



IN A DIFFERENT ZONE

Actor Rasika Duggal says she tries not to focus on delivering as per what people expect from her

LEISURE P2



US-INDIA CLIMATE PARTNERSHIP

Biden says he wants to achieve climate and energy goals with India and is looking forward to work on this matter

INTERNATIONAL P10



DOUBLE-HEADER TODAY

CSK take on RCB in a high-voltage clash before SRH lock horns with Delhi Capitals in Indian Premier League

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



If the situation doesn't improve soon, politicians might blame us for oxygen shortage

Lack of O₂ kills 20 COVID victims

THE COVID SITUATION IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL WORSENE WITH THE DEATH OF MORE PATIENTS FOR WANT OF OXYGEN

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 24: In a repeat nightmare within 48 hours, 20 people died Friday night at the Jaipur Golden Hospital in Delhi due to shortage of medical oxygen, a top official at the hospital said Saturday, highlighting the worsening situation in the national capital's hospitals.

"We had been allotted 3.5 metric tonnes of oxygen from the government. The supply was to reach us by 5 in the evening, but it reached around midnight. By then, 20 patients had died," Dr DK Baluja, Medical Director at Jaipur Golden Hospital, said.

At least 215 COVID patients admitted at the hospital are critical and in dire need of oxygen, he added.

The hospital has now approached the Delhi High Court for help. "There is big human tragedy coming in next few minutes in our hospital. We have already lost 20 lives." "We are gasping for oxygen. We have our doctors before you. Please save lives. Please," Jaipur Golden Hospital said in its plea.

Jaipur Golden Hospital is the second hospital in the city to sent SOS over shortage of oxygen this morning.

Earlier, Moolchand Hospital, in a tweet, appealed for urgent help from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Lt Governor Anil Bajjal. More than 130 COVID patients are on life support, it stressed.



A man breaks down after losing his relative at Jaipur Golden hospital, Rohini, New Delhi

Madhu Handa, Medical Director, Moolchand Hospital, broke down as she gave details of the situation about an hour later: "We are down to around 30 minutes (of oxygen supply) at the moment but yes, cognizance has been taken and nodal officers have responded. But I think there are other hospitals facing similar challenge. So they now have to prioritise."

Several hospitals have, over the past three days, flagged a crisis of oxygen supply, beds and medicines amid rising COVID cases, and many have approached the Delhi High Court for help.

The court has asked the Centre to strictly follow its order to provide medical oxygen to Delhi and ensure safe

passage to oxygen without obstructions. "Beg, borrow or steal," said the judges, warning the Centre that "all hell would break loose" if hospitals ran out of oxygen. Earlier, around 25 Covid-19 patients had died in the period of 24 hours in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH). It had raised an alarm for immediate need of oxygen supply Thursday evening as over 140 critical patients admitted in the hospitals were on ventilators and on oxygen support.

Along with Jaipur Golden Hospital, Moolchand Hospital, SGRH, Batra Hospital, Saturday, sent SOS messages reporting shortage of oxygen and appealed to authority to arrange it at the earliest.

Oxygen crisis claims six lives in Punjab

CHANDIGARH: At least six patients, including five COVID-19 victims, died in a private hospital in Amritsar in Punjab early Saturday after they lost oxygen supply due to its shortage. Family members of victims said there was no oxygen flowing to ventilators in Neelkanth Multispecialty Hospital, leading to their deaths.

They were informed late Friday night by hospital authorities that oxygen supply from the government was running short and they should make arrangement of it. A doctor of the hospital informed the media that they had expressed concern several times over the delay in replenishing medical oxygen cylinders and also of running out of its supply with the district authorities.

"We were told by a nodal official of the health department that the priority of supplying oxygen is to the government hospitals. After that the demand from the private hospitals will be met," he added.



Srimandir closed for devotees till May 15

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, April 24: Given the surge in COVID-19 cases across Odisha, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Saturday decided to stop the entry of devotees into the 12th century shrine till May 15.

However, the age-old daily rituals of the trinity - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Jagannath - will continue with help of servitors and temple officials, SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar said after chairing a meeting attended by representatives of temple servitors, the Puri district Collector and superintendent of police, and other stakeholders.

It was also decided that all preparations for the construction of chariots will continue as per traditions.

The SJTA will take steps for procurement of masks and sanitisers for use during Chandan Yatra, Snan Yatra, and Ratha Yatra. The annual Ratha Yatra falls July 12 this year.

"The grave challenge posed by COVID-19 was discussed in detail. All were of the unanimous view that necessary steps must be taken to ensure continuity of the Niti-Kanti (rituals) of Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannath," Kumar said.

A decision was also taken to carry out regular screening and testing on families of servitors and temple officials. The SJTA said that it would again review the evolving situation May 6.

SHORT TAKES

Justice NV Ramana sworn in as 48th CJ

New Delhi: Justice NV Ramana took oath as the 48th Chief Justice of India Saturday morning.

President Ram Nath Kovind administered him the oath at Rashtrapati Bhawan in Delhi in a small ceremony due to COVID restrictions. In the farewell to Justice SA Bobde, who retired as the Chief Justice Friday, Justice Ramana said, "We are going through testing times as we battle the COVID wave. Lawyers, judges and court staff are all affected due to the virus. Some hard measures may be necessary to break the chain of transmission. We can defeat the pandemic together with dedication." Another challenge Justice NV Ramana faces is filling up six vacancies in the top court.

Customs duty waived on vax, O₂ import

New Delhi: Customs duty and health cess on the import of COVID vaccines and oxygen are to be waived with immediate effect for a period of three months; the Centre said Saturday after a high-level meet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as India battles a devastating second wave of infections. The waiver will include import of equipment related to supplying patients - whether due to COVID or otherwise - with oxygen, such as generators, storage tanks, filling systems and concentrators.

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	42.1°C	39.8°C
	MIN	25.1°C	25.0°C
Humidity		92%	68%
Rainfall		Nil	Nil
	Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

No ventilator beds in Koraput, Jharsuguda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: With the steep rise in COVID cases across the state, tall claims made by government on COVID preparedness and management have been exposed. Data provided by the state government shows that there is no ventilator bed available for the critically ill COVID-19 patients in Koraput and Jharsuguda districts.

There are only three ventilator-supported beds at the Saheed Laxman Nayak Medical College & Hospital in Koraput and all of them have been occupied. Similarly, all 10 ventilator-supported beds at Jharsuguda district headquarters hospital have also been filled up.

In such a condition, any seriously ill COVID patient visiting the hospitals will face problems.

The situation is also alarming in many other places of the state, especially in western Odisha, as all the beds are being occupied fast. At least 12 out of 18 ventilator beds are occupied in Ashwini Hospital in Cuttack and 11 out of 30 such beds are already being used in the Bhubaneswar unit of the hospital. The Puri district COVID

hospital has 11 ventilator beds, of which six are already occupied.

While the COVID hospital at Bargarh has 8 ICU beds, the unit is not functioning due to lack of support staff. The critical patients of these two districts - Koraput and Jharsuguda - have been referred to nearby hospitals where ICU beds are available, Health department sources said.

Director Medical Education and Training (DMET) CBK Mohanty said the situation has improved a little in western Odisha. The infection rate has come down slightly in the region. He added that the number of beds is being increased in the districts where the number of positive cases is high.

In fact, of the 179 ventilators beds available in all the government facilities 25 have been already occupied. Similarly, 105 out of the 625 ventilators have been occupied in private COVID hospitals across the state.

As many 140 of the 682 ICU beds in government-run COVID hospitals are occupied. Currently, there are 1,754 ICU beds in the private COVID Care Hospitals and 608 of these have been occupied by critically ill patients.

The situation is also alarming in many other places of the state, especially in western Odisha, as all the beds are being occupied fast

Bharat Biotech hikes prices of Covaxin

THE VACCINE HAS NOW BEEN PRICED AT ₹600 FOR STATES, ₹1,200 FOR PVT HOSPITALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Bharat Biotech has fixed the price of its COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, at Rs 600 per dose for state governments and at ₹1,200 per dose for private hospitals, the vaccine maker announced Saturday.

In a statement, Bharat Biotech Chairman and Managing Director Krishna M Ella said the company is supplying the vaccine to the Central government at ₹150 per dosage.

"We would like to state that more than 50 per cent of our capacities have been reserved for Central government supplies," Ella said.

Recovering cost is essential in the journey of innovation towards other vaccines



such as intranasal COVID-19, chikungunya, zika, cholera and others, he added.

The company has tagged the vaccine between \$15-20 for export markets.

Earlier this week, Serum Institute of India (SII) had announced a price of ₹400 per dose for "Covishield" for state

governments and ₹600 per dose for private hospitals.

The company also said for the next two months, it will address the issue of limited capacity by scaling up vaccine production.

"Going ahead, 50 per cent of our capacities will be served to the Government of India's

vaccination programme, and the remaining 50 per cent of the capacity will be for the state governments and private hospitals," Serum Institute of India had said in a statement.

American vaccines in the private market cost more than ₹1,500 per dose, while Russian and Chinese vaccines cost greater than ₹750 per dose, it had noted.

Covishield comprises over 90 per cent of the 12.76 crore COVID-19 vaccines administered across the country so far, according to government data Wednesday.

Of the 127,605,870 COVID-19 vaccination jabs administered till now, 11,60,65,107 are of Covishield, while 1,15,40,763 are Covaxin, according to the government's CO-WIN portal.

Jyothy Labs

Ordinary blues stain white clothes

Only Ujala supreme gives ultimate whiteness

Asli Safedi, Ujala Safedi.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You may feel empty, and completely down-and-out today. Ganesh says that this may make you feel a bit more inclined to spirituality. Meditation and prayer will engage more of your attention. You will also make considerable material progress.

TAURUS
It is more than likely that you will emerge victorious in all your meetings and outings today, predicts Ganesh. Your calm temperament will not let you flinch in the face of pressure. It is in your best interest to take some time to cope with all the stress, advises Ganesh.

GEMINI
It is better for you to swim with the current in all of today's dealings, suggests Ganesh. This will help you effortlessly deal with even the most morbid state of affairs. No need to be a hero, today. Pleasure is the key word for you.

CANCER
Today, it will be all about finding your comfort zone, and spending the day there. You are likely to spend most of the day with your close friends. Your smooth demeanour will help you breeze through all business deals.

LEO
Don't expect you'll be handed everything on a silver platter. Especially today, you must put such expectations on the back burner, says Ganesh. Today, you would do better to dig deep into your resources of persistence, as a somewhat less productive day awaits you.

VIRGO
A cocktail of business and pleasure is on the house today. Parties will run till dawn. You will also take the correct route to success by making important decisions. People will stand to gain if they involve you in their do, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
The Bhagavad Gita says, "Do your duty without expecting the fruit." Remember this important lesson and strive hard to put in extra efforts to finish off whatever you undertake to do. Worrying about results will only hamper your progress. Go with the flow and let results come to you. You may want to discuss some urgent matters with your close friend today, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO
The day just went from bad to worse today, says Ganesh. Troubles are coming in faster and thicker than a locust swarm. But keep a leash on yourself, says Ganesh, and steer clear of it all. Take criticism in your stride today and pay attention to what is being said, not who is saying them.

SAGITTARIUS
Hedge your bets carefully, says Ganesh. Solving problems will come naturally to you. But, beware, as you may face the music from certain disgruntled individuals. Worry not, and keep the spring in your step.

CAPRICORN
Ganesh can hear the wedding bells. There is all the likelihood that you will find your perfect match today and will let him/her know about your feelings, says Ganesh. Your family means the world to you and you will be more expressive about this today than you have been in the past few years.

AQUARIUS
Meditate, and tune in to your inner sanctuary. As you do this, you will realise you don't need others' advice all the time. Your boss will cooperate with you, while your loved ones will encourage you.

PISCES
A highly productive day awaits you. You will be driven to succeed, and filled with energy and enthusiasm to achieve your goals. Meetings with your superiors ought to yield some much anticipated results, says Ganesh.



AMY HOPES TO HAVE ANOTHER BABY DESPITE GIVING UP ON IVF

Actress Amy Schumer hopes to have another child, although she has quit the idea of getting pregnant again through in vitro fertilization (IVF). While speaking on an episode of The Ellen DeGeneres Show, she shared that motherhood has been her best experience.

I FINALLY KNOW I'M A LESBIAN: KEHLANI

American singer-songwriter Kehlani said finally knows what her sexuality is, and confirms that she is a lesbian. "I am gay, gay, gay. I finally know I'm a lesbian," the 25-year-old singer confirmed in a new TikTok post.



