farm laws to protect lakhs of our annadatas becoming victims of the pandemic so that they can continue to produce food to feed the Indian people,” they said.

“Though it has not been the practice of your office or government, we would appreciate a response to our suggestions in the interests of India and our people,” the leaders said in the letter.

Govt approves procurement of 1.5L units of DRDO ‘Oxycare’ system

New Delhi, May 12: The government on Wednesday approved the procurement of 1,50,000 units of ‘Oxycare’ system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to help in the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Oxycare is an oxygen supply system based on SpO2 (oxygen saturation) level. The DRDO has already transferred the technology to multiple industries in India for large-scale production of the Oxycare system. The ‘Oxycare’ systems will be procured for Rs 322.5 crore using the PM-Cares Fund, according to the defence ministry. “PM-Cares Fund has accorded sanction for procurement of 1,50,000 units of ‘Oxycare’ system developed by the DRDO at a cost of ₹ 322.5 crore,” it said. The ministry said 1,00,000 manual and 50,000 automatic Oxycare systems are being procured. “The Oxycare system delivers supplemental oxygen based on the SpO2 levels and prevents a person from sinking into a state of hypoxia which can be fatal,” the ministry said in a statement. Oxycare was developed by the DRDO’s Bengaluru-based Defence Bio-Engineering and Electro Medical Laboratory (DBEL) for soldiers posted at extreme high-altitude areas. “The system is indigenously developed for operation in field conditions and is robust. It can be effectively used to treat COVID-19 patients,” the ministry said. It said the variants of the system have been configured. “The basic version consists of a 10-litre oxygen cylinder, a pressure regulator cum flow controller, a humidifier and a nasal cannula. The oxygen flow is regulated manually based on the SpO2 readings,” the ministry said. “In the second configuration, the oxygen cylinder is equipped with electronic controls which automatically regulate the oxygen flow through a low-pressure regulator and an SpO2 probe,” it said. Various parts of India have been ravaged by a devastating second wave of coronavirus pandemic.

One of the most common complications being faced by the COVID-19 patients has been a drop in oxygen levels. The huge surge in coronavirus cases has triggered a shortage of medical oxygen across the country.

— PTI



Workers install an oxygen plant for a temporary Covid Care Centre at Ramliha Ground, near LNJP Hospital in New Delhi, Wednesday.

—PTI

Bhima Koregaon case: SC dismisses Navlakha’s bail plea

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

The Supreme Court Wednesday rejected a plea for default bail by human rights activist Gautam Navlakha, one of the accused in the January 2018 Bhima Koregaon violence case, over his alleged links with Maoists.

Rejecting Mr Navlakha’s bail plea, a bench of Justices Uday Umesh Lalit, Indira Banerjee and K.M. Joseph suggested that the lower courts could put him under house arrest, given the need to stop overcrowding of jails in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic’s second wave. They said that using the provisions of Section 167 CrPC, an accused can be put under house arrest when sent to judicial custody instead of sending him to jail as is ordinarily done.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Joseph said: “The concept of house arrest as part of custody under Section 167 has not engaged the courts, including this court. However, when the issue has come into focus, and noticing its (Section 167) ingredients we have formed the view that it involves custody which falls under Section 167.”

Justice Joseph said: “We observe that under Section 167 in appropriate cases it will be open to the courts to order house arrest.”

Indicating the criteria, which it said was not exhaustive, Justice Joseph said an accused could be sent to house arrest given factors like “age, health condition and the antecedents of the accused, the nature of the crime, the need for other forms of custody and the



ability to enforce the terms of the house arrest.”

Having shown the new course for the subordinate judiciary to follow by sending an accused to house arrest, in the case of Mr Navlakha, the court rejected his contention that he was entitled to default bail as the National Investigating Agency did not file the chargesheet within the statutory 90 days from the date of his arrest.

He had contended that the 34-day period when he was put under house arrest by the Delhi high court have not been accounted for in the 90-day time limit for filing the chargesheet.

Mr Navlakha was put under house arrest by the Delhi high court while hearing his challenge to the transit custody granted by a Delhi court to the Mumbai police. The high court held the magistrate’s order as flawed.

Holding that his house arrest wasn’t under Section 167 CrPC, the Supreme Court in its 206-page ruling upheld the Bombay high court’s ruling that the law requiring the NIA to file the chargesheet against an accused within 90 days of arrest was not flawed.

The high court hadn’t accepted Mr Navlakha’s plea to include the 34 days of his house arrest in Delhi from August 28, 2018 to October 1, 2018 to show his incarceration for 93

days in the calculations and dismissed his appeal on February 3, 2021.

The NIA had filed the chargesheet on October 9, 2020. Seeking default bail, Mr Navalakha had shown 34 days of house arrest, plus 11 days of NIA custody and 48 days in Tihar Jail, Delhi, and Taloja Jail, Mumbai.

Mr Navlakha and the other activists are accused of allegedly making inflammatory speeches and issuing provocative statements at the Elgar Parishad meeting in Pune on December 31, 2017 that led to violence at Bhima Koregaon the next day.

Mr Navlakha had approached the Supreme Court against the Bombay high court order denying him bail. He is among the eight alleged Maoist activists against whom the NIA filed a chargesheet on October 9, 2020. The others are Mumbai’s Anand Teltumbde, Hany Babu, an associate professor in Delhi, Sagar Gorkhe and Ramesh Gaichor of Pune, Jyoti Jagtap of Kondhawa, Milind Teltumbde of Yavatmal and Stan Swamy of Ranchi. Mr Swamy, a 80-year-old priest, was arrested from his home in Ranchi only two days before the filing of the chargesheet.

Anand Teltumbde, a professor who normally lives in Goa, was one of the conveners of the Bhima Koregaon Shaurya Din Prerna Abhiyan and was present at Shaniwar Wada in Pune on December 31, 2017, where the Elgar Parishad programme was organised. The NIA claimed it recovered incriminating documents revealing his role in CPI(Maoist) activities.

‘Your visit to violence-hit area violates norms’

■ Mamata writes to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 12

A day before West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was scheduled to begin his tour of areas affected by post-poll violence, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday advised him to “desist” from undertaking “field trips” and follow the established government protocol.

In a strongly worded letter to the governor, who is planning to undertake the trip in a BSF helicopter, Ms Banerjee drew his attention to the state home (political) department’s ‘Manual of Protocol & Ceremonials’ which mentions: “The programme for the governor’s visits to places in the districts is finalised by the secretary to the governor after obtaining the orders of the government. However, before recommending a request to the governor for acceptance, whether it is from a private party or a government Institution, the secretary to the governor consults the government and the commissioner of the division and the district officer in charge of the proper execution of the overall programme.”

Kin of Kerala woman killed in rocket strike in Israel still in shock

Idukki(Ker), May 12:

The family of a 30-year-old Kerala woman, who lost her life in a deadly Palestinian rocket attack in Israel, is yet to recover from shock.

They cannot believe that they will never be able to see her again.

They never imagined such a tragic end to Soumya, who worked as a caregiver for an elderly woman in Ashkelon in that country, although she had often shared her anguish with them about massive firings in the Israeli territory by the Palestinian militants.

Her husband Santhosh, a resident of Keerithodu in Idukki district, is struggling to console their nine-year-old son, who could not cope with the situation.

“He is awaiting her call,” Santhosh told reporters here, while holding back his tears.

It all happened as Soumya was planning her return to Kerala, ending over seven years of toil in the Israeli city, for a better life back home.

It was a Tuesday afternoon and Soumya was on a video call with her husband telling him about the tense atmosphere in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon.

Little did she knew that it would be her last call.