Rasika shares her work ethics

Mumbai: Actress Rasika Duggal said she tries to avoid focusing on what people expect of her while bringing alive a role. She feels what matters is being invested in one's work. "I try to not focus on delivering as per what people expect from me. I always believe that if you are invested enough in your work, the audience will be invested enough in your story. The idea is to keep myself invested and inter-

ested in the story," Rasika said. She will soon reprise her role of Dr Meera in the second season of web series *Out Of Love*. Earlier, she returned in the second season of *Mirzapur*, and soon she will be seen in season two of *Delhi Crime*. About her return on *Out Of Love*, she said: "I find season two is very fascinating. It's a very different experience." **IAN S**



Suniel Shetty admits to making mistakes

New Delhi: Actor Suniel Shetty, who has been a part of Hindi film industry for three decades now, says his problem is not being typecast but playing safe. Suniel feels the new generation actors have to create an individual style. "No risk (means) you are no actor according to me. Make your own style. Look at Tiger, Ayushmann, Salman they are all self-made. All of us were self-made. Yes, we made mistakes but there were Akshay Kumar and Ajay Devgn, who came out with flying colours," he said. He added: "There was a Suniel Shetty who failed after a few years because he believed in the subject but the marketing failed." Suniel feels his journey in the industry will help his son Ahan pave his path, now that the latter is all set to enter the showbiz. The *Mohra* actor is happy how his run in the industry has shaped up. "It is an unbelievable journey. I am grateful is all I can say," he concluded. **IAN S**

Manushi roped in by Unicef

Mumbai: Former Miss World Manushi Chhillar has been roped in by Unicef to raise awareness of the need for immunisation of children in India. She says Covid-19 should not disrupt children's access to life-saving childhood vaccines. "Vaccines have helped generations of children grow up in good health, safe from infectious and dangerous diseases like polio and measles. To save lives, we must redouble our efforts to vaccinate children - particularly the most vulnerable. We must not let Covid-19 disrupt children's access to life-saving childhood vaccines," says Manushi. She noted that vaccines will help protect children from the most devastating impacts of infectious diseases. "As we wait for #covid19 vaccines to roll out more widely, let's remember to vaccinate our children against other highly contagious diseases which remain a serious threat to their lives," she adds. **IAN S**

World Immunization Week



Ana Romero's solo show *Eudaimonia* fights stereotypes

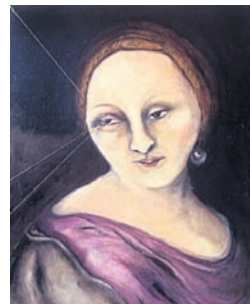
SHE IS THE ONE WHO WILL GET OLD AND NOT HER WORKS AS THEY WILL REMAIN CONTEXTUAL FOR ALL TIMES, REMARKS THE PORTUGAL-BASED PAINTER.

The ongoing Ana Romero's solo virtual show on India International Centres website in collaboration with the Portuguese Embassy Cultural Centre, goes beyond aesthetics requiring reflection and deliberation. The Portugal-based artist is a teacher whose passion is painting and has been exhibiting her artworks since 2003. Titled *Eudaimonia*, the expo will be on till April 25. *Eudaimonia*, stands for happiness for the Greeks or the good performance of their demons and this is achieved by doing what they are called or evoked for. "This word defines in totality my works on display. In simplified terms it means self-realisation, doing what one likes." Elaborating this point, she says, "I am lucky to be a teacher and I like to teach. And that is to look at the world and interpret it through techniques that can be

GOING BEYOND ART



Ana with one of her works at the back drop



Oil canvas painting Hope

happiness, inner growth, the ugliness of the world. By portraying the worst, I let the best grow in me. I am the one who will get old and not my works as they will remain contextual for all times!"



Je Suis Ton depicts sadness

taught, such as painting. One can also observe and assimilate the world in another way, through drawing, the primordial form of communication." The 13 works on display mirror varied and conflicting emotions of life including joy and sorrow. The oil canvas painting *Hope* is a positive painting depicting longing and expectation while *Je Suis*

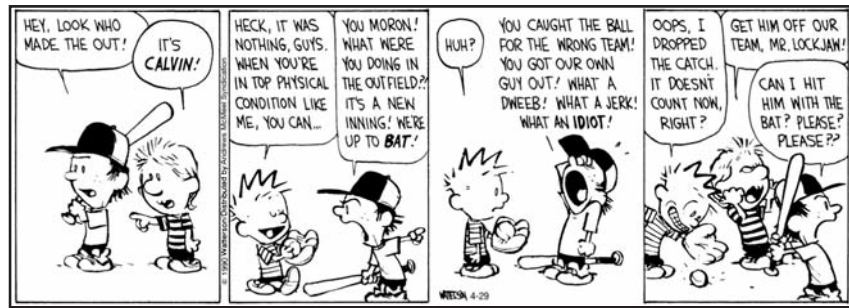
Ton is sad and bloody. Likewise *Hate Me, Hate Me Not* draws attention to conventional norms of beauty. "In my works there is always contradiction and these help in highlighting emotions," remarks Romero. Talking about her creative act of painting, Romero says, "The creative act serves as catharsis for the broken dreams, sadness,

When asked if these works are symbolic, Romero says "Yes, the dog is a symbol for fidelity, something I cherish. Birds represent freedom and their depiction in 'Red Alarm' is juxtaposed with a human figure to show dichotomy in our life." **AGENCIES**

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

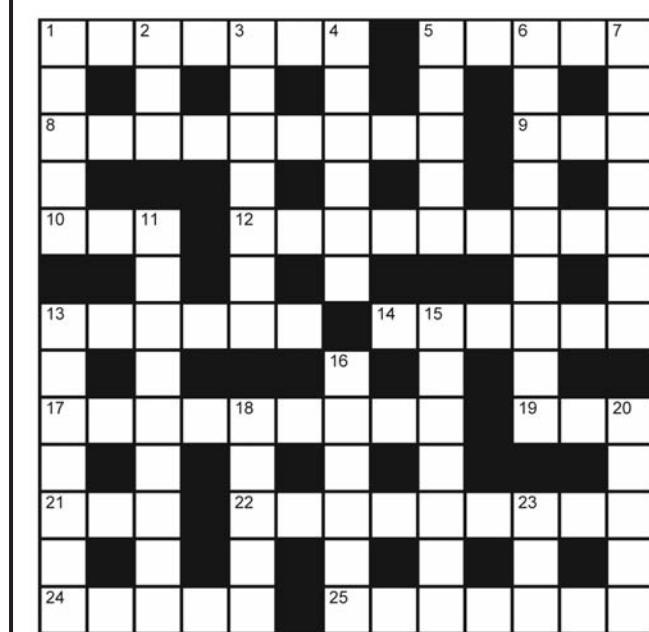


BREVITY



FUN post

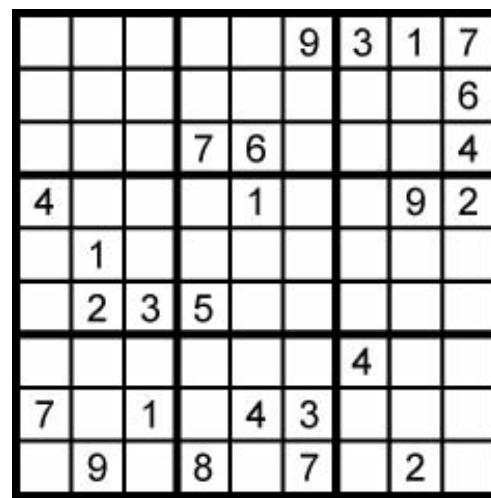
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Netherlands
 - 2 Brief literary descriptions
 - 3 Sicilian seaport
 - 4 Mark Antony's fling
 - 5 Dumpy in the window?
 - 6 Words to a goldbrick (5,2)
 - 7 Deep serving dishes
 - 8 Electric fish
 - 9 Stately tree
 - 10 Old school (4,5)
 - 11 Photo op time
 - 12 Sound setup
 - 13 He was great!
 - 14 Easy mark
 - 15 Outback runner
 - 16 Stockpile
 - 17 Caviar
 - 18 Small pastry
 - 19 Punctual (2,4)
 - 20 Involuntary twitch
 - 21 Reverses an order
 - 22 Dummy in the window?
 - 23 Words to a goldbrick (5,2)
 - 24 Deep serving dishes
 - 25 Slowly, to a conductor
 - 26 Blacksmith's block
 - 27 Old-hat
 - 28 Rocky peak

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS

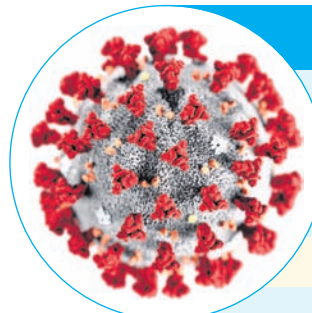


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



1-HOUR WINDOW
Joggers were given relaxation for an hour during the weekend shutdown in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	14,66,76,525	12,43,92,604	31,05,014
India	1,66,10,481	1,38,67,997	1,89,544
Odisha	4,01,341	3,59,467	1,981

Cuttack traders feel the pinch of Covid curbs

Cuttack, April 24: The imposition of night curfew and weekend shutdown to check the spread of novel coronavirus has taken a heavy toll on the traders of the Silver City – the hub of Odisha's trade and commerce.



Closed shops at Malgodown in Cuttack, Saturday

The restrictions have wreaked havoc on the businesses of wholesale as well as retail traders at Malgodown, Chhatrabazar, Choudhury Bazar, Pithapur, Haripur, Ranihaat, Mangalabag, Buxibazar, Nimchouri, Nayasadak, College Square and Dolamundai areas of the city, sources said.

Almost all traders dealing in grocery items, vegetables, garments and jewellery are witnessing poor business due to Covid-induced restrictions. The restaurants, fast-food shops and roadside eateries are bearing the brunt of night curfew and weekend shutdown, sources added.

Chhatrabazar and Malgodown, the biggest wholesale markets for grocery items and vegetables in state, used to witness good footfall from early morning to midnight. However, the imposition of night curfew from 9pm to 5am everyday is affecting business prospects at the twin markets, sources said.

"The volume of business at Malgodown has slumped by 20 to 30 per cent due to the night curfew. The situation will worsen further as the city has been put under weekend shutdowns to check the virus spread," said Cuttack Traders' Association president Laxmidhar Sahu.

Many retailers of the city are expecting around 50 per cent dip in

The volume of business at Malgodown has slumped by 20 to 30 per cent due to the night curfew. The situation will worsen further as the city has been put under weekend shutdowns to check the virus spread

LAXMIDHAR SAHU | CUTTACK TRADERS' ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

their business due to Covid-19 restrictions. "We usually do brisk business during weekends. The imposition of weekend shutdowns is hurting our business more. Our business will go down by 50 per cent due to the restrictions imposed by the govern-

ment to fight the deadly virus," said Amit Agarwal, a retailer.

Unable to bear the loss due to the twin restrictions, many fast-food sellers of the city are now planning to close down their shops.

"We usually receive good number of customers between 5pm and 10pm. Now, we are hardly getting any customer after 7:30pm. People are leaving the market places before 8pm due to the night curfew. This apart, the weekend shutdown will also add to our woes. If this situation continues for some more days, we will be forced to close down our shops," said Umesh Chandra Guru,

Fast-food business is severely hit as people are leaving the market places before 8pm due to the night curfew

Poor storage facility and sluggish demand are causing huge losses to the fruit sellers

a fast-food seller.

Echoing similar concerns, Soumya Ranjan Sahu, a restaurateur, said, "We suffered huge losses last year due to the prolonged nationwide lockdown. We had expected that the situation would improve this year. We used to sell food worth around Rs 10,000 every evening. Now, we are not getting good number of customers due to the stringent norms imposed by the government. Some eateries are now unable to sell food worth around Rs 500 a day."

The condition of fruit sellers is no different. Poor storage facility and sluggish demand are causing huge losses to the fruit sellers. "We are procuring fruits at higher prices. But, fruits are getting damaged due to rise in temperature. Now, this weekend shutdown is adding to our woes as we do not have proper storage facility," said Padmanabh Sahu, a fruit seller.

nCoV cases breach 4L mark in Odisha



Passengers undergo thermal screening at Biju Patnaik Airport, Saturday

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Odisha Saturday reported 6,647 new Covid-19 cases, following which the state's tally breached the 4-lakh-mark, officials said.

Eight more people succumbed to the deadly virus in the state, taking the toll to 1,981, they said.

The state's Covid-19 tally currently stands at 4,01,314. Odisha crossed the 3-lakh-mark November 7 last year, and took over five months to record the next one lakh cases.

All 30 districts reported new cases. Of these, 3,855 were detected in quarantine centers while the rest 2,792 are local contact cases.

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest 1,189 new positive cases, followed by Sundargarh (788) and Nuapada (559).