As she was sharing the details of the war-like situation prevailing in the area, Santhosh heard a huge sound on the other end.

Her phone, which was still connected, had fallen down.

“We are beginning to move to a framework of protecting foetuses through vaccination, rather than from vaccination,” Miller said.

In April, the scientists published a study showing pregnant women make Covid antibodies after vaccination and successfully transfer them to their foetuses. “Until infants can get vaccinated, the only way for them to get Covid antibodies is from their mother,” Goldstein said.

The placenta is the first organ that forms during pregnancy. It performs duties for most of the foetus’ organs while they are still forming, such as providing oxygen while the lungs develop and nutrition while the gut is forming. According to the researchers, the placenta manages hormones and the immune system, and tells the mother’s body to welcome and nurture the foetus rather than reject it as a foreign intruder.

—PTI



“The programme for the governor’s visits to places in the districts is finalised by the secretary to the governor after obtaining the orders of the government. However, before recommending a request to the governor for acceptance, whether it is from a private party or a government Institution, the secretary to the governor consults the government and the commissioner of the division and the district officer in charge of the proper execution of the overall programme”

She told the Governor, “I find that you are unilaterally proceeding to the district of Coochbehar on 13-5-2021 and, sadly, I find that to be violative of the long-standing norms as evolved over several decades. I, therefore, would expect that you will kindly follow the well-established norms of protocol, as stated above, and desist from abrupt decisions with regard to field visits.”

Reminding Mr Dhankhar of one of her previous letters, Ms Banerjee added, “I had requested and specifically advised you to refrain from surpassing the chief minister and her Council of Ministers and communicating with and dictating to the state officials, in excess of your power under the Constitution and direct-

ing them to attend before you. I find that you are steadily ignoring this advice, solemnly rendered by me to you, and have been communicating with and dictating the state officials. You have also been seeking reports from them directly. I urge you and again request and advise you to refrain from this. I am asking my chief secretary to go by this norm.”

Hitting back at the Trinamul Congress supremo immediately, Mr Dhankhar, who plans to visit Assam first on Thursday morning to meet BJP workers in a shelter there, rejected her advice and reminded her of his “constitutional duties.”

In his reply to her, Mr Dhankhar wrote, “In time of such unprecedented

crisis there was need to act in togetherness with all concerned, including the governor. It was no time for optics or playing to the gallery when we are in the midst of unprecedented post-poll retributive violence. I can’t persuade myself to subscribe to the stance reflected in your communication. It betrays elementary ignorance of constitutional provisions. We both, being constitutional functionaries, are subject to the Constitution. I am sure you will at least concede supremacy of the Constitution, that by oath you are ordained to follow. It is a textbook proposition that provisions of the Constitution can neither be diluted nor ignored.”

He added, “I am appalled that a leader of your stature should be even contemplating that in making visits the governor has to obtain orders of the government. Surprising that you became aware of this constitutionally untenable provision at a time when my visits are to share the pain and agony of suffering people. I am just not persuaded by your stance. There would be no sane takers of this.”

Muslim man praised for performing last rites of Hindu friend

AKSHAYA KUMAR SHOO
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 12

Praises continue to pour in for Rahmat Ali, a Muslim man hailing from Odisha’s Sundergarh, as he actively participated in the funeral of his Hindu friend who died of Covid-19 last week.

According to reports, a 40-year-old man named Sanatan Patel of Bandhapali area in Sundergarh died while undergoing treatment at a Covid hospital. His body was taken to the nearby crematorium for last rites.

When Rahmat Ali got the shocking news of his friend’s death, he immediately rushed to the crematorium where he along with the crematorium staff members performed the last rites with complete adherence to Covid-19 guidelines.

He also changed ‘Ram Nam Satya Hai, Hari Nam Satya Hai’ while carrying the bier along with the deceased’s relatives to the crematorium at Ranibagicha.

“The Covid-19 Pandemic has affected us like nothing else in our lifetimes and it has taught us that humanity is above everything else. Rahamat’s act inspires hope in these times of despair and despondency,” Sidhant Panda, a staff member of the crematorium said on Wednesday.

“Amidst plethora of disturbing images of the dead being abandoned and denied a dignified funeral, even by the near and dear ones, Rahmat Ali’s act not gives a message that humanity transcends all barriers of faith, but also teaches us how to surmount the evils of fear and stigma in these dark times,” said R P Gupta, a noted social activist of Sundergarh.

When Rahmat Ali got the shocking news of his friend’s death, he immediately rushed to the crematorium where he along with the crematorium staff members performed the last rites with complete adherence to Covid-19 guidelines

Odisha to vaccinate sadhus, saints, nomads and non-ID proof holders

AKSHAYA KUMAR SHOO
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 12

The Odisha government on Wednesday decided to administer Covid-19 vaccine to vulnerable people who don’t possess any identity proofs.

In a letter to all the collectors and Municipal Corporation Commissioners, additional chief secretary to the government, P K Mohapatra, asked to immediately identify such persons and bring them under the inoculation process.

“In all the phases of Covid-19 vaccination drive, it has been pre-

scribed that the beneficiary must register in the COWIN portal. The beneficiary has to register in the portal with one of the seven prescribed ID proofs. However, some vulnerable groups of citizens may not possess any of the seven prescribed identity cards. Such vulnerable persons may not be denied for Covid-19 vaccination for absence of identity proof. Hence, there is a need to provide special consideration for Covid-19 vaccination of the vulnerable population, as these beneficiaries are also at risk of exposure to Covid-19

infection,” Mr Mohapatra wrote in the letter.

“Such groups of people include nomads (including sadhu/saints from various religions), prison inmates, inmates in mental health Institutions, citizens in old age homes, roadside beggars, people residing in rehabilitation centers/camps and any other identified eligible persons, aged 18 years or more, and not having any of above prescribed individual photo ID cards. The COWIN portal will provide the facility for creation of special vaccination sessions for this purpose,” the official said.

JAB | SAFETY

Pregnant women make antibodies after vaccination and transfer them to babies

Vaccines don’t damage placenta: Study

New Delhi, May 12: Covid-19 vaccines may be safe during pregnancy, suggests a study that found no evidence of injury to the placenta in pregnant women who received the preventive.

The first-of-its-kind study, published on Tuesday in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology, adds to the growing literature that Covid-19 vaccines are safe in pregnancy.

“The placenta is like the

black box in an airplane. If something goes wrong with a pregnancy, we usually see changes in the placenta that can help us figure out what happened,” said Jeffery Goldstein, assistant professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in the US.

“From what we can tell, the Covid vaccine does not damage the placenta,” Goldstein said.

The researchers noted that there is a lot of vac-

cine hesitancy, especially among pregnant people.

“Our team hopes these data, albeit preliminary, can reduce concerns about the risk of the vaccine to the pregnancy,” said study co-author Emily Miller, assistant professor at Northwestern University.

The study authors examined the placentas from 84 vaccinated patients and 116 unvaccinated patients who delivered at a hospital in Chicago, US.

Most patients received

vaccines — either Moderna or Pfizer — during their third trimester.

Last year, the same team published a study that found placentas of women who tested positive for the Covid-19 virus while pregnant showed abnormal blood flow between mother and baby in utero.

Pregnant patients who want to get vaccinated to avoid contracting the disease should feel safe doing so, Miller said.

“We are beginning to

move to a framework of protecting foetuses through vaccination, rather than from vaccination,” Miller said.

In April, the scientists published a study showing pregnant women make Covid antibodies after vaccination and successfully transfer them to their foetuses. “Until infants can get vaccinated, the only way for them to get Covid antibodies is from their mother,” Goldstein said.