Two of the latest deaths happened in Sundargarh district, and one person each died in Bolangir,

ORAM, MARNDI COVID POSITIVE

BHUBANESWAR: BJP leader and former Union minister Jai Oram Saturday tested positive for Covid-19. The minister informed about his status on Twitter. "I underwent COVID 19 test today and it has turned out positive. Those who have come in contact with me in last few days are advised to get tested for themselves and take required precautions," he said. Meanwhile, state revenue minister Sudam Marndi also tested positive for the virus.

Balasore, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Nuapada, he said.

There are 43,304 active cases in the state at present. In all, 3,56,003 patients have so far recovered from the disease. The state tested 41,017 samples Friday.

GPS tagging of vehicles carrying O₂ on the anvil

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The state Health department Saturday released a new set of instructions for the district Collectors and Chief District Medical Officers (CDMOs) to ensure timely delivery of medical oxygen cylinders to the hospitals in the state.

The district drug inspectors have been entrusted with the task of supply of oxygen cylinders to the health centres. "The drugs inspector of the district shall ensure timely dispatch of the empty cylinders to the assigned fillers and inform his counterpart at which the filler is stationed for timely filling of the cylinders," the Health department order issued by Additional Chief Secretary PK Mohapatra said.



He also said that the drugs inspector should identify a collection point in consultation with the medical superintendents and other

officials and assign transport vehicles to each collection point.

"The medical superintendents and other officials concerned shall engage vehicles for transportation of the oxygen cylinders by utilising existing vehicles or by hiring private vehicles following financial guidelines. The details of these vehicles must be shared with the local drugs inspector for GPS tagging," the order said.

"The hiring charges can be met from Public Health Response Funds or any other suitable head from which transportation charges towards Covid-19 management are being currently met," the order read.

Twenty-nine tankers carrying 510 tonnes of oxygen have been sent from Odisha to other states in last two days, said sources.

1L Covishield doses reach state

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The state government Saturday received a fresh consignment of 1 lakh Covishield doses from the Centre.

Briefing the media, state Health and Family Welfare Director Bijay Panigrahi said, "The state government got 1 lakh more doses of Covishield vaccine Saturday. We will send the new supply to different districts to ensure the ongoing vaccination drive in the state goes on without much hindrance. With

the arrival of the new consignment we will have around 2 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine in stock."

Cong for free vax

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik Saturday appealed to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to provide Covid-19 vaccines to people of Odisha free of cost. Taking to Twitter, the OPCC President said, "What is stopping the Odisha government from declaring free vaccination for all in our state? Please do it without a second thought, CM."

PIPLI BYELECTION

Sura confident of Bishwokeshan's win

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The state Congress Saturday expressed confidence of newly declared party candidate Bishwokeshan H Mohapatra getting people's support for the upcoming Pipli bypoll.

Party leader Suresh Routray said that Mohapatra is a good pick and likely to boost the party in the region.

"We are strong enough and will get dignified votes in Pipli bypoll. The new Congress candidate of Pipli is an educated person, a law abiding citizen and had been a loyal worker. His father also worked with me. It will be good for the party," he said.

He also added, "He was given the ticket based on his performance. We had earlier planned to

give ticket to the family of Ajit Mangaraj but they declined. It will take some time for us to seek vote for the party. Our local candidate is working well in the area and we will win the election."

Routray said that Bishwokeshan would file the nomination by April 26. About the campaigning by the new leader, he said, "The campaign has been curtailed due to Covid protocols. We will look for other means to rally for our leader."

Routray wears mask

Days after his willful defiance of Covid-19 safety protocol of not wearing a mask, the veteran Congress leader was seen masked up Saturday. The leader had vowed to not abide by the government norms and avoid masks by saying that masks could make him sick.

Brown sugar worth ₹1Cr seized; 5 held

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch has arrested five drug peddlers and seized brown sugar worth around Rs 1 crore from their possession.

The accused were identified as Bijay Mohanty of Barunei in Khurda, Sk Jumman alias Badruddin of Jaleswar in Balasore, Soumyajit Parija, Sagar Behera and Sapan Bhattacharya of Jagatsinghpur district.

According to sources, the STF sleuths were recently tipped off about the execution of a brown



sugar deal between some drug peddlers along Khurda-Barunei road. Subsequently, the sleuths with the help of Khurda police carried out a raid and arrested one of the accused Mohanty. The sleuths also seized brown sugar weighing 1.05 kg from his possession.

On the basis of the information elicited during the interrogation of Mohanty, STF arrested Parija,

Behera and Bhattacharya, who were supplying him the contraband, from different places in Jagatsinghpur district. They further revealed the name of Sk Jumman who used to procure brown sugar from Murshidabad of neighbouring West Bengal and later supply the drugs to local drug peddlers.

The four were arrested when they were on the way to Balasore to procure brown sugar. Cops have seized a car and Rs 5, 30,000 from their possession.

STF arrested all the five accused by registering a case (15/21) in this regard. They were later sent to judicial custody by the court Saturday.

Weekend shutdown back in Odisha cities

Residents of Capital city Bhubaneswar and Silver city Cuttack confined themselves to indoors as the urban areas of Odisha were put under weekend shutdown to tackle the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. All traffic junctions, roads and marketplaces in the twin cities wore a deserted look while security personnel were seen enforcing the restrictions, Saturday



Jaydev Vihar in Bhubaneswar



Unit-2 market in Bhubaneswar



Rasulgarh Square in Capital



Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar



Badambadi in Cuttack

ULBs to have rainwater harvesting structures

POST NEWS NETWORK

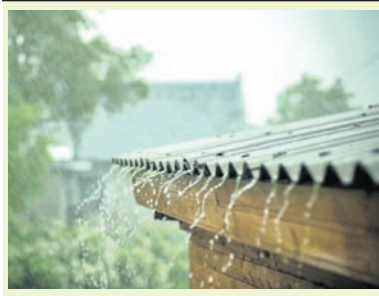
Bhubaneswar, April 24: In a bid to recharge ground water and provide livelihood support to women SHGs, the state government has decided to create rain water harvesting structures in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) under the Urban Wage Employment Initiative (UWEI).

The Mission Shakti groups will be engaged as implementing partners to build such structure in each ward of all 114 ULBs of the state, an official of Housing and Urban Development (H & UD) department said.

The initiative will be taken up in a mission mode. All the 114 ULBs have been directed to immediately identify open spaces like parks, playgrounds etc. where rain water harvesting structures will be constructed in the first phase, he said.

The government has planned to construct 5 to 10 such structures in every ward of the smaller towns and 20 to 25 projects in the corporations.

State level task force headed by H & UD secretary G Mathi Vathanan and city level core groups headed by commissioner/executive officers have been constituted to oversee execution of 5,000 rainwater



Mission Shakti Groups will be engaged as implementing partners under the Urban Wage Employment Initiative

The government has planned to construct 5 to 10 such structures in every ward of the smaller towns and 20 to 25 projects in the corporations

The government has set a target to build the structures in next two months and before the onset of monsoons

Officials of the ULBs have been directed to immediately ensure issuance of work orders to Mission Shakti Groups, sensitise them and start the execution of plan

harvesting structures. The government has set a target to build the structures in next two months and before the onset of monsoons.

A capacity building programme was organised by the department Friday. Senior officers sensitised the functionaries on the road map and discussed the step by step standard operating procedure (SOP) on how the targets would be achieved within the stipulated timeline.

Officials of the ULBs have been directed to immediately ensure issuance of work orders to Mission Shakti Groups, sensitise them and start the execution of plan.

Dedicated Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) has been set up at the department level to monitor and facilitate all UWEI activities. Besides, the ULBs have also been provided with the required human resources to implement UWEI.

Mathivathanan said that sustainable water management is the focus of the department and the most important method of doing it will be commissioning of the rain water harvesting structures.

This will be helpful in reducing the runoff and flash floods apart from ensuring ground water recharge, he said.

LPG cylinder-laden truck overturns on NH-16

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulnakhara, April 24: A truck carrying LPG cylinders Saturday overturned on a vegetable shop at Bamphakuda area near Phulnakhara on National Highway -16 in Cuttack district.

The driver and helper of the truck, however, had a miraculous escape. Besides, the weekend shutdown came as a blessing for the vegetable shop owner as there was no one at the shop at the time of the accident.

The weekend shutdown came as a blessing for the vegetable shop owner as there was no one at the shop at the time of the accident

According to a source, it was around 7am when the truck heading towards Kendrapara from Jatni filling station met with the mishap. After the accident, the driver and the helper of the truck came out of the truck's cabin safely.

On being informed, police reached the spot and seized the truck and the cylinders lying scattered.

Local residents blamed the driver's carelessness for the mishap. A detailed probe is underway, it was learnt.

Fire services personnel deployed at all Covid-19 hospitals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Following the mishap at a Covid-19 hospital at Virar in Maharashtra, the Odisha Fire Services department Saturday deployed firemen at all dedicated Covid-19 hospitals to avoid any fire related eventualities in the state.

As many as 13 serious Covid patients had succumbed to the inferno at the hospital in Maharashtra Friday. The fire services personnel have been deployed at all the 48 Covid-19 dedicated hospitals across the state including six in Bhubaneswar along with the firefighting equipment to deal any fire emergency.

The personnel have been conducting mock drills at the hospitals to check preparedness.

EOW arrests man for ₹3-crore fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Friday arrested a man on charges of alleged fraud to the tune of ₹3 crore.

The accused, identified as Bishnu Prasad Sahu, is said to be the proprietor of M/s Sahil Enterprises.



Sahu was arrested in connection with EOW PS case (No.-04, dt-18.02.2021)

U/s 406/420/467/468/471/120-B of IPC r/w Section 6 of Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors (OPID) Act, 2011, an EOW official said.

The presiding officer of a designated court under OPID Act in Cuttack remanded him in judicial custody after he was forwarded to the court Saturday.

According to sources, a case was

registered based on an FIR lodged by Shubhranshu Shekhar Raut from whom Bishnu had collected around ₹65 lakh.

The accused had allegedly asked 21 others to invest in his ongoing potato business and seafood trading (prawn business) and had collected about ₹2.5 crore from them.

Bishnu misappropriated the en-

Bishnu collected about ₹3 crore from 22 persons to invest in his potato business and seafood trading but defaulted on payment

tire amount for his personal use. An investigation revealed that during 2017, the complainant came in contact with accused Bishnu, who is a resident of Keonjhar. The accused is the proprietor of a fake firm Sahil Enterprises at Patia in Bhubaneswar. He and his associates had asked the complainant to invest by promising the latter to return the principal invested amount along with a very high dividend, the EOW official said.

BARGARH FIRM BUNGLES ₹4 CRORE GOVT SUBSIDY

Harpal Singh, through a forged authorisation certificate and using the company's fake logo and notepad, got registered in the website of Agriculture dept

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Harpal Farm Equipment, Bargarh has allegedly misappropriated government subsidy of crores of rupees using forged documents related to a reputed Kerala-based agricultural machinery equipment manufacturer, Redlands Ashlyn Motors PLC.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch has registered a case in this regard on the basis of the complaint lodged by Rigin Bennet, the manager Redlands Ashlyn Motors PLC.

Sources claimed that Harpal Farm Equipment located at Chakarkend in Bargarh district contacted the Kerala firm authorities seeking dealership for farm equipment in 2018. The Kerala-based company gave him dealership for Odisha to sell tractor-op-

erated straw baler. The company also sent two equipment from Thrissur in Kerala to Bargarh in April 2019. Meanwhile, the accused, Harpal Singh, allegedly through a forged authorisation certificate and using the company's fake logo and notepad got registered in the website of Odisha Agriculture department as a supplier of farm equipment.

Harpal also reportedly forged the signature of the Chief Executive of the Redlands Ashlyn Motors to



The Rukuna Rath is being pulled towards Lingaraj temple from Mausli Maa shrine as part of the Bahuda Yatra in Bhubaneswar, Saturday. The festival was organised without the presence of devotees in accordance with the Covid-19 norms

Probe into withdrawal from Balikuda block a/c

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch has initiated a probe into the withdrawal of around ₹3 crore from the bank account of Balikuda Panchayat Samiti office in Jagatsinghpur.

The EOW has registered a case in this regard on the basis of a complaint lodged by Balikuda BDO Kayan Saurav Dash at the Balikuda

police station in January this year.

As per the sources, the complainant while going through bank statements was shocked to find withdrawal of around ₹3 crore in various installments from the account opened at the Union Bank of India Branch at Arilo under Balikuda police limits. Subsequently, Dash wrote a letter to the branch manager of the UBI intimating him about the unlawful withdrawal without his approval or signature. He urged the

manager to credit the amount to the account as quick as possible.

However, the manager didn't take any action in this regard. The complainant also informed the DGM of UBI requesting him to credit the withdrawn amount to the account, but to no avail.

Sources claimed that the BDO later lodged a complaint with Balikuda police and requested the DGP to initiate a Crime Branch probe into the matter.

Sockists warned over Covid drug supply

BHUBANESWAR: The state level committee headed by Crime Branch ADG, Yashwant Jethwa, Saturday warned the stockists and C&F agents not to supply Covid-19 drugs to hospitals and patients outside the state. The committee did so after it got information regarding supply of Remdesivir injections to patients and hospitals outside the state. Speaking to the media, Jethwa informed that an advisory to this effect would be issued soon.

CP yet to trace 1,549 missing children

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Many parents in city are regularly reaching out to various police stations hoping to get back their missing children during the last couple of years. However, these helpless parents are getting noting but assurances in return.

Recently, the state police received a lot of flak from all corners for its poor track record regarding the tracing of missing children in the state during the last couple of years.

Meanwhile, regarding the tracing of missing children, the record of commissionerate police is not very encouraging even though they are equipped with all the modern facilities as compared to their counterparts in other districts. Data received through the Right to Information Act revealed that cops have failed to trace almost 35 per cent of missing children of the city during the last ten years.

According to the data, as many as 4,438 child missing cases have been registered at different police stations of the city during the last ten years. The cops managed to find out 2,889 children while it failed



to get any details regarding the whereabouts of the remaining 1,548.

Khandagiri police received maximum number of missing reports between 2010 and 2021. As many as 720 missing cases have been registered at the Khandagiri police station while the cops managed to trace 510 missing children during the above period. Khandagiri police are yet to find out 210 children who had gone missing between 2010 and 2021. Similarly, the Mancheswar police managed to rescue 372 out of the 664 missing children in the last ten years. Parents of 292 children are still running to police station hoping to get back their wards.

The Jatni police received 601 reports of missing children. The cops succeeded in tracing out 348 children while 253 missing cases are still pending. Chandrasekharpur police that received 150 missing cases succeeded at only 80 between 2010 and 2020. Nayapalli police have a better record in this regard as it managed to trace 189 out of 198 minors.

Speaking on the issue, DCP Umashankar Dash said that police are taking the cases with utmost seriousness. The city police are also regularly uploading all data related to the children on Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).

Data received through the Right to Information Act revealed that cops have failed to trace almost 35 per cent of missing children of the city during the last ten years

Many cases are related to elopement of minor girls who return after few years. However, the parents don't normally report the police about the return of their children

Many of the missing children were also trafficked outside the state engaged in prostitution and forced begging

Speaking to Orissa POST, noted child rights activist Benudhar Senapati said that many cases are related to elopement of minor girls who return after few years. However, the parents don't normally report the police about the return of their children. Many of the missing children were also trafficked outside the state engaged in prostitution and forced begging. Police should become more sensitive in connection with cases related to missing of minors.

Govt revises norms for WB returnees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Saturday issued a new notification regarding revised norms for West Bengal returnees.

The new norms said that those with Covid negative reports or completing both doses of vaccines can opt for seven days' home quarantine instead of 14-day mandatory quarantine.

The new norms said that those who are found flouting the home quarantine norms could be subjected to seven days of institutional quarantine.

The government has however ordered some exemptions. "Persons coming on emergency works related to Covid-19 management by government and private hospitals as well as those coming in connection with election duty as per the orders of ECI or Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha shall be exempted from this order," the new norms said.

Vet body to protest from May 1 alleging govt apathy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Marred by the alleged apathy from state government towards the veterinary doctors, the Odisha Veterinary Service Association Friday called for a state-wide protest from May 1 if the government fails to heed to their long pending demands.

In a press conference, the association said that they have planned digital boycott from April 25. They will wear black badge, stop work beyond duty hours and on public holidays, and avoid taking up door step service from May 1.

The association also threatened to go for mass leave from May 15 and mass resignation from May 25. It also informed that in the last 20 years, though the manpower has decreased to 30%, the departmental work has enhanced to 300%.

"In order to overcome this lacuna, the veterinarians have never hesitated to utilise their personal

wealth or time. Though in recent past, these veterinarians were deprived of being declared as Covid Warriors, they have provided uninterrupted services 24x7 putting themselves and their families in danger," the association said in a statement.

The association members said that in the last 15 years though the veterinarians have submitted their legible demands time and again, their demands have not been considered by the government. The veterinary doctors have demanded parity with general doctors and provision of Group A status for them besides other things.

"But in today's scenario, being the victim of such apathy by the government, the state service veterinarians have become agonized. They have lost their will to provide selfless service as ever. Hence, they are compelled to protest against the above apathy of government," the statement of the association read.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8995550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

NINL's O₂ plant to be operational

13 OFFICERS, 16 TECHNICIANS ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES TO RUN THE 418 TONNE FACILITY IMMEDIATELY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 24: The authorities of the state-owned Nilachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) in Kalinganagar Saturday decided to revive the defunct oxygen plant on its premises to meet the rising oxygen demand of Covid patients in the country, a report said.

The move comes a day after **Orissa POST** published a report about the oxygen plant of the company remaining non-operational for over a year when the country is grappling with an acute shortage of oxygen.

The matter came to the fore after S.K. Sahoo, manager (HRM) of NINL, issued an order appointing 13 officers and 16 technicians to run the plant. The news has spread cheers among workers and officials of NINL as they thanked the newspaper for doing the needful.

According to the order, Chandramani Das, DGM (power plant) will be in-charge of the oxygen plant. He has to report to Ashok Kumar Panda, general manager of power plant.

Moreover, Sanjay Kumar Rout, AGM of sinter plant, PG Bhgawat, Sarthak Kumar Padhi and Bhaskar Chandra Parida, MGMs CIAT, Rajesh Kumar and Jyotranjan Kar, managers, LDGP, Prasant Kumar Patra, manager CEM, Sunil Nayyar, manager of oxygen plant, deputy managers Jagannath Patra, Anil Kumar Pradhan, Pradipta Kumar Ojha, Niladri Sahu and Sudhir



According to the order, Chandramani Das, DGM (power plant) will be in-charge of the oxygen plant. He has to report to Ashok Kumar Panda, general manager of power plant

The 418 tonne oxygen plant had entered into an agreement with the government to provide 5 per cent of its oxygen output to hospitals and use the rest in steel manufacturing

The oxygen plant became defunct after the main plant was shut down March 30, 2020. The closure of the twin plants dealt a blow to the livelihood of over 4,000 labourers, workers and officials

Kumar Dash have been asked to report for duty at the oxygen plant. This apart, 16 technicians and operators have also been posted at the oxygen plant. The above officials have been asked to immediately carry out the order. Notably, NINL had established an oxygen plant on its premises that started functioning in 2012 at an expenditure of ₹300 crore. The 418 tonne oxygen plant had entered into an agreement with the government to provide 5 per cent of its oxygen output to hospitals and use the rest in steel manufacturing. However, the company stopped supplying oxygen to hospitals after closure of the main plant. The oxygen plant became defunct after the main plant was shut down March

30, 2020. The closure of the twin plants dealt a blow to the livelihood of over 4,000 labourers, workers and officials.

The NINL, functioning under the Union Steel Ministry, was established near Daitari in 1984 as a result of a move aimed at establishment of a second steel plant in the state. Later, the state government entered into a partnership with MMTC to run the plant for which land was acquired and the plant started manufacturing in 2000.

As many as 668 families were displaced for the plant while 452 persons got jobs. However, the plant was closed down in March 2020 after Union Minister Prakash Javadekar announced divestment of shares of its six shareholders January 8, 2020.

Covid-19 claims two more scribes in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 24: Out of the eight Covid-19 fatalities Odisha reported Friday, two were journalists from Ganjam district.

The fact that two scribes lost their battle against coronavirus came to the fore later in the day. The deceased media persons have been identified as Govinda Behera and Manoj Kumar Sahoo.

While Govinda was working as a block correspondent for the news portal News 6, Manoj was Odia daily Nitidin's correspondent for Chikiti.

According to sources, Govinda had quarantined himself after developing symptoms of Covid-19. It was when his health condition did not improve that he underwent Covid-19 test April 20. His report came out to be positive for the infection. He was immediately admitted at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. While undergoing treatment his oxygen level reportedly dropped and he succumbed April 23.

As if it was not enough of a shock for the family, the deceased's uncle breathed his last 15 minutes after Govinda's death. His father Kandha Behera who is also a Covid-19 patient is undergoing treatment.

Similarly, Manoj had complained of breathlessness April 20. He was admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital April 22 night. He breathed his last Friday. Meanwhile, the administration has intensified checking of mask-wearing and is taking action against the violators of Covid guidelines.

UNDER STRICT VIGIL



With weekend shutdown in force, policemen intercepting people and checking their documents to know if they are really out on emergency work in Berhampur, Saturday

Sealing borders with WB sparks confrontations



According reports, Covid's third mutant is fast spreading in the neighbouring state. This has posed serious danger to people in Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts sharing borders with Bengal

Bengal side has caused difficulties in normal life and set the people on confrontational mode.

Report said, scores of people from Bengal have been coming to Laxmannath toll plaza in Jaleswar and Shabajipur-Chandanpur-Digha road, but the Odisha Police has been denying them entries. This has enraged people of Bengal.

Friday, some Bengal people had thrown ashes to Odisha police at Don Chhal on Sahabajipur-Udaypur Chhak. A group of people also halted trucks going to Bengal from Odisha side for hours Saturday. They shouted slogans against Odisha.

The local administration of Bengal supported its people, leading to tension on the borders. At some places, fights have broken out. It is said that drivers and helpers of Odisha trucks have to face difficulties in the Bengal side. Some trucks were allowed to ply by Bengal people after their administration relented in its stand.

On the other hand, people of Bengal's fringe areas warned that over 3000 people from Bhograi area working in Digha will be driven out unless entry restrictions on borders are removed.

Meanwhile, the Bengal administration is going to put up border check posts in their side from Sunday. Locals said, it will further stoke tension on borders at different places. Friday, Odisha police had denied entry of five wedding parties of Bengal coming to Odisha.

Keeping this danger in view, the district administration has sealed all roads and entry points leading to West Bengal. The Balasore district administration has taken a strong stance on the Covid management

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, April 24: Sealing of border points and restrictions on entries have led to tension between people of West Bengal and Odisha in Bhograi and Jaleswar areas of Balasore district Saturday.

According reports, Covid's third mutant is fast spreading in the neighbouring state. This has posed serious danger to people in Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts sharing borders with Bengal.

Keeping this danger in view, the district administration has sealed all roads and entry points leading to West Bengal. The Balasore district administration has taken a strong stance on the

Covid management.

It has sealed 36 entry points in Bhograi and eight ones in Jaleswar and prevents people coming from Bengal side to Odisha. A 14-day quarantine has been made mandatory for the people from the neighbouring state.

Scores of villagers in East Midnapur and West Midnapur districts have been sharing good rapport with people of fringe areas in Balasore in terms of local trade, commerce, communication and culture. People of both sides are inter-dependent in the matter of healthcare, local markets, trade, tourism and even marriage ties.

On this backdrop, sealing the borders and restricting entry from

O₂ crunch fear strikes people in Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 24: Even as Covid-19 infection cases have spiraled across the state, the government has taken up a host of measure to deal with the situation. It claimed it has adequate stock of medicines and oxygen for patients.

But the rate at which Covid infection has been rising in Sambalpur, there is a growing requirement for oxygen at the Covid hospital. If the situation takes a worse turn, shortage of oxygen in the district can't be ruled out.

The district has no oxygen plant. Only an oxygen refilling plant is working in the district. Sources in the district industries centre said that the plant is capable of refilling of 1000 cylinders a day. Various places are abuzz about



the possible shortage of oxygen, given the rate of Covid infections in the district. On an average, the daily Covid infection is more than 200. People have demanded adequate stock of oxygen in advance at various hospitals.

According to reports, 300 oxygen cylinders are required at VIMSAR Covid hospital on a daily basis. About 200 cylinders are being used

for Covid patients.

In the coming days, the second Covid hospital will be operationalised in the district while it will have 525 beds for Covid patients. Accordingly, the requirement for Covid cylinders will be 650 or 700 units per day, according to a rough estimate.

On the other hand, some private hospitals require 200 to 300 cylinders

every day. Besides, many families in the district have stocked oxygen cylinders at their homes to meet the crisis.

Taking all these into account, there is a need for over 1000 oxygen cylinders every day to cater to Covid patients. It is said that the refilling plant will not be able to meet the requirement for oxygen cylinders in the coming days.