The placenta is the first

organ that forms during pregnancy. It performs duties for most of the foetus’ organs while they are still forming, such as providing oxygen while the lungs develop and nutrition while the gut is forming. According to the researchers, the placenta manages hormones and the immune system, and tells the mother’s body to welcome and nurture the foetus rather than reject it as a foreign intruder.

—PTI

<div style="text-align: center;">  GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HULICAL (SELECTION GRADE) TOWN PANCHAYAT, NILGIRIS DISTRICT SPECIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (SADP)- 2020-2021 Tender Notice </div>						
L.No. 79 / 2020			Date : 12.05.2021			
1. Tender Inviting Authority Designation, Address : Executive Officer, Hulical Town Panchayat, The Nilgiris District-643 102						
Sl. No.	Name of the work	Package	Type of work	Ward Number	Value put to tender (Rs. in lakhs)	EMD Amount. in Rs. (Rounded to ten ten Rupees)
1	Improvements to Anipallam ST Village road @ Km 1/8 to 3/2 with Pipe Culvert, Surface Drain and Breast Wall	1	CC Road	16	110.00	110000.00
2. Place of Execution : Within/Hulical Panchayat						
3. Bid document available (at free of cost) : http://tenders.gov.in and http://townpanchayats.tn.gov.in/tender						
4. Due date, time and place for the submission of bids (ie- submission is also permitted) : 28.05.2021 up to 3.00 P.M in the Office of the Executive Officer, Hulical Town Panchayat. In the event of specified date for submission of bids declared a holiday, bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.						
5. Date, time and place of opening of Tender : 28.05.2021 at 3.30 P.M in the Office of the Hulical Town Panchayat. Selection will be based on the least cost, among the technically qualified bidders.						
6. Any other important criteria by the tender inviting authority : Can be seen in the tender document. Any clarification required may be sought from the office of Hulical Town Panchayat during office hours on all working days.						
Sd/- Executive Officer, Hulical (Sel) Gri Town Panchayat, Hulical - The Nilgiris						

DECCAN Chronicle

13 MAY 2021

Be grateful for ideas, don't cast them in partisan light

The abject failure of the Union government in anticipating, and preparing the nation for, the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19 seems to have unsettled the ruling dispensation with its leading lights jeering at every criticism, instead of offering an answer. The practical suggestions former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had listed in his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi were met with an uncharacteristically scornful reply by health minister Harsh Vardhan. And now the letter BJP president J.P. Nadda has written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi in reply to the Congress Working Committee's criticism that the Centre has abdicated its role in fighting the pandemic is another example. As the principal Opposition party, the Congress would be failing in its job if it does not call out the lapses of the government and force it to correct its course. The government needs to answer it but the BJP has chosen to do the job, seeing it as a political issue. It hardly is.

The BJP president's letter essentially questions the credentials of the questioner, instead of rebutting the points in a way that behoves the ruling party. To the criticism about the shortage of vaccines, Mr Nadda says state governments had demanded decentralisation of the vaccination programme. This is specious because it is not the entry of the states in the market that has created the shortage; it's the complete lack of planning by the Centre, which went to the town about launching the "world's largest inoculation drive", that has created the present situation where the states are forced to wind up their vaccination camps for shortage of doses. The shortage was felt even before the third phase of vaccination, to be taken up by the states, started. The states never wanted to pay twice or four times the price the Centre pays the vaccine manufacturers for each dose; nor did they ask for organising a competition with one another and the private sector for vaccines. Now several states, including those ruled by the BJP, are forced to float global tenders for sourcing the vaccine.

The BJP president says the Opposition parties were less appreciative of the achievements of Indian scientists in developing the vaccine. Everyone will join Mr Nadda when he says the vaccine that is made in India should be a matter of national pride but his overplaying the nationalistic cap will be unacceptable. True, there were sceptics even in the scientific community when the authorities concerned cleared the India-made vaccine for emergency use without waiting for the scientific process to get completed. Mr Nadda gives a partisan tilt to the call for adherence to the scientific process. This is unfair.

The Congress' criticism that India is witnessing a "grave calamity" was in fact shared by Mr Nadda's former colleague in the Union council of ministers, Santosh Gangwar, who put it on record in his letter to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath. Mr Gangwar was only reflecting what millions of Covid-19 patients and their dear ones have been feeling. The BJP must realise that shooting the messenger hardly helps solve issues.

Is it time to free Rajiv killers?

The clamour for the release of seven Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convicts is bound to grow. The change in government in Tamil Nadu has given fresh impetus to what is already a state-wide push to see those involved in the periphery of the LTTE plot to kill a Prime Minister of India be freed as they have been incarcerated for close to 30 years now — May 21 will mark the 30th anniversary of the sombre event that shook the nation. The killing itself had come straight out of a Frederick Forsyth novel with belt bomber Dhanu activating the device while pretending to greet Rajiv Gandhi in Sriperumbudur when he was on a campaign visit.

The Centre has been steadfast in its refusal to countenance the release of the prisoners for life, some of whose death sentences were commuted to life. The rationale for the refusal to consider several pleas, an Assembly resolution and a Cabinet decision to recommend that they be freed on compassionate grounds has been that those associated with the killing of a Prime Minister of the land cannot be sown any mercy. The breach of security taking a PM's life — Rajiv was a former PM at the time as he had refused to try to retain his post though Congress was returned as the single largest party after the 1989 polls — was considered a national affront that hurt even more as the conspiracy was hatched outside India.

The Tamil Nadu governor, acting obviously on orders from the Centre, sat on the matter of freeing many who had spent their entire youth in jail, including for the possibly innocent act of procuring a nine-volt battery for the detonator. The LTTE was subsequently decimated after a civil war that lasted over 25 years and Rajiv Gandhi's wife and children had also forgiven the killers. The sentiment in Tamil Nadu is overwhelmingly in favour of the prisoners' release but it is complicated as it involves foreigners. Whether cold-blooded conspirators in assassinating an Indian PM deserve any mercy when they should be in prison for life is another matter.

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Subhani



Will Beijing return the remains of 1962 hero?

Claude Arpi

In recent months China has given a lot of publicity to several new war memorials which have come up in Tibet; this mushrooming is probably due the Galwan incidents in which the People's Liberation Army lost some 45 men and officers in July 2020, although this information is still a state secret within China (it took months for Beijing to finally admit four Chinese had died in the brawl with Indian troops).

On May 6, *China Tibet Net* published pictures of the Lhoka (Shannan) Martyrs' Cemetery. This sub-district of the Tibet Military Region (TMD) faces the northern borders of Bhutan and the western part of the McMahon Line, north of the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

The article says: "Among the green pines and cypresses is the solemn Shannan Martyrs Cemetery, where are buried [the martyrs] of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, the Tibetan rebellion, the Sino-Indian border self-defence counter-attack, and the socialist revolution and construction in Tibet."

More than 700 soldiers are said to be buried there.

Tibet's so-called "peaceful liberation" should be read as the invasion of the Roof of the World; the Tibetan "rebellion" is the Tibetan masses' uprising against the occupiers in March 1959 while "the self-defence counterattack" is the treacherous attack against India in October 1962.

Along with the memorial, "sculptures, manuscripts, pictures, certificates of merit, military medals... all cultural relics, silent and sacred, telling the infinite loyalty and love of revolutionary martyrs to the motherland and people."

Similar memorials can be found in Gar and Tsanda in Ngari Prefecture (Western Tibet), in Rima (north of Kibithu in Lohit Valley) and of course in Lhasa and Shigatse; the most important one is Kanxiwar Memorial on the Highway 219 (Aksai Chin road) in Xinjiang, which pays homage to the hundreds of Chinese soldiers who lost their life in the battle of Rezang-la in November 1962.