As for the issue, VIMSAR superintendent Lalamoan Nayak said 300 oxygen cylinders are needed for the Covid hospital. "Earlier, 350 cylinders used to be in stock for patients. After the second Covid hospital is made functional, requirement for oxygen cylinders will go up. The state government has been intimated about it. Oxygen will be stocked according to requirement," he added.

Ganjam Collector denies oxygen shortage in hosps



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, April 24: Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange termed the reports on oxygen scarcity in the district as rumours. He visited the Covid hospital in MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur and took stock of the situation, a report said Saturday.

Despite the chances of severe risk, Collector Kulange took it upon himself and visited the hospital wearing a PPE kit. Accompanied by the doctors, he moved from ward to ward and interacted with the patients about the state of healthcare facilities and on food served to them in the wards.

Among the patients, one was found taking oxygen while another was found sitting on his bed. He even found a Covid infected youth undergoing treatment carrying

out his studies while sitting on his bed. Later, he tweeted about his interactions with patients along with photographs in his official twitter handle.

He released a video of his visit to the mediapersons where he was seen inquiring from the patients about their health conditions, whether doctors visit them regularly, availability of food as well as the state of hygiene and sanitation in the hospital. The patients expressed their happiness while ruling out any issues regarding supply of oxygen, Kulange clarified.

The visit of the Collector assumes significance of after the leader of a political party tweeted to the Chief Minister over irregular oxygen supply to the patients. The tweet of the concerned party leader went viral in various social media platforms.

Kulange in a tweet termed the allegations as false and mere rumours which he claimed to have verified by visiting the MKCG Covid hospital. In another tweet, he said the district has a sufficient stock of oxygen and supply chain is being monitored on a real time basis.

2 die as bike, tractor collide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kandhamal, April 24: Two persons were killed and another sustained critical injuries after a bike and a tractor had a head-on collision near Kotapadi under Baliguda police limits in Kandhamal district in the intervening night of April 23-24.

The deceased have been identified as Radhekrushna Pujari and Dasarath Bishimajhi. The injured is yet to be identified. The trio was

travelling on a motorcycle when the mishap took place.

According to sources, Radhekrushna, Dasarath and another person, residents of Bigapadar village under Sindrigaon panchayat, were returning home from Baliguda area on a motorcycle.

As they were near Kotapadi, a tractor coming from the opposite direction hit their bike from the front, killing Radhekrushna and Dasarath on the spot.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 24: The state government has decided to convert Nandanban at Birnarsinghpur in Boudh district into an ecological park. The administration held a review meeting on the proposed project. There is a plan to build a forest nursery on 1307 acres near Birnarsinghpur.

In the project area, separate sites will be earmarked for accommodation of tigers, deer, various reptiles, space for rescued wild animals, water sources, and plantation of herbal plants. Besides, a hill zone and a park will be demarcated. On April 14, officials of the 5T and

the district administration had reviewed the safari work of the Nandanban. The revenue department has completed the land demarcation by setting up pillars.

A plan design will be drawn by an architect while the principal of a local polytechnic has been assigned to the survey work of the ecological park.

The Watershed Mission has been tasked with building check dams at five places. The PWD is to lay roads while the minor irrigation department will look after the canal construction.

The horticulture department has been assigned the work of plantation and developing the park.



The Collector has directed all officials to make spot visit of the project and suggest various facilities to be put in place.

IN THE PROJECT AREA, SEPARATE SITES WILL BE EARMARKED FOR ACCOMMODATION OF TIGERS, DEER, VARIOUS REPTILES, SPACE FOR RESCUED WILD ANIMALS, WATER SOURCES, AND PLANTATION OF HERBAL PLANTS. BESIDES, SITES FOR A HILL ZONE AND A PARK WILL BE IDENTIFIED

ON APRIL 14, OFFICIALS OF THE 5T AND THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION HAD REVIEWED THE SAFARI WORK OF THE NANDANBAN. THE REVENUE DEPARTMENT HAS COMPLETED THE LAND DEMARCATION BY SETTING UP PILLARS

a water zone. The area will be surveyed by drone cameras. The administration has laid stress on immediate work on check dams.

SUMMER WOES



Women collecting water from a creek in Taljhari village under Kashipur block in Rayagada as water scarcity becomes acute in the area, Saturday

Nandanban to be converted into eco-park

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 24: The state government has decided to convert Nandanban at Birnarsinghpur in Boudh district into an ecological park. The administration held a review meeting on the proposed project. There is a plan to build a forest nursery on 1307 acres near Birnarsinghpur.

In the project area, separate sites will be earmarked for accommodation of tigers, deer, various reptiles, space for rescued wild animals, water sources, and plantation of herbal plants. Besides, a hill zone and a park will be demarcated. On April 14, officials of the 5T and

the district administration had reviewed the safari work of the Nandanban. The revenue department has completed the land demarcation by setting up pillars.

A plan design will be drawn by an architect while the principal of a local polytechnic has been assigned to the survey work of the ecological park.

The Watershed Mission has been tasked with building check dams at five places. The PWD is to lay roads while the minor irrigation department will look after the canal construction.

The horticulture department has been assigned the work of plantation and developing the park.

The Collector has directed all officials to make spot visit of the project and suggest various facilities to be put in place.

In the nearby area of the ecological park, there have been plans for identifying sites for hotels, parking lots, ticket counters, safari, and

a water zone. The area will be surveyed by drone cameras. The administration has laid stress on immediate work on check dams.

FOCUS PANDEMIC

PREPARE FOR THE WORST



The bigger issue is that this Second Wave of the pandemic may not be the last; and the present vaccines may not quite work against the future variants of the novel coronavirus

in Uttarakhand has supplied the Ganga water to hundred-odd persons across the country. They have found that 67 per cent of those facing mental health problems got relief. The percentage of persons who got relief in other diseases was as follows: neurological problems 56 per cent, digestive problems 55 per cent, dermatological problems 54 per cent, urological problems 50 per cent, arthritis 45 per cent, diabetes 40 per cent, cardiological problems 36 per cent and respiratory problems 33 per cent. These results are based on small numbers less than 25 patients of each disease. Nevertheless they provide a prima facie evidence for the efficacy of the phages of Ganga against a number of diseases.

The Maryland, USA, based Adaptive Phage Therapeutics has already made a phage-based vaccine and is conducting Phase I trials. We must not be under the impression that all will be well after large numbers of our people have been vaccinated. The virus can mutate and the vaccinations can be rendered ineffective. We must plan for the worst.

We have already lost much time. Even now we are running after foreign vaccines that are effective against specific strains. One elderly person told me that he was waiting for the Pfizer vaccine to become available. Only then he would get vaccinated. We must immediately launch a massive programme to make a cocktail phage based vaccine for Covid-19.

The government must not run on business-as-usual mode. The policy of the government is to borrow heavily and continue its 'consumption'—salaries and perks—as previously. The hope is that the bad times will pass, economy will bounce back, and the borrowings made will be repaid. That may not happen. The second wave may be followed by a third wave; and the third may be followed by a new strain. No one knows how the situation will play out. But we must plan for all eventualities.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore.

The government was driving the economy till March as if the coronavirus pandemic was a one-time catastrophe that will get abated with vaccination of large numbers of our people. As it has happened, the Second Wave has come perhaps two months before the widespread vaccination could be done. The government has avoided imposing lockdown that is being asked for by the medical fraternity. The government has to choose between the devil and the deep blue sea. The economy will collapse more and people will die less if lockdown is imposed. The economy will collapse less and people will die more if lockdown is not imposed. The bigger issue is that this Second Wave may not be the last; and the present vaccines may not quite work against the future variants of the coronavirus.

Firstly, the Second Wave may not be the last. Countries have faced third and even fourth waves. More importantly, the Covid virus is mutating. Ewen Callaway writes on nature.com website that in January 2021 "biotech firm Novavax released data from clinical trials showing that its experimental vaccine, designed to combat the original virus, was about 85% effective against a variant identified in the United Kingdom — but less than 50% effective against 501Y.V2," which is known as the South Africa variant. This means that the vaccines that are effective against the present strains may not be effective against new mutated strains. Callaway explains that it is normal for viruses to mutate. The influenza virus, for example, mutates frequently. The World Health Organization has established a Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza in Melbourne, Australia. This centre monitors emerging flu strains for genetic changes that might influence the effectiveness of presently available vaccines for influenza. They continuously assess whether the mutations are "widespread." They stand back and wait and watch if a new strain is localised to one

region or country. They start the process of making a new vaccine if they find the new strain to be widespread.

The coronavirus is similarly likely to mutate continuously requiring the production of continuously new vaccines. The present vaccines against the virus might have to be updated periodically as they are for influenza. We do not know how much time it may take to update the vaccines and how much damage they may perpetrate before a vaccine is made to combat the new strain. We should not, therefore, be under the impression that we will become free of coronavirus if the entire population of the country is vaccinated.

An alternative approach to combating the pandemic is to use Phage Therapy. Phages are viruses like the coronavirus. However, they are beneficial. They kill disease-creating bacteria in the body. That increases the immunity of the body and makes it possible to face the attacks by coronavirus. Professor Andrez Gorski of Poland has said that the beneficent phages can additionally block the pathways of the disease-creating virus. Let us say, the coronavirus has entered a person's lungs. It is trying to enter the cells of the lungs. It would not be able to enter the cells of the lungs if the beneficent virus has already entered the lungs and blocked the cells through which the

coronavirus would have wanted to enter.

S. Mert Selimoglu of Pak Group of Companies of Turkey says on the Capsid & Tail Newsletter that one way of dealing with the problem is to administer a mixture of phages as a vaccine. Such mixtures are called 'cocktail' in medical parlance. He says that administering a cocktail would enable the vaccine to self-select which bacteria are present in the body. It is like the farmers sowing a mixture of seeds. Those that suit the particular weather grow well; and others die. Similarly, administering a cocktail of phages enables the phages to select the viruses present and attack them. A vaccine made of such cocktail of phages has the advantage that it may be effective against a number of mutations of the coronavirus. The prime requirement for the development of such a cocktail vaccine is the availability of a variety of beneficent phages.

We have an especial advantage here. The National Environment Engineering Institute, Nagpur has undertaken a study of the Ganga River. They found that the water of upper Ganga has more than 200 types of phages. In comparison, Yamuna and Narmada have only 20-50 types of phages. Thus, we have available with us cocktail of phages that can be used to make a cocktail vaccine.

The Ganga Today Trust based



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

AS IT HAS HAPPENED, THE SECOND WAVE HAS COME PERHAPS TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE WIDESPREAD VACCINATION COULD BE DONE



THE MOTHER

Higher always higher! Let us never be satisfied with what is accomplished.

Misplaced Priorities

Just before the 2014 election, two of India's most famous economists had a public quarrel. Because they were academics the language was mostly polite but the disagreement was not minor. It was about the Gujarat Model. Jagdish Bhagwati took the side of Narendra Modi, and Amartya Sen took the opposite side. In brief, the Bhagwati-Modi view was to prioritise economic growth over social spending. Sen's view was that economic growth was not possible without social spending. Sen did not oppose a liberalised business environment; his concern was primarily what the government did. Bhagwati did not oppose social spending; his concern was what the government should not do.

Both sides had rational arguments, but Sen had one unanswerable question: Could anyone name a nation that had become developed without a healthy and well-educated population? The answer to that was no. There is no nation in the world that has ignored investing in the health and education of its population and become developed. It is social spending that leads to growth and not the other way around. You cannot have a population that is not very literate and not very healthy and expect that industrialists will do all the work necessary to make a nation developed. The state and the government have the primary responsibility and function in this area. The Gujarat Model believes that if the government supports industrialists by offering them subsidies, ease of doing business, freedom from workers' unions and holding Vibrant Gujarat melas for a sufficiently long period then the benefits will accrue to the general population because it is business that makes the economy strong.

The Sen model believes that a healthy and educated population is both an end in itself and a means to achieving economic prosperity. It was in fact possible for the government to create a healthy and educated population even when it had no real economic strength and Cuba is an example of this. There is no example of a developed nation that had a third world education and healthcare system. For this reason the state must focus on building a strong education system and a strong healthcare system and prioritise its spending in these areas. Sen supports schemes like MNREGA and Right to Food, Modi opposed MNREGA and called it a monument to failure. The Congress party said this week that in 25 years under the BJP, including 12 years under Modi, Gujarat did not build a single new government hospital. The BJP has not denied the claim, meaning that it is correct. Of course many Vibrant Gujarat summits were held. What did they produce ultimately? The answer is not development, whatever definition we can use for it. Yes it is true that some Gujaratis have become very wealthy even managing to triple their wealth in 2020 a year when many of us lost work. But for the majority there was no benefit. The large industries that came up in Gujarat did not employ a lot of people. This is why the most dominant political community of the state, the Patidars, took to the street demanding reservations in jobs.