While there is nothing wrong in China honouring its soldiers, it is shocking that Beijing has never returned the remains of Subedar Joginder Singh, Param Vir Chakra, who died in Tibet in November 1962.

What happened to Joginder Singh? In the morning of October 20, 1962, a JCO of the Assam Rifles posted at Bumla, north of Tawang, noticed some 1,000 labourers, with digging implements; they came protected by Chinese soldiers. The JCO rushed to inform the nearby platoon of a possible danger.

Nothing happened till 4.30 am on October 23, when suddenly the Chinese started firing with mortars and anti-tank guns to destroy Indian bunkers built south of the international border, and soon 600 Chinese attacked the Assam Rifles post, which was quickly overrun, though after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Subedar Joginder Singh of 1 Sikh Regiment was posted a few hundred metres away. According to the official report of the 1962 War: "The enemy attacked the forward platoon position of 'D' Coy [Company] of the Sikhs at the IB [Inspection Bungalow] Ridge, at about 5:00 hrs with the objective of capturing 'Twin Peaks'. As the climb from the bed of the nullah to the platoon position was steep,

the Sikhs were able to inflict heavy casualties to the Chinese, compelling them to retire."

Joginder Singh immediately asked for more ammunition, but by that time the enemy had cut the communications with the company headquarters. Joginder Singh fought like lion, he was badly wounded in the process and then taken prisoner.

The citation for the PVC gave more details: "In this fierce action, the platoon lost half of its men but not the will to fight. Subedar Joginder Singh, despite a wound in the thigh, refused evacuation. His platoon also refused to yield any ground to the enemy. The last wave of the Chinese attack, which was more determined and more forceful, followed next. Now the platoon had very few men left to fight. Subedar Joginder Singh, therefore, manned a light machine gun and killed a large number of enemies. But he could not stem the tide of the enemy advance single-handed. The Chinese continued advancing with little concern for the casualties."

The report concluded: "While in the enemy's custody he died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery."

Joginder was very badly wounded. When a few days later he arrived at the PoWs' camp near Chongye in central Tibet, Chinese doctors immediately suggested an amputation (he was also suffering from frostbites), which the brave subedar refused; his chances of being promoted to *Subedar-Major*, the senior-most rank for a JCO (junior commissioned officer) would be jeopardised.

The report concluded: 'While in the enemy's custody he [Joginder Singh] died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery.'

The Chinese doctors asked the Indian commanding officers in the camp to try to convince Joginder it was necessary if he wanted to survive. But the Indian officers failed to do so and soon after Joginder passed away. This was sometime in November 1962.

Ironically, it is at Bumla, the place where Joginder fought so well, that the first wounded jawans were repatriated by the Indian Red Cross on December 15.

In his memoirs, one of the COs remembered that on March 23, 1963, the PoWs were informed that Maj. Gurdial Singh of the Rajputs, who was in the camp, was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. At the same time, they probably heard of the PVC for Joginder Singh.

The officer noted: "On 26 March 1963, the commandant of the camp called us to tell us we were going to be returned to India via the mainland." He further recalled: "Before leaving the PoW camp, we asked the Chinese to take us to the graves of our soldiers who had died in our camp. There were seven of them, including Subedar Joginder Singh, who had been awarded the highest gallantry award, the PVC. We were told by the Chinese that he had refused to have his toes, which were affected by frostbite [and bullet wounds], amputated... He [had] died of gangrene."

Incidentally, a war memorial has recently been constructed to honour the PVC awardee at Bum La; it was inaugurated by Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu, with Joginder's family and Army representatives present. It is a first step in the right direction, but it is time for New Delhi to ask the Chinese government to repatriate to India the mortal remains of the brave Sikh soldier as well as his six other companions still buried in Tibet.

It would only be late justice.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

MAKE IT SEPARATE

The people are being vaccinated at both private and government hospitals and vaccination centres. To prevent the spreading of the coronavirus it would be in the interest of the people if a vaccination programme is not set up in hospitals. The Madras High Court also has rightly recommended the same. Separate centres and buildings or blocks where no covid-19 patients are admitted or undergoing treatment or where no tests (RT-PCR) are taken could be used. Doctors, nurses and other staff should be allotted exclusively for vaccination purposes and should not be allowed to attend to the covid-19 patients or related work.

M.C. Vijay Shankar,
Chennai

NEED SWIFT ACTION

The rampage of the ongoing second wave of the pandemic has brought back memories of the gory days of the British colonial era marked by pestilence and famines when the poor just floated their dead down the nearest rivers. So-called tall claims of "New India" by the ruling dispensation led by BJP at the Centre were literally washed away on the banks of the holy river Ganga in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where State authorities have continued to recover bodies of suspected Covid-19 victims. The antiquated public health infrastructure of UP coupled with the callousness of the state administration led by its Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in addressing the desperate pleadings of its people for medical oxygen and hospital beds have now turned the state an ideal place for the virus to have a free run. It is time the UP government sets its priorities right and turns the focus away from crushing the voices of dissent criticising its inept handling of the second wave and initiate steps to save human lives from the jaws of death.

Jeyaram,
Sholavandan

Ashwani Kumar



Amid grief as Covid surges, India needs divine mercy!

Driven by a compelling need to unburden an unbearable sense of grief, this article is also a supplication for divine mercy in these calamitous times. It is about the moral impoverishment of an ancient society and wanton abandonment of empathy, that is an essential condition of our coexistence.

Proud citizens of a resurgent nation that seeks a place on the high table of global politics have been reduced to beggary — begging for a gasp of breath, a ventilator, a hospital bed and medicines, a chance to be vaccinated on a non-discriminatory basis, transportation of the sick and the deceased, sources of information for medical relief and, above all, a cylinder of oxygen to buy time in a hope to live, have robbed us of our innate dignity which defines our humanity. The trauma of seeing a loved one slip away gasping for breath while struggling to hold on to life, wanting to live, is a burden too heavy to carry, and I should know, having lost my wife to lung failure. That she did not go due to lack of oxygen seems like a divine benediction today.

And we die a thousand deaths suffering the loss of our soul every time our dignity is wounded, when the dead do not find space in cremation grounds, when bodies are piled one upon the other waiting to be cremated even as unending funeral pyres test the boundaries of our grief, when the helpless die in rickshaws, scooters and makeshift ambulances outside hospital gates for want of oxygen or hospitalisation — alone and in the cold without family or friends, when the nearest and dearest ones are forced to turn away or when nurses steal critical drugs to profiteer over human misery. When an elderly patient gives up his bed to save the life of a younger person or when the allocation of a ventilator depends on the age of the patient, we know what we are or have become — a savage society.

How else can we respond to Sahir Ludhianvi's damning interrogatory: "Kahan hain, kahan hain muhafiz khudi ke" (Whither the sentinels of honour), except by way of humble repentance for our moral, political and societal excesses? Living with the thought of dying alone with no one to

hold our hand in the last moments, not able to feel the warmth of those who are integral to our lives... remains a mourning in perpetuity.

Loneliness, as Mother Teresa had reminded us, is about the feeling of being unloved. Thoughts about the futility of human relationships and about the dispensability of those who define us have added to an unprecedented sense of aloneness. Gulzar's poignant verse depicting a decline in human togetherness even in normal times has an added resonance today: "Zindagi yun hui basar tanha, kafil saath aur safar tanha" (Life lived alone, surrounded by a crowd). And now we are compelled to be alone even in death. Hopefully, this will not be the life we want for the generations to come.

Wailing mothers, grieving children and the helplessness of marginalised people mock our politics and proclaim a failure of the dignitarian promise of our national charter. Our "raucous" democracy remains enthralled with electoral triumphs and the vanquishing of political opponents even as the

nation's soul is scarred beyond all recognition. The political parties are complicit in their failure to prevent large gatherings, protest movements or religious congregations — all of which are responsible for the pandemic's massive surge across the country. Our exalted institutions of democracy, including Parliament, the Election Commission and even the Supreme Court, have failed the nation. Despite its celebrated jurisprudence on human rights issues, our highest court's inability to issue binding judicial dikats against the holding of massive electoral rallies during the time of a pandemic is wholly inexplicable considering the indisputable evidence that huge physical gatherings compromise the social distancing norms and the legally enforceable Covid-related protocols. An eloquent newspaper headline about a high court sums up in varying degrees the unintended but failure nevertheless, of our constitutional institutions. It reads: "High court hearing, plea to get ICU bed, man dies in wait". (*Indian Express*, May 1)

Clearly, in matters of life and death,

judicial inaction cannot be passed off as an act of judicial restraint. The constitutional courts with a large remit need not be reminded that securing the right to life is the first charge on the exercise of judicial power and that in moments of test, justice and judgment cannot lie apart.

Politicians for their part must know that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" and that the excesses of power are invariably called to account. We must all accept that the embrace of humility coupled with a rejection of hubris is, in the order of things, both a sign of strength and a condition of our existence. Although the anguish and deep sorrow that drives this article is beyond the "realm of articulate thought", the soaring and silent ache in the heart begs no expression. We know that grief, felt in the innermost recesses of our being, heals even if it is a terrible burden of being, and that "God brings men in deep waters not to drown them but to cleanse them".

The writer is a former Union

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,690.80	-0.96
Nifty 50	14,696.50	-1.04
S&P 500*	4,103.24	-1.18
Dollar (₹)	73.42	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.78	-0.12
Euro (₹)	89.10	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,074	229 0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.54	1.44
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.010	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.668	0.044

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Nod for ₹18,100 cr PLI scheme for battery storage

New Delhi: The government approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promoting battery storage at an estimated outlay of Rs 18,100 crore. With the objective to promote the 'Make in India' initiative, the National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage is expected to attract investment of Rs 45,000 crore, information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said.

EU economy to expand, bouncing back from slump



Brussels: The European Union economy is set to bounce back this year after the deep Coronavirus recession and member states are forecast to have recouped the ground that they had lost by the end of next year. In its latest forecast, the EU's executive commission said that growth in the 27-nation bloc is predicted to expand by 4.2% this year, a significant uptick from a February prediction of 3.7%.

\$376 mn outflow in India-focussed offshore, ETFs

New Delhi: India-focused offshore funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of \$376 million in three months ended March 2021, making it the twelfth consecutive quarter of withdrawal, according to a Morningstar report released on Wednesday. This was markedly lower than the net outflows of USD 986 million registered during the quarter ended December 2020.

SoftBank sets record with \$17.7bn profit

Tokyo: SoftBank Group Corp. reported a \$17.7 billion fourth-quarter profit, setting a new record for Japan thanks to an unprecedented windfall from its investment business. The net income was 1.93 trillion yen in the three months ended March 31, according to a filing by SoftBank on Wednesday. That's the highest ever for a listed Japanese company in any quarter dating back to 1990.



Food basket inflation at 2%; manufacturing surges

Inflation eases, IIP up

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MAY 12

With the easing of food prices, India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index or CPI, slowed to 4.29 per cent in April 2021, while industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production or IIP, grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year-ago, government data showed on Wednesday.

The CPI data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, however, showed that inflation in the food basket was 2.02 per cent in April, down from 4.87 per cent in the preceding month. The consumer retail inflation was predicted to cool to 4.2 per



cent in April, just above the RBI's 4 per cent target and down from March's four-month high of 5.52 per cent, according to a Reuters poll which was taken over the past week.

Meanwhile, the industrial output, or IIP, on the whole grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year-ago. Despite the massive spread of Covid-19 across the country in its second

wave, industrial activities were not hampered to a great extent.

A separate data, released by the National Statistics Office, also showed that the manufacturing sector output surged 25.8 per cent in March 2021. "Besides, mining output too climbed 6.1 per cent and power generation increased by 22.5 per cent in March. The IIP had shrunk by 18.7 per cent in March 2020," it showed.

As per the data, during 2020-21, the IIP contracted 8.6 per cent compared to 0.8 per cent contraction in 2019-20. Industrial production has been hit due to the Covid-19 pandemic since March last year when it contracted by 18.7 per cent.

The IIP had registered a growth of 5.2 per cent in February last year.

IEA SAYS OIL GLUT GONE EVEN AS DEMAND FORECAST CUT ON INDIA

GRANT SMITH MAY 12

The International Energy Agency said the supply glut created by the global pandemic has cleared, even as demand suffers a blow from a resurgence of the virus in India.

Surplus oil inventories in developed nations are now just a small fraction of the levels seen when demand collapsed last year, with output cuts by OPEC and its allies draining the excess, the IEA said on Wednesday. Still, the agency sees a temporary setback for global consumption as infections rock India, before the recovery resumes later in the year.

"Bloated world oil inventories that built up during last year's COVID-19 demand shock have returned to more normal levels," the IEA said in its monthly report. "But India's COVID crisis is a reminder that the outlook for oil demand is mired in uncertainty. Until the pandemic is brought under control, market volatility is likely to persist."

Oil markets have extended their recovery as fuel consumption roars back in China and the US, buoying crude prices to about US\$69 a barrel in London. — Bloomberg

U.S. REVERSES TRUMP JAB, REMOVES XIAOMI FROM BLACKLIST

May 12: The US Defence Department will remove China's Xiaomi Corp from a government blacklist, a court filing showed, marking a reversal by the Biden administration of one of Donald Trump's last jabs at Beijing before exiting office.

The court filing said the company and the US government would agree to resolve their ongoing litigation, bringing to an end a brief and controversial spat between the hardware company and Washington that had further soured Sino-US ties.

A Xiaomi spokeswoman said the company is watching the latest developments closely, without elaborating.

Shares in the company jumped over 6 per cent in Hong Kong as news of the decision spread. The company's share price has tumbled roughly 20 per cent since it was placed on the blacklist in January in the waning days of the Trump administration.

The defence department did not immediately comment. A justice department spokeswoman declined to comment.

The department had designated the firm as having ties to China's military and placed it on a list that would restrict US investment in the company.

Xiaomi went on the offensive by filing a lawsuit against the US government, calling its placement "unlawful and unconstitutional" and denying any ties to China's military. — Reuters

Job postings decline yearly, sequential fall

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 12

Amid the second wave of the pandemic, online job postings saw a decline in April, both against March 2021 as well as lockdown-hit April 2020.

The employment index saw a decline in job posting activity in April 2021 compared to the previous month by 3 per cent. Overall job postings have declined by 4 per cent year-on-year in April 2021 compared to April 2020, Monster.com said.

The job postings for entry-level roles have declined by 5 per cent month-on-month in April 2021 against March 2021. The decline in postings is due to the onset of the second wave of the pandemic leading to lockdowns, Monster.com reported.

Industries that exhibited the highest decline in job postings compared to the previous month include engineering, cement, construction, iron and steel, which declined 15 per cent, retail 14 per cent, FMCG, food and packaged food 12 per cent and logistics, courier/ freight/ transportation 12 per cent.

Meanwhile, industries such as travel and tourism declined 52 per cent, education 34 per cent, engineering, cement, construction, iron/ steel 26 per cent as of April 2021 compared to April 2020.