The sacrifice that was made by the population for the Gujarat Model was very great. Gujarat was low on the Human Development Index and in 2012 Modi told the Wall Street Journal that there was malnutrition in his state because its girls were 'fashion conscious' and didn't want to drink milk. This sort of contempt and ignorance of fundamental issues has come at a cost to India. The Sen model is not only about expenditure, it is about state focus. A government that believes that it is the well-being of its citizenry as measured through their health and education will be geared and organised in a particular way. It will not be caught scrambling one year after a global pandemic because it does not have enough oxygen or medicines or beds. The Gujarat Model expected that the private sector would take care of health because it was a business and there would be consumers. That is not how the rest of the world has achieved it.

It is not necessary to say today that Bhagwati was totally wrong because he was and we can see that all around us. As India suffers and the ruling party is on the defensive the truth is that the only way that this wave will pass is if exponential growth of the virus stops on its own. The intervention of the government is so poor and so weak that it cannot by itself do anything significant to save us

save us. This is the reason why Modi has been missing from the public eye after stopping his rallies in Bengal abruptly. The reason why Modi was furious that Arvind Kejriwal showed their interaction to the rest of us was not because it was a breach of protocol but because the truth was exposed and it was embarrassing. At a moment of crisis, we are choosing to run away from the fact that core beliefs about what the government should do have been proven wrong. We should have an honest discussion once again about the Bhagwati and Sen debate and what we should do in the medium and long term.

save us. This is the reason why Modi has been missing from the public eye after stopping his rallies in Bengal abruptly. The reason why Modi was furious that Arvind Kejriwal showed their interaction to the rest of us was not because it was a breach of protocol but because the truth was exposed and it was embarrassing. At a moment of crisis, we are choosing to run away from the fact that core beliefs about what the government should do have been proven wrong. We should have an honest discussion once again about the Bhagwati and Sen debate and what we should do in the medium and long term.

save us. This is the reason why Modi has been missing from the public eye after stopping his rallies in Bengal abruptly. The reason why Modi was furious that Arvind Kejriwal showed their interaction to the rest of us was not because it was a breach of protocol but because the truth was exposed and it was embarrassing. At a moment of crisis, we are choosing to run away from the fact that core beliefs about what the government should do have been proven wrong. We should have an honest discussion once again about the Bhagwati and Sen debate and what we should do in the medium and long term.

WISDOM CORNER

- “The world is indeed a mixture of truth and make-believe. Discard the make-believe and take the truth.” — RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA
- “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” — MAHATMA GANDHI
- “I find hope in the darkest of days, and focus in the brightest. I do not judge the universe.” — DALAI LAMA

WORDSWORTH

Moot point

Moot point is one of those phrases that once had a firm and well-understood meaning, but no longer does. It was just as you say: a matter that was uncertain or undecided, so open to debate. It comes from the same source as meet and originally had the same meaning. In England in medieval times it referred specifically to an assembly of people, in particular one that had some sort of judicial function, and was often spelled mot or mote. So you find references to the witenagemot (the assembly of the witan, the national council of Anglo-Saxon times), hundred-mote (where a hundred was an Anglo-Saxon administrative area, part of a county or shire), and many others. So something that was mooted was put up for discussion and decision at a meeting — by definition something not yet decided. The confusion over the meaning of moot point is modern. It is a misunderstanding of another sense of moot for a discussion forum in which hypothetical cases are argued by law students for practice. Since there is no practical outcome of these sessions, and the cases are invented anyway, people seem to have assumed that a moot point means one of no importance. So we've seen a curious shift in which the sense of "open to debate" has become "not worth debating". The mute spelling is a development that has come about because moot is now a fossil word, usually encountered only in this phrase; there is an understandable tendency to convert the unknown into the known, and mute seems to fit the new meaning rather better. But it's wrong.

SPECTRUM NATION

Where are the people?

In the climax scene of the iconic film Joker which fetched that year's Academy award for its lead actor, the protagonist after shooting dead the anchor point blank, one he had idolised all his life, on a live interview set to the utter incredulity and horror of the global audience, proudly walks out of the television set with an incredibly sardonic laugh. Arrested by the police and passing through the streets of New York, the so-called Gotham City, the police vehicle crashes into an oncoming van and the Joker comes out all bloody and bruised to a heroic ovation by thousands of Jokers who had rebelled against the system and at last found their voice.

The Joker in the memorable Todd Phillips-directed movie is an out-of-the-margins rebel who laughs incessantly taking his life to be a comedy and bludgeons those he deems are the power elites or their collaborators, his way of fighting systemic tyranny and misery inflicted on the under privileged. The Joker in this perspective could be the voice of the oppressed avenging the taunts and caprices of those who have overrun the society with their collusion with levers of power in a strangulated world.

Cut to 2021, India and the dreaded

double mutant of the coronavirus scientifically jargonised B.1.617, and now with the addition of a third mutant.

If the mayhem necessitated by an abysmal negligence and mismanagement laced with a false sense of complacency and triumphalism is any indication, scores of Covid-ravaged bodies lying in wait at the innumerable morgues, crematoria and makeshift burial grounds with thousands running from hospital to hospital in search of beds, anti-virals, vaccines and oxygen show succinctly how the Indian healthcare system has plummeted to its lowest depths, to the point of a virtual collapse. Ironically it is the people who had reposed their trust in their elected representatives who formed the governments at the Centre and states assuredly to take care of their welfare, their lives and their future.

Nary it was to be. No questions were to be asked, questions demanding accountability for having wrecked the nation and the wellbeing of millions of its citizens. The same people, sick and tired, have lost faith in themselves as the father sees a young son dying, a daughter holds her dying mother in her arms, a child waiting for oxygen to be pumped into her lungs

as the last breath ebbs away, hospitals in flames, states not letting oxygen vans pass through. The fate of a glorious republic, born out of the embers of innumerable sacrifices and ideals of visionaries to usher in a new India in the struggle against colonialism, today lies in tatters. Literally in flames.

The smoldering smoke rising out of the funeral pyres amidst the heaps of bodies lying scattered all over the place seem surreal, refuse to awaken the collective conscience of the nation if it was still there. Who is to bear accountability for this horrific human disaster unleashed in front of a cowering population and played out in macabre detail in the global media? The image of a nation founded on the values of pluralism, secularism and respect for democratic rights seems utterly destroyed. It took a virus and the resultant lack of preparedness to bring about the catharsis in minutiae. The venerable institutions, which have built up the edifice of the world's largest democracy founded on Abraham Lincoln's stirring Gettysburg address that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth", have ceased to perform their constitutionally mandated roles. It bears constant reiteration that

the glorious constitution of our land starts with the people. "We the people", it opens, "do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this constitution", it proclaims. But where are the people? Why are their voices stifled amidst these dreary scenes of injustice and monumental apathy?

Where are our elected representatives, the courts, the legislatures, the commissions and directorates, the media and civil society, those denizens of the society whose complicity in this game of opacity and silence may never be forgiven, least of all forgotten. The ugly masquerade of religious shibboleths and the incomprehensible political rituals of elections, supposedly "free and fair" as envisaged by our constitution makers, all vying to break up the society or at least unleash a thousand cuts on the body politic spreading yet another deadlier virus would be the execrable parody while a nation goes berserk in this disastrous pantomime of delusion and destruction. This is not the society which we, the people, deserve. Certainly not, unless we choose to be the Jokers of Gotham City.

The writer is a retired diplomat and holds a doctorate in social justice.



Malay Mishra

THIS IS NOT THE SOCIETY WHICH WE, THE PEOPLE, DESERVE. CERTAINLY NOT, UNLESS WE CHOOSE TO BE THE JOKERS OF GOTHAM CITY

Vaccine hoarder

Sir, This is in reference to the news item "Americans first: US on India's vax raw material plea", Orissa POST, April 24. President Joe Biden declared US is back and will engage with the world to meet challenges of today and tomorrow. It is time for him to redeem his pledge in the fight against Covid-19. The US has an impressive pace in vaccinating its people over the last three months. It has fully vaccinated 35% of its adult population and about 52% have received at least one dose. Its supply pipeline is adequate to vaccinate every willing adult in a month. However, the US is holding on to a stockpile of vaccines that it no longer needs. The country has a reserve of reportedly 20 million doses, with more in the pipeline. Those vaccines need to be used immediately in countries facing a surge. It's not right to hoard them when just a handful of countries have consumed most of the 800-odd million doses used so far. The US has used a wartime measure, Defence Production Act, to disrupt the vaccine supply chain by preventing exports of crucial ingredients. Serum Institute of India's collaboration with Novavax is a victim of it. The US doesn't face a crisis today. The DPA needs to be withdrawn to facilitate the export of vaccine supply chain - that could accelerate the vaccination programme in India, the most ravaged country struggling with highest infections in the world.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Deluge of death

Sir, The COVID-19 deaths bring to attention the chaos of the crematoriums and burial grounds in various parts of the country. The relatives of the deceased have to wait for many hours for the last rites. The complaints about charging extra fees for funerals are being witnessed across the states. The need of the hour is that the state governments should manage crematoriums, set up more crematoriums for COVID-19 victims, and strictly monitor them.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Chaos & confusion

Sir, The past week has seen an utter breakdown of our public health system with no leadership available to address the issue. While the people are falling down like ninipins, our leaders are scrambling around blaming each other for the prevailing situation. What India needs right now is an able crisis manager and we just don't have one. It was pathetic to see Covid patients die without oxygen or in hospital fires. The situation is chaotic and confusing.

CK Subramaniam, CHENNAI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

How TN is managing O₂ supply

MORE CURBS AS CASES SURGE

AGENCIES

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 24: Providing green corridor for medical oxygen tankers, setting up of a 24x7 call centre for hospitals/nursing homes to solve oxygen related issues and instructing industries to increase production of oxygen are some of the measures taken by the Tamil Nadu government.

A 24x7 call centre has been set up to resolve 'any issues' faced by hospitals related to the supply of medical oxygen and health facilities may call 104 for assistance, the Tamil Nadu government said Saturday.

The demand for medical oxygen from hospitals and nursing homes is expected to rise as the number of COVID-19 cases was increasing and oxygen manufacturing industries in the state have been instructed to 'explore methods' to increase production, the government said.

Tamil Nadu has nearly one lakh active cases (95,048) out of the total 10.51 lakh and Friday, the state reported 13,776 fresh infections.



Workers refill cylinders with medical oxygen for COVID-19 patients, amid a surge in coronavirus cases, in Chennai, Saturday. PTI PHOTO

The government also said tankers carrying medical oxygen are being provided a Green Corridor along with Police Patrol wherever necessary for fast movement of vehicles carrying oxygen.

"In order to resolve any issues related to medical oxygen supply

faced by hospitals, nursing homes, the government has established a 247 call centre under the State Drug Controller. Hospitals, nursing homes in Tamil Nadu facing any shortage of medical oxygen may immediately call 104 for assistance," a government release said.

Chennai, April 24: Cinemas, places of worship, malls, bars and salons must be shut effective April 26, the Tamil Nadu government announced Saturday reintroducing more curbs following surging COVID-19 cases.

People from abroad and other states shall be allowed entry to Tamil Nadu only if they have registered in the portal <http://eregister.tnega.org> and information on registration should be produced to authorities on arrival.

Those from neighbouring union territory of Puducherry are exempted from the e-registration norm, the government said in an official release.

Recreation clubs, all types of bars, auditoriums, big format shops, shopping complexes and malls shall not be allowed to operate, the government said.

In all corporation and municipal areas, beauty parlours spas and salons are not allowed and only take-away services should be offered in restaurants, hotels and tea shops.

"In all places of worship, there



A health worker sprays disinfectant all over the Nagaraja Temple premises as a precautionary measure against coronavirus in Nagercoil, Saturday

will be no permission for the general public to offer worship," the government said. However, there was no bar on employees continuing with usual worship and prayer sessions, it added.

The general public must not be allowed in temple consecration functions too. Sporting activities, ex-

cept those related to international and national level events, would also not be permitted.

Not more than 50 people may assemble for marriages and for funeral the upper limit is 25, the government said. The current restrictions like night curfew (10 pm-4 am), and Sunday lockdown would

CINEMAS, PLACES OF WORSHIP, MALLS, BARS, SALONS, AUDITORIUMS AND RECREATIONAL CLUBS MUST BE SHUT EFFECTIVE APRIL 26

continue to be on.

Groceries and all other kinds of retail outlets may continue to operate as usual and department stores could function without using air-conditioning facility and by sticking to the '50 per cent' customer capacity norm.

The state government had announced reintroduction of curbs like permission only for 50 per cent seating capacity in cinemas from April 10 and days ago it postponed class 12 public examination and came up with complete lockdown on Sundays and night curfew from 10 pm to 4 am, effective April 20 as virus cases continued to surge. As on Friday, Tamil Nadu had close to one lakh active COVID-19 cases.

Alongside guns, heroin flows into Valley from Af-Pak

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 24: The valley of Kashmir particularly the northern Kupwara district is rapidly turning into a major hub of narcotics smuggled in from Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to official figures, heroin worth over Rs 300 crore has been seized in the valley in the last 16 months even as the volume of the drugs smuggled in, produced and traded in the same period is estimated to be of the order of Rs 600 crore.

"59 kilos of heroin, 51 kilos of brown sugar and 355 kilos of charas has been seized in Kashmir from 1 January 2020 to 20 April 2021. This is in addition to fukki and processed drugs in the form of capsules, tablets and injections recovered from different individuals and gangs during the same period," Inspector General of Police Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, revealed to India Narrative.

According to the official statistics, Police have also seized 2,000 kg of fukki, 73,800 drug tablets and capsules and 245 vials of injections besides cash worth Rs 14820248 (1.48 crore) from the persons dealing with drugs and psychotropic substances since 1 January 2020.

1,498 persons have been booked and arrested in 946 FIRs under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Charge-sheets have been produced against 530 persons in different courts in the Union Territory.

The revenue district of Kupwara, comprising Kupwara and Handwara Police districts, is emerging as the epicentre of the drug smuggling with its advantage of being con-



NARCOTICS TRADE

Afghanistan is the source of more than 90% of world's opium supply and more than 95% of the European opium supply since 2001

Since the United States military occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, followed by the NATO occupation in 2003, opium production has increased exponentially in Afghanistan

Of the high-value drugs smuggled in from Afghanistan and Pakistan, 10% of the quantity is believed to be for local consumption and 90% for high-end clients in Amritsar, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Mumbai and other Indian cities

tiguous to the border areas of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). 19 kg of heroin has been seized in Kupwara and 22 kg in Handwara in addition to 10.3 kg of charas in Kupwara and 7.4 kg in Handwara. Police have also recovered 48.5 kg of brown sugar in Kupwara and 0.27 kg in Handwara.

Of the cash recovered from the people engaged in drug smuggling and trafficking, Rs 1,37,91,738 has been recovered in Handwara alone.

Seventy NDPS-related FIRs have been registered in Kupwara and 44 in Handwara, even as 25 cases have been chargesheeted in Kupwara and 18 in Handwara and 86 persons have been arrested in Kupwara and 69 in Handwara.

One of the high profile cases in Handwara has been assigned to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which has completed a part of the investigation, taken custody of the accused traffickers from the Police and arrested some of them. The NIA has filed its charge-sheet for prosecution in a designated court in Jammu. Senior Army and Police officers maintained that the entire Kashmir valley was now affected by the drugs and narcotics being smuggled in from Pakistan and Afghanistan, traded, consumed and also produced locally.

"However, there is one marked difference between North Kashmir and South Kashmir. Almost the entire quantity of drugs in circulation

in the North is smuggled in from Afghanistan and Pakistan, mainly to convert it into terror funding. Contrarily, the drugs in circulation in South Kashmir are procured out of the poppy straw grown on large chunks of land in Pulwama, Kulgam and Anantnag districts", said one Senior Superintendent of Police.

"Militants, growers and traders (of drugs) are not by and large linked to one another in South Kashmir but they do not disturb others. This is different from North Kashmir where terror funds are generated out of the large scale smuggling of the high-value heroin", said the SSP.

According to senior Police officials, including Director General of

the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Dilbag Singh, gangs of professional smugglers have been receiving drug consignments through different modes, including underground tunnels. In some cases, drones are believed to have dropped the consignments along the International Border in Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts in Jammu and Pathankot and Gurdaspur districts in Punjab.

During its investigation in different cases in Jammu and Kashmir, the Enforce Directorate (ED) has also detected smuggling of heroin through the cross-LoC barter trade. It has been officially asserted that the proceeds of the contraband were being used for funding of the secessionist militancy. In the wake of such detections, and finally a suicide attack on the CRPF on the Srinagar-Jammu highway in February 2019, the cross-LoC trade and travel has been completely suspended.

Mufti slams 'social media monitoring' of govt employees



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 24: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Saturday said the Centre's 'paranoia' about Kashmiris has touched "a new low" with social media accounts of government employees now allegedly being monitored.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister was reacting to a news report she shared on Twitter. The report claimed that a new directive by the Jammu and Kashmir administration requires the social media history of government employees to be scanned for objectionable activity.

"Even as India gasps for breath thanks to GOI's inept handling of COVID, it's paranoia about Kashmiris has touched a new low with social media of government employees now being monitored. The vengeance with which J&K's special status was scrapped doesn't seem to have an end in sight," Mehbooba said in her tweet.

TN sought 20L vax doses, received 4L

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 24: Tamil Nadu Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar Saturday said the state has received four lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine.

He said the state has received two lakh doses each of Covaxin and Covishield vaccines.

Vijayabaskar said the vaccines will be sent to district centres for further dispersion.

There have been complaints of vaccine shortage with people wanting to get the job being turned away.

The Tamil Nadu government Friday urged the Centre to allocate an "assured supply" of 20 lakh doses of covid vaccines to ensure unhindered immunisation and batel against any restriction on supply of Remdesivir, used in COVID-19 treatment.

Chief Minister K Palaniswami told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that an Integrated Vaccine complex near here was ready and appealed that it be brought to working condition at the earliest to augment production of COVID vaccines. In a letter to Modi, the chief minister said directions are being issued by National and "certain State regulators," prioritising supplies by individual manufacturers to certain states and restricting Remdesivir sales only within the state where the drug was being produced.

"This would be very damaging to the availability of such valuable life saving drugs in places of need. At this stage, any restrictive or-



ders by individual States, should be strictly barred to ensure easy accessibility of Remdesivir."

"I urge Government of India to take up this issue with such states where the companies have their production facilities located," Palaniswami said.

On the vaccination front, he said the drive was gaining pace in the state and requested that "an assured supply of at least ten days consumption of vaccine, of about 20 lakh doses, may be supplied well in advance to ensure that the vaccination drive in the individual sites are not affected and persons com-

ing for second dose are assured of vaccination on the date and on the site they report."

Highlighting the pandemic prevention activities, the chief minister said Tamil Nadu was strictly following the practice of testing, tracing, isolating, treating and also vaccinating the eligible.

The State has been able to restrict the COVID-19 mortality to very low numbers and bring down the case positivity to less than 5 per cent initially.

Micro-containment, setting up of static and mobile fever camps, testing and screening centres to triage

the positive patients to hospital, health centres, care centres or home quarantine are the other activities.

Tamil Nadu had been showing a continuous decline in positivity rate and case fatality and also dip in total numbers till the end of February 2021.

"However, in tune with the national trend, the state has also not been immune to the rapid increase in the COVID-19 infections in March and April 2021. The state is witnessing rise in new cases and the daily cases have crossed 10,000 and in Chennai alone, it is 3,300," he added.

PAK ATTEMPT TO DROP ARMS BY DRONES FOILED

Pakistan is using drones to drop weapons and drugs at a time when there is peace on the borders in J&K after India and Pakistan agreed to uphold the 2003 ceasefire agreement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 24: The Border Security Force (BSF) Saturday foiled Pakistan's attempt to airdrop arms and ammunition by drones along the International Border (IB) when alert troops opened fire on two such flying objects on entering Indian airspace in Arnia sector here, a spokesperson of the force said.

Both the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) were spotted hovering in Jabbowal and Vikram border outpost area between 4.30 am and 4.45 am and returned to Pakistani side after the alert BSF personnel fired around 15 rounds in an attempt to bring them down, officials said.

Pakistan is using drones to drop weapons and drugs with the latest attempt coming at a time when there is peace on the borders in Jammu and Kashmir after India and Pakistan agreed to uphold the 2003 ceasefire agreement from the intervening night of February 24 and 25.

"Despite the existence of a ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India, Pakistan Rangers did not stop their nefarious activities against India and carried on with their ill motives on IB in Jammu. Today (Saturday) alert BSF troops in Arnia foiled drones intrusion bid by Pakistan. Two drones/UAV were observed entering from the Pakistan side and were immediately fired upon by vigilant BSF troops, compelling them to retreat back to Pakistan territory," Deputy Inspector General of BSF SPS Sandhu said in a statement here. Sandhu, who is also public re-



lations officer BSF Jammu, said the BSF intelligence branch was receiving inputs about possible use of drones by Pakistan for ferrying arms and ammunition into India. Accordingly, the troops are on alert and the border domination was exponentially increased, the officer said.

He said Pakistan Rangers have been regularly violating the IB through drone intrusions and trying to drop arms and ammunition in Indian territory but BSF have successfully repulsed such attempts in the past. Last year on June 20, BSF shot down a Pakistani hexa-copter drone with a payload of five-and-a-half kilograms including a sophisticated US-made M4 semi-automatic carbine and seven Chinese grenades at Pansar border outpost in Kathua district.

Soon after the successful foiling of the drone intrusion attempt, the BSF officials said the whole area had been cordoned off and a search operation was carried out to ensure that there was no dropping from the drones before returning to Pakistan.

However, nothing objectionable was found on the ground so far, the official of the border guarding force said.

Received death threat from LeT terrorist: J&K BJP chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 24: Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina Saturday claimed that he has received a death threat from a Pakistani terrorist affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

He said he took up the matter with Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Dilbag Singh, who assured him that a proper investigation would be carried out in the matter.

However, there was no official word from the police about the death threat received by Raina.

The BJP leader claimed he received a call from a Pakistani mobile number around 5:30 PM on Saturday and the caller introduced himself as a commander of LeT. "He warned me to leave Jammu and Kashmir and also sent me a video on WhatsApp," Raina said.

In the over three-and-a-half-minute video, a masked man armed with an AK assault rifle, a pistol and

four grenades is seen talking.

"You are talking about liberating Azad Kashmir (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) on a daily basis and building a temple there... you are spewing venom against Pakistan and Jihad (holy war). We will cut your tongue and hang it in Jammu city centre," the man in the video said. "This is the last warning to you to desist from making such statements otherwise your death is certain," he said.

Talking about the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution by the Centre, the man in the video said everything will be avenged."

Raina told PTI that he will not be cowed down by such threats.

"We have taken a resolve to uproot terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir to provide a peaceful atmosphere to the people, especially the residents of the Valley who have been facing Pakistan-sponsored violence for the past three decades," he said.

national



I am sceptical. Nevertheless, I urge the government to start preparing NOW in order to meet the much greater demand for vaccines on and after May 1
P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

'OXYGEN LANGAR' FOR COVID PATIENTS

With the lack of availability of beds in hospitals coupled with a shortage of oxygen, an "Oxygen Langar" service has been started by a gurdwara in the National Capital Region (NCR) to rescue those patients in need of oxygen



of the day quote

On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, I applaud the Covid warriors at the local level for rendering enormous service to our citizens during this critical period. The nation stands with them



M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hundreds of such oxygen plants are being set up across the country under the PM CARES Fund. Gujarat has also received permission to set up 11 plants, which will be functional soon



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

We have decided to float a global tender for vaccines and Remdesivir (used for the treatment of COVID-19) through a committee headed by chief secretary Sitaram Kunte



AJIT PAWAR | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Guj Deputy CM tests Covid +ve

Gandhinagar: Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel was Saturday admitted to the UN Mehta hospital in Ahmedabad after being diagnosed Covid-19 positive. Patel was not keeping well for some time, following which he got himself tested for Covid and the report came out to be positive. He had accompanied Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at various meetings across the state.

Naxals kill cop after abduction

Raipur: Naxals have killed a police sub-inspector they abducted in Bijapur district three days ago, an official said Saturday. Murlu Tati had come to his home at Palnar when he was abducted by Naxals April 21, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Kamlochan Kashyap said. The Maoists dumped Murlu's body near a village at Gangalur in Bijapur district, with a message alongside which claimed the policeman was "executed as decided by a people's court". At least 22 security personnel were killed in a Naxal attack in the Sukma-Bijapur area of Chhattisgarh earlier this month.

'Illegal' factory blast injures 11

Bhargore: Eleven persons were injured in a blast at a factory in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas on Saturday morning, police said. The incident happened around 7.30 am at an illegal leather unit at Malancha-Padmapukur in the Bhargore police station area, around 20 km from Kolkata, they said. Three of those injured were stated to be very critical and being moved to Kolkata for treatment, a police officer said. The others are being treated at a hospital in the district, he said. The factory has been sealed following the incident, he added.