Online job postings in Delhi were down 1 per cent and Mumbai 2 per cent in April compared to March. Cities like Baroda



with a 10 per cent decline and Jaipur with 5 per cent have been the most impacted sequentially.

However, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai reported significant increase in the number of job postings year-on-year and marginal growth month-on-month. Agrobased industries, chemicals/ plastic/ rubber, paints, fertilizer/ pesticides and printing/ packaging recorded good growth over April 2020. Software and hardware, telecom and shipping and marine too saw growth in April.

"The second wave of the pandemic and various intensities of lockdowns across the country have impacted hiring activity. However, hiring activity in cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai indicate a positive uptick, and year-on-year growth across certain sectors and functions have been witnessed. These are positive indicators that we are better equipped to face the impact this year compared to April 2020," said Sekhar Garisa, CEO of Monster.com.

DISHEARTENING TO HEAR STATES COMPLAINING, SAYS BHARAT BIO

New Delhi, May 12: It is quite disheartening to listen to some states complaining about Bharat Biotech's intentions regarding supply of COVID vaccine Covaxin, a top company official said on Wednesday.

In a tweet, Bharat Biotech Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella said the company has already dispatched Covaxin lots to 18 states on May 10.

"18 states have been covered though in smaller shipments. Quite disheartening to the teams to hear some states complaining about our intentions. 50 of our employees are off work due to covid, yet we continue to work under pandemic lockdowns 24x7 for U," she said in a tweet.

The Hyderabad-based firm is supplying Covaxin to 18 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jharkhand and Delhi. Other states are Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal. — PTI

FMCG industry grows record 9.4%

New Delhi, May 12: The Indian FMCG industry has recorded a 9.4 per cent growth in the January-March quarter of 2021, helped by a consumption-led growth and value growth by increased prices of products, especially of staples, said data analytics firm Nielsen.

The rural market continued to perform with strong growth of 14.6 per cent during the period and the metro markets have registered a positive growth after two quarters.

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry sales growth from the tra-

ditional trade channels jumped to double digits, while growth in e-commerce normalised down to single digits in the January-March quarter.

"FMCG industry in India has built growth momentum by growing at 9.4 per cent in the quarter ending March 2021 after growing at 7.3 per cent in the previous quarter (October-December 2020), over the same quarter of the previous year," said FMCG Snapshot for Q1 2021 released by NielsenIQ's Retail Intelligence team.

NielsenIQ South Asia

Lead Diptanshu Ray said: "This is backed up by staples, essential non-foods and indulgence categories." He cautioned that the beginning of the second quarter may bring some new dimensions, as the situation is dynamic. "Now that lockdowns have resurfaced, and with last-mile delivery boost up, the e-commerce channel will continue to be dynamic," it said.

According to the report, metros have registered a growth of 2.2 per cent in the January-March quarter after two-quarters of decline. — PTI

New Covid-19 lockdowns hit vehicle sales: Siam

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MAY 12

The Covid-19 pandemic induced partial lockdown in several states hit sales of cars, SUVs, vans, bikes and scooters during April as showrooms remained shut while those open wore a deserted look.

On Wednesday the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers or Siam said passenger vehicles sales in April fell 10 per cent at 2,61,633 units compared with 2,90,939 units sold in March 2021. No year-on-year comparison data is available due to total national lockdown in April 2020 which led to zero sales in that month.

Sales of two-wheelers also fell 33 per cent last month at 9,95,097 compared with 14,96,806 units sold in March.

While sales of three-wheelers dropped 57 per cent at 13,728 units, the all categories of vehicles plunged 30 per cent at 12,70,458 units.

While showrooms remain shut in most parts of the country, automakers have been forced to advance their maintenance shutdown by a month to May due to a number of business disruptions.

Maruti Suzuki, Hero MotoCorp, Honda Cars, Honda Motorcycles and Scooter, Toyota Kirloskar, MG Motor, Yamaha and Mahindra & Mahindra announced temporary plant closures. Other companies like Tata Motors are rationalising output as per demand.

Since retail off-take has been impacted, automakers are trying to avoid a pile of inventory by cutting back on production.

The lockdown has hit the supply chain involving component suppliers.

"Supply chain related production challenges continue with the lockdown restrictions in many parts of the country. The demand has been clearly impacted by the second wave of Covid-19, both in terms of low consumer sentiments and closure of dealerships due to lockdown restrictions," Rajesh Menon, Director General at Siam, said.

On May 10, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association or

FADA also reported lower sales during April based on the vehicle registration data sourced from the regional transport offices. When compared to the previous month of March, FADA said in April 2021 total vehicle registrations were down 28.15 per cent at 11,85,374 units versus 16,49,678 units.

Passenger vehicle registrations were down 25.33 per cent at 2,08,883 units in April, as against 2,79,745 units in March this year, while those of 2W declined by 27.63 per cent at 8,65,134 units, as against

11,95,445 in the previous month, it pointed out.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, UP, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Goa are some of the states that have announced full lockdowns, putting automotive sales in the non-essential category.

"The first nine days of May have seen extremely lean sales due to lockdown announced by a majority of states. Even where dealerships are open, the walk-ins have dropped to 30 per cent and customers are delaying their decision," FADA said.

DII stake in Nifty 500 at 14.3%

Mumbai, May 12: As foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have increased their holding in the domestic stocks, domestic institutional investors (DII) have been net sellers, and their stake in Nifty-500 stocks declined to a seven-quarter low of 14.3 per cent in the march 2021 quarter, shows a brokerage analysis.

On an annualised basis, the overall FPI ownership in Nifty-500 stocks rose 160 bps to 22.3 per cent in the March quarter from 20.7 per cent in March 2020, while that of DIIs

declined 50 bps to 14.2 per cent from 14.7 per cent in March 2020.

On a quarterly basis, the same FPIs saw a 20 bps decline from the December 2020 quarter, and DIIs witnessed decline by 10 bps, show data from domestic brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In the March quarter, while foreign portfolio investors pumped \$7.3 billion into domestic equities, domestic institutional funds saw a net outflow of \$3.2 billion. It indicates that vastly divergent

sequential trends are seen between FPI and DII purchases of equities, it said.

While FPIs increased weights in two-thirds of the sectors (telecom, metals, consumer durables, realty, and cement), DIIs trimmed weights on these sectors in particular and the overall market in general between the December and March quarters.

The overall FPI ownership in Nifty-500 grew 160 bps year-on-year to 22.3 per cent while DII holdings were down 50 bps down year-on-year to 14.3 per cent, — PTI

GOOD TIMES

Once-in-a-decade opportunity sees new highs; BSE IT Index rises 101%

IT, metal, small-cap focused funds top MFs' harvest

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 12

The last one-year period has brought bumper returns for mutual fund investors, that is seen once in a decade.

No less than 14 schemes have returned more than 100 per cent during the last one year period. Even the largest funds managed by HDFC Mutual Fund and ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund falling in the safer hybrid category balanced advantage fund have generated 40 to 60 per cent returns compared to around 60 per cent returns given by almost all large cap equity

funds. Mid-cap equity funds return range between 59 and 78 per cent while the small-cap equity funds have turned the table this year with 80-100 per cent or more in return for most of the funds in the sub-category.

Said Ravi Singhal, vice chairman, GCL Securities, "Such opportunities come once in ten years. After the 2008 financial crisis, select mutual funds had displayed similar performance in 2009. Otherwise, in general, one should not expect more than 15-20 per cent yearly return from the stock market and equity-orient-



ed mutual funds."