Man shot dead over old enmity

Phagwara: A 35-year-old man was shot dead outside his house at Ramgarh village here by two bike-borne men Saturday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Ram Lubhaya, said Phagwara Superintendent of Police (SP) Sarabjit Bahia. Two motorcycle-borne men fired two shots from a pistol at Lubhaya when he was standing outside his house this morning, said Bahia.

ENSURE COVID DOES NOT HIT VILLAGES: PM

Addressing a ceremony on Panchayati Raj Diwas during which Modi launched the distribution of e-property cards under the 'SWAMITVA' scheme, he said the pandemic was prevented from affecting rural areas last year and exuded confidence that the success can be replicated as local leadership now have experience as well as knowledge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday said the COVID-19 challenge before the country now is bigger than last year and called for making efforts to ensure that the infectious disease is stopped from hitting villages by all means.

Addressing a ceremony on Panchayati Raj Diwas during which Modi launched the distribution of e-property cards under the 'SWAMITVA' scheme, he said the pandemic was prevented from affecting rural areas last year and exuded confidence that the success can be replicated as local leadership now have experience as well as knowledge.

Chief Ministers of eight states joined the event, held virtually, while a large number of local body repre-



sentatives also connected to the ceremony.

I have this confidence that if someone is going to emerge victorious first in this fight against the coronavirus, then it is going to be India's villages, the leadership of these villages... The people of the villages will show the way to the country and the world, the prime minister said.

Right now, the mantra of the panchayats should be 'dawai bhi, kadai bhi' (medicine as well as caution), he

stressed. Modi said villages should follow the guidelines issued by the government and people should also get themselves vaccinated.

To help the poor get food, his government has decided to provide them free ration for May and June, the prime minister noted, adding this will benefit over 80 crore people and cost the government Rs 26,000 cr.

As many as 4.09 lakh property owners were given their e-property cards, which also marked the rolling out of the SWAMITVA scheme for implementation across the country.

Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar attended the event. Modi also conferred the National Panchayat Awards 2021 on the occasion.

The National Panchayat Awards 2021 were conferred under the following categories -- Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar to 224 panchayats, Nanaji

Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar to 30 gram panchayats, Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award to 29 gram panchayats, child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award to 30 Gram Panchayats and e-Panchayat Puraskar to 12 states.

The prime minister transferred the award money, ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, as grants-in-aid, by clicking a button, the PMO said.

The amount will be directly transferred to the bank account of the panchayats concerned in real-time, the government said, adding that this is being done for the first time.

The SWAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme was launched by the prime minister April 24, 2020, as a central scheme to promote a socio-economically empowered and self-reliant rural India.

IAF brings cryogenic oxygen containers from Singapore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The Indian Air Force Saturday picked up from Singapore four cryogenic containers for storage of liquid oxygen, officials said.

The containers were airlifted from Singapore by C17 heavy-lift aircraft of the IAF.

The aircraft with four cryogenic oxygen containers landed at Panagarh airbase in West Bengal at around 4.30 pm, the officials said.

India is struggling with the second wave of the coronavirus infection and hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds in view of a rising number of COVID-19 cases.

Since Friday the IAF has been airlifting empty oxygen tankers and containers to various filling stations across the country to speed up the distribution of the much-needed medical oxygen in treating COVID-19 patients.

With liquor shops shut, 6 die gulping sanitiser in Maha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Yavatmal, (Maharashtra), April 24: In a bizarre incident, at least six persons died after consuming hand sanitiser as liquor was unavailable owing to the statewide lockdown in Maharashtra to check the raging Covid-19 pandemic, a top official said here Saturday.

The incident happened in different areas of Vani town in Yavatmal district late Friday when three persons were rushed to a local hospital with complaints of burns in the mouth and stomach, vomiting and giddiness. All the three persons died later.

"Three others were also drinking alcohol-based hand sanitisers since the past couple of days, who died too. We have lodged three accidental death cases. The other three victims did not go to the hospital. Further probe is on," Yavatmal Superintendent of Police, Dilip Bhujbal, told IANS.

DESERTED GHAT



Vishram Ghat on bank of River Yamuna wears a deserted look during weekend lockdown in Mathura district, Saturday

Oxygen Express delivered 150 tonnes of O2 in 24 hrs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 24: The Oxygen Express trains being run by the Indian Railways have delivered nearly 150 tonnes of the life-saving gas in the last 24 hours, the Ministry of Railways said Saturday.

In the wake of severe shortage of oxygen for Covid-19 patients in many parts of the country, the Indian Railways has launched the Oxygen Express initiative to transport Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) across the nation.

The Ministry of Railways said in a statement, "Oxygen Express trains with LMO tankers have arrived at Nashik and Lucknow. Few containers were also unloaded at Nagpur and Varanasi enroute to supply LMO in these regions. Also, a third Oxygen Express has started its journey from Lucknow this morning."

According to the ministry, states like Andhra Pradesh and Delhi are



in consultation with the Railways to run more such trains. Under this initiative, empty tankers are being loaded with LMO from Visakhapatnam, Jamshedpur, Rourkela and Bokaro.

"To fulfil the requirements of medical oxygen in Uttar Pradesh, a green corridor was created for the movement of the train between Lucknow and Varanasi. The distance of 270 km was covered in four hours and 20 minutes with an average speed of 62.35 kmph," the ministry said.

It pointed out that a total of 10 containers having nearly 150 tonnes of oxygen have been transported so far.

Avalanche in Chamoli claims 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gopeshwar (U'khand), April 24: Eight Border Roads Organisation (BRO) workers were killed in an avalanche near the Indo-China border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, officials said Saturday.

A total of 430 BRO workers were at the road-construction site when the avalanche occurred on Friday, Uttarakhand Director General of Police (DGP) Ashok Kumar said.

Two bodies had been recovered from the site in Sumna area of Niti Valley on Friday night, while six more were recovered Saturday, District Magistrate Swati Bhaduria said. Four injured have been rescued from the site, where rescue operations are on, Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat told reporters at Joshimath.

Of the 430 workers, 384 have returned to the ITBP and Army camps in the area so far, eight are dead, seven injured have been rescued while 31 are missing, the DGP said, adding that a joint search-and-rescue operation by Army, ITBP, SDRF and NDRF personnel continues in



the affected area.

The injured were rescued in helicopters and flown to the Army hospital in Joshimath.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Indian Army posts at Sumna are safe, the DGP said.

Sumna, where the avalanche occurred is approximately 25 km from Malari village and located near the confluence of Girthingad and Kiogad, two streams that originate from Dhauli Ganga, which witnessed a calamitous avalanche in February in which 80 people were killed and 126 went missing.

A part of the Nanda Devi glacier broke off in Chamoli February 7, leading to massive floods, recalling a 2019 study that warned about the dangers of climate change and said Himalayan glaciers have been melting twice as fast since

the start of this century.

The glacier collapse at Joshimath led to a massive flood in the Alaknanda river system and caused large-scale devastation in the upper reaches of the ecologically fragile Himalayas.

In June 2019, a study spanning 40 years of satellite observations across India, China, Nepal and Bhutan, indicated that climate change is eating the Himalayas' glaciers. The study, published in the Journal Science Advances, shows that glaciers have been losing the equivalent of more than a vertical foot and half of ice each year since 2000 -- double the amount of melting that took place from 1975 to 2000.

Heavy snowfall in the area is hampering the rescue operations, which is being carried out jointly by the ITBP, NDRF and the SDRF, the chief minister said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has assured of all help in the rescue operations, Rawat said.

A similar avalanche at Sumna had killed eleven ITBP personnel in 1991.

Why India is facing an oxygen crisis as Covid cases mount

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 24: Several hospitals in Delhi, which has no significant oxygen production capacity, made frantic public calls this week seeking emergency supplies.

By air, by train and by road, India is scrambling to move large quantities of medical oxygen to hospitals in its capital New Delhi and other areas hit hard by a record surge of Covid-19.

The main problem is that medical oxygen is not reaching hospital beds in time. This delay is a product of where production units are located, a stretched distribution network, and what critics have said is bad planning.

Several hospitals in Delhi, which has no significant oxygen production capacity, made frantic public

calls this week seeking emergency supplies.

With Covid-19 cases also swamping its neighbouring states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, oxygen facilities there are over-stretched attempting to meet local demand.

To fulfil Delhi's current needs, additional medical oxygen now has to be trucked in from industrial zones in eastern India.

The facilities from where Delhi will now receive oxygen are spread across seven states, some more than 1,000 km away, according to a court document.

Given the hazardous nature of the substance, all liquid oxygen must be transported in a limited number of specialised tankers, requiring advance planning to ensure deliveries are made on time, a gas industry source told Reuters.



In recent days, as a scramble for oxygen among states worsened, local officials in some regions disrupted movement of tankers in a bid to keep supplies for themselves.

In part due to such blockades, Delhi only received about 177 tonnes of oxygen on Wednesday against its allocation of 378 tonnes, an official said. But the industry source said

that Delhi had also dragged its feet on planning ahead, without factoring in the time it takes to move oxygen cross-country by road.

"This problem wouldn't have happened if they had acted 2-3 weeks ago," the source said.

Delhi's government did not respond to questions about the planning. India has a daily production

capacity of at least 7,100 tonnes of oxygen, including for industrial use, which appears to be enough to meet current demand.

This week, the government allocated 6,822 tonnes of liquid oxygen per day to 20 of the country's worst-affected states, compared to their combined demand of 6,785 tonnes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office said Thursday.

India's total medical oxygen demand was just 3,842 tonnes as of April 12, as the surge in cases really took hold.

States are typically allocated supplies by an inter-ministerial group of bureaucrats mandated to monitor and facilitate the flow of essential medical kit during the pandemic. Modi's office has noted that the availability of liquid medical oxygen had increased by about

3,300 tonnes in the past few days, with steel plants and other industrial units diverting their production.

The federal government has activated the Indian railways to move multiple tankers from refilling plants to where it is most needed.

Working with industrial gas major Linde India and others, the government is also using the Air Force's cargo planes to fly empty tankers to production hubs. Refilled oxygen tankers will then move back by road.

The armed forces are importing 23 mobile oxygen generation plants from Germany.

Several other industries are offering oxygen to hospitals, while salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group is importing 24 specialised containers to transport liquid oxygen.

national

of the day quote

Instead of doing their bit, they are trying to put the blame on each other to divert the attention. What the Delhi government and the central government has done is criminal. They have not spent a single penny on enhancing oxygen supply and adding storage capacity in Delhi in the past year



AJAY MAKEN | CONGRESS LEADER

Lack of proper planning on the part of the Centre to address the need for drugs and oxygen in hospitals for the pandemic-stricken patients has resulted in the unabated rise of cases during the second wave of coronavirus



V NARAYANASWAMY | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

I would be grateful if you could provide us with any oxygen, along with tankers, from your state or any organization in your state. Kindly treat this as an SOS



ARVIND KEERIVALA | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

SHORT TAKES

Road mishap claims four

Azamgarh: Four people were killed and seven others seriously injured here when a speeding truck rammed into two jeeps, police said Saturday. Superintendent of Police Sudhir Kumar Singh said the truck hit three vehicles, including two jeeps, near Suhaval village Friday. The injured were referred to Varanasi for treatment. Occupants of the two jeeps were returning from a 'tilak' ceremony (pre-wedding ritual) in Mau district. The two jeeps had stopped on the roadside in Suhaval village when the speeding truck coming from Chiraiyyakot hit them, the SP said.

CPI (Maoist) Dy Commander held

Hyderabad: A deputy commander of the banned CPI (Maoist) operating in Chhattisgarh was arrested in Bhadradi Kothagudem district of Telangana and gelatin sticks and other explosive substances were seized from his possession, police said Saturday. A police team on combing operation apprehended the 24-year-old Maoist in the forest near Geesarelli village of Cherla mandal Friday. Five detonators, 20 gelatin sticks and 200 metres wire were seized from his possession, they said. The explosives were meant to be used for planting landmines to kill police personnel, a senior police official said.

Trapped tiger dies at Pench reserve

Seoni: A tiger died after allegedly by walking into a snare used by poachers to capture wild boars or deer in a buffer zone of Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district, an official said Saturday. A patrolling party found the big cat ensnared with his body parts intact in Ghatkoha area Friday evening, the PTR's field director Vikram Singh Parihar said. On finding the carcass, a sniffer dog squad searched the area to apprehend the unidentified poachers, he said. It appears that the tiger walked into a trap set up to catch a wild boar or deer, he said, adding that had the poachers killed the animal for its body parts, they would have disfigured it.



Reminding again the prime minister and his colleagues that India cannot be micromanaged in a pandemic. The responsibility for the deaths of Indian citizens for shortage of oxygen and medicines lies squarely at the doorstep of the government

ANAND SHARMA | CONGRESS LEADER

CONG LAUNCHES DIGITAL PLATFORM

The Congress Saturday launched