"The BSE IT index has given a 101 per cent return in the last one year. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, IT stocks were investors choice, as these companies are getting mammoth deals. Owing to

reasons such as an increase in the Work From Home (WFH), change in business tactics, use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud, online advertising and social media, increase in internet consumption and many more, the IT sector remained an outperformer. Looking at these factors, IT stocks will remain agile during the pandemic," Singhal said.

The BSE Metal Index has given an outstanding return of 182 per cent in last one-year period.

"Due to the low-interest rates, metal demand has increased significantly across the world. As per

recent data, home sales in the USA have remained the highest since 2007. Moreover, rising housing and infrastructure demand in China will further augment the metal demand. These factors are helping the metal sector to outdo this excellent performance for one more year," Singhal said.

Small cap companies have displayed fairly good performance, the BSE small cap index return was at 99.51 per cent in the last one year.

"Due to the COVID-19 challenge, a limitation in boundaries is helping the small cap companies. Owing to a new taxation

system, small companies are finding it easier to fight with large companies. On account of fewer imports from China due to the cold war situation and border tussles, small cap companies are immensely benefiting," Singhal said.

The IT sector funds with over 100 per cent return as on April 27, include ICICI Prudential Technology Fund (154%), Tata Digital India Fund (113%), Aditya Birla Sun Life Digital India Fund (113%).

The small-cap funds include Quant Small Cap Fund (175%), Kotak Small-cap Fund (114%), Nippon India Small-cap Fund (102%).

SHORT TAKES

NZ 'keeper Watling to retire after WTC

Wellington: New Zealand wicket-keeper batsman BJ Watling on Wednesday announced that he will end his over-decade-long career in all forms of cricket after the World Test Championship final against India next month. New Zealand will also play two Tests against hosts England before the WTC final against India in Southampton from June 18. The 35-year-old has been a stalwart of the Test side since debuting in 2009 as an opener, going on to establish himself as a world-class keeper-batsman and claiming numerous records in his 73 Tests to date. The Northern Districts gloveman had been pondering his options for a while. "It's the right time," said Watling. The announcement of Watling's retirement was also expedited by his expected omission from the player contracts list. — PTI

Perera appointed Sri Lanka skipper

Colombo: Wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Perera was on Wednesday named Sri Lanka's ODI captain with Kusal Mendis as his deputy for the away series against Bangladesh this month. Perera, who has represented Sri Lanka in 101 ODIs, 22 Tests and 47 T20Is, takes over the reins from Dimuth Karunaratne who has been dropped along with Angelo Mathews and Lahiru Thirimanne. — PTI

Squad: Kusal Perera (capt), Kusal Mendis (vice-capt), Danushka Gunathilaka, Dhananjaya Silva, Pathum Nissanka, Dasun Shanaka, Ashen Bandara, Wanindu Hasaranga, Isuru Udana, Akila Dananjaya, Niroshan Dickwella, Dushmantha Chameera, Ramesh Mendis, Asitha Fernando, Lakshan Sandakan, Chamika Karunaratne, Binura Fernando, Shiran Fernando.

Need competitions before Oly: Neeraj

Mumbai: The training has gone along just fine but Olympic-bound star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Wednesday said he is desperate for some competition ahead of the Tokyo Games given that two years have simply been "wasted" because of injury and the Covid-19 pandemic. The 23-year-old, who is being seen as a strong medal hope in Tokyo, said he has been coordinating with the Sports Authority of India to get some competition exposure. "I am trying to give my 100 per cent in training and have been training as I used to do before. The focus on training is good and it is happening well. But I am in need of competitions and we are trying for it," he said. "It has been over two years that I haven't played international competitions," added Neeraj. — PTI

RP Singh loses his father to Covid-19

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Rudra Pratap Singh lost his father to Covid-19 on Wednesday. The 35-year-old left-arm pacer from Uttar Pradesh informed about the death of his father Shiv Prasad Singh on twitter. "It is with deepest grief and sadness we inform the passing away of my father, Mr Shiv Prasad Singh. He left for his heavenly abode on 12th May after suffering from Covid. We request you to keep my beloved father in your thoughts and prayers. RIP Papa," he tweeted. RP Singh represented India in 14 Tests, 58 ODIs and 10 T20Is before hanging his boots in September 2018. — PTI

Semenya held for reckless driving

Cape Town: Olympic champion Caster Semenya was sentenced to 50 hours of community service for speeding while driving in South Africa, prosecutors said on Wednesday. The runner was arrested last Thursday and released on \$35 bail, the National Prosecuting Authority said in a statement. Semenya appeared in court in the capital, Pretoria, on Friday and pleaded guilty to the offense, the NPA said. — AP

ALL-ROUND VALUE

Bowling coach says Shardul has proved with the bat too

New Delhi, May 12: India bowling coach Bharat Arun on Wednesday said Shardul Thakur has what it takes to be the fast-bowling all-rounder that the team has needed ever since Hardik Pandya's back injury restricted his role with the ball. Pandya was not included in the Test team for the tour of England as he "was not in a position to bowl", according to the BCCI.

Arun said that while the selectors will have the last word on finding the next set of options, Thakur has certainly made a case for himself.

"It is more of a selectors' job to find them and then we can develop those all-rounders. Shardul has proved he can be an all-rounder. What he did in Australia was fabulous," Arun said.

Pandya last played Test cricket for India in 2018, during the tour of England. He has been battling a back injury since 2019 and recently, during the IPL, also picked up a shoulder niggles.

Arun agreed that finding someone as good as Pandya would be a very tough job.

"I wish you could just wish and develop bowlers like that. Hardik is an outstanding talent, but unfortunately, he had to undergo a back operation and then it's not very easy to come back after that," he said.

"He bowled against England, I thought he did a really good job. But, to sustain that we need to manage him well and build on his strength," he added.

The two-Test old Thakur was mighty impressive in the only longest format game he played in the away series against Australia.

— PTI



A file photo of India bowling coach Bharat Arun (left) with Shardul Thakur.

Dravid picked Aussie brains: Greg

Sydney, May 12: Rahul Dravid picked Australian brains to create a talent identification system better than Australia in India, the legendary Greg Chappell has said, lamenting the current lack of a similar structure in his own country that was "one of the best at developing young players."

"Chappell said that both India and England have

overtaken Australia as the best in recognising young talent and providing them a platform to succeed.

"India have got their act together and that's largely because Rahul Dravid has picked our brains, seen what we're doing and replicated it in India and with their much larger (population) base," told cricket.com.au.

Dravid is the Director of Cricket Operations at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. He was the head coach of India A and India under-19 cricket teams between 2016 and 2019.

Chappell, one of the finest batsmen to have played the game, cautioned that talented Australian cricketers might find their careers at

KP SAYS ECB MAY CHANGE IPL STANCE

London, May 12: Kevin Pietersen believes that England's cricket board will relent if country's top players unanimously decide to participate in the currently-suspended Indian Premier League in case it resumes in September this year. ECB's Director of Cricket Ashley Giles has indicated that their centrally contracted cricketers might not be available for the second phase of the IPL as they have international commitments which they need to honour.

"It's going to be interesting to watch how the ECB handle this issue around not allowing its best players to play IPL if it's rescheduled," Pietersen tweeted.

"When I went up against ENG, I was alone. This time, it's all their best branded players! If they stand together, they'll play IPL," said the former England captain.

— PTI

crossroads because of the domestic structure.

"Historically, we've been one of the best at developing young players and keeping them in the system, but I think that's changed in the last couple of years. I'm seeing a bunch of young players with great potential who are in limbo. That's unacceptable. We cannot afford to lose one player." — PTI



A file photo of Saina Nehwal.

Saina, Srikanth to miss Games

New Delhi, May 12: Star Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth's chances of booking berths for Tokyo Olympics are all but over after the world body on Wednesday cancelled the last qualifying event in Singapore due to the coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

The tournament organisers Singapore Badminton Association (SBA) and Badminton World Federation (BWF) jointly agreed to cancel the Singapore Open scheduled for June 1-6.

The Singapore Open, a Super 500 event on the BWF World Tour, was the last tournament offering Race To Tokyo ranking points inside the Olympic qualifying window.

"In the interests of all players, tournament personnel and the local community's health and safety, the event has been cancelled. BWF can confirm the tournament will not be rescheduled," the BWF said in a statement.

"All attempts were made by the organisers and BWF to provide a safe tournament environment for all participants. However, rising Covid-19 cases globally led to complex challenges in managing inbound travel."

The BWF said it will

The Singapore Open, a Super 500 event on the BWF World Tour, was the last tournament offering Race To Tokyo ranking points inside the Olympic qualifying window.

issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date.

The chances of London Olympics bronze-medallist Saina and Srikanth qualifying for the Olympics had hinged on the Singapore Open after the Malaysian Open (May 25 to 30) was postponed on May 7.

After the postponement of the Malaysian Open, Badminton Association of India (BAI) had reached out to the world body, seeking clarity on the qualification scenario for its shuttlers. With Singapore suspending all flights from Covid-ravaged India, it was always going to be a difficult task for the Indian players, to travel to the country for the last qualifier.

Indian shuttlers who have already made the cut for the Olympics include PV Sindhu, B Sai Praneeth and the men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy.

— PTI

OLYMPICS CANCELLATION DEMANDS GROW LOUDER

Tokyo, May 12: A full-page newspaper ad says Japanese will be "killed by politics" because the government is forcing them to endure the pandemic without vaccines. More than 300,000 people have signed a petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled. And a swimming star has faced pressure to drop out of the games. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, meanwhile, has caused anger and confusion by repeatedly vowing to skeptical lawmakers that the Olympics will be safe, even as some hospitals struggle to find beds for the sick and dying and a state of emergency was extended on Wednesday to more places in Japan.

Public frustration has even targeted Japanese swimming star Rikako Ikee who tweeted recently that she has received messages that "pained her heart" by urging her to oppose the Olympics and not attend.

Meanwhile, Japan plans to vaccinate its Olympic athletes before the Games, a move that would place them ahead of the general population as the government faces pressure over a slow rollout.

— AP



A Manchester City fan celebrates his club's EPL triumph.

— AFP

PROLIFICITY!

Manchester City win EPL title for third time in four seasons

London, May 12: Manchester City were crowned Premier League champions for the third time in four seasons after Manchester United crashed to a 2-1 defeat against Leicester on Tuesday.

Pep Guardiola's side are 10 points clear of second placed United and have wrapped up the title with three games to spare.

In the midst of a gruelling run of three games in five days, United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer effectively handed the title to arch rivals City by picking a weakened team with 10 changes.

With many of City's players watching on television, Luke Thomas' 10th minute volley put Leicester ahead before Mason Greenwood equalised five minutes later.

Cağlar Soyuncu's towering header in the 66th minute ensured City could pop the champagne corks for a title party that has seemed inevitable for months.

City were denied the chance to celebrate on Sunday when Chelsea won 2-1 at the Etihad



This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is remarkable. It is relentless

— PEP GUARDIOLA

Manchester City manager

MOST TITLES (EPL ERA)

Manchester United	13
Chelsea	5
Manchester City	5
Arsenal	3
Blackburn Rovers	1
Leicester City	1
Liverpool	1

Stadium, while United kept them waiting with a victory at Aston Villa on Sunday.

But the delay was only temporary and City, who also won the League Cup in April, can finally savour a title triumph that is all the sweeter given the obstacles they have overcome this term.

"This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one," Guardiola said.

"We will always remember this season for the way we won. I am so proud to be the manager here and of this group of players."

"They are so special. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the

consistency we have is remarkable. It is relentless."

Treble-chasing City's seventh top-flight title could be the prelude to an even greater triumph on May 29 when they face Chelsea in their first ever Champions League final.

Drained by the late finish to last season and ill-prepared due to the subsequent lack of a proper pre-season, City were slow out of the blocks.

After a dismal 1-1 draw against lowly West Bromwich Albion in December, City had won just five of their opening 12 Premier League games. It was the worst start to a season of Guardiola's managerial career, prompting the Spaniard in the startling admission that he didn't

like his team. A coronavirus outbreak in the squad added to Guardiola's problems in December.

Having surrendered the title meekly to Liverpool the previous season, it seemed City were heading for a period of regression. But Guardiola masterminded such a superb recovery that City turned the title race into a procession, giving him three Premier League crowns to go with three La Liga trophies with Barcelona and three at Bayern Munich.

Following the West Brom game, City powered to 21 successive victories in all competitions, a record for an English top-flight club, including a 4-1 rout of Liverpool at Anfield. — AFP

BARCA TITLE HOPES HANG BY A THREAD

Madrid, May 12: Lionel Messi scored a brilliant volley but Barcelona's title hopes could be over, with a 3-3 draw away at Levante on Tuesday giving Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid the chance to pull away at the top of La Liga.

Another slip could prove decisive given Atletico will move four points clear of Barca with two games left if they can win away at Real Sociedad on Wednesday. Real Madrid will edge two points ahead of Ronald Koeman's side if they win away on Thursday at Granada. There are certainly no guarantees in what has been a frenetic and thrilling title race in recent weeks, with all of Spain's four contenders stumbling down the final stretch. — AFP

UEFA BEGINS LEGAL BATTLE WITH REBELS

Lausanne, May 12: UEFA on Wednesday initiated disciplinary proceedings against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus, the three clubs yet to renounce the aborted European Super League project.

European football's governing body has appointed disciplinary inspectors to conduct an investigation regarding a potential violation of UEFA rules by the clubs "in connection with the so-called 'Super League' project", it announced.

"Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course."

UEFA last week said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still support the proposed Super League, a competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify. — AFP

TT loses a legend and brave fighter

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, MAY 12

The Indian table tennis fraternity on Wednesday expressed shock and sorrow at the demise of Arjuna awardee V. Chandrasekhar. Chandra, as he was fondly called, passed away due to Covid-19-related complications here on Wednesday. He was 63 and is survived by his wife and son.

A three-time national champion, Chandra was a stylish player with a huge fan following during his playing days. As a coach, Chandra played a key role in grooming champions such as S. Raman and G. Sathiyam. His academy in Chennai has produced many a quality player.

Sathiyam, who trained under Chandra for 14 years, said his demise felt like a personal loss. "My family was pretty close to him. I have a lot of memories which I will cherish forever. When I found out he was hospitalised, I kept calling to check on his health. He was fine for a few days but I think things went out of control in the past two days," said Sathiyam.

Veteran paddler Sharath Kamal said the sport had lost a legend. "It's a very



V. Chandrasekhar

tough loss for the fraternity. Had he continued playing, he would have brought more laurels to the country. But what happened to him, was really unfortunate," said Sharath.

Chandra's life turned upside down in 1984 after he underwent a botched knee surgery at a private hospital. His brain suffered damage, he lost control over his limbs and spent more than a month in a near-coma state. His valiant legal fight against the hospital made the headlines and he won the lawsuit later.

Raman hailed Chandra as a "fighter". "A multi-talented person before medical negligence reduced him to fight for survival. As a player he fought against the system. Remained a fighter till the very end, battling tooth and nail with Covid," said Raman, who coaches Sathiyam now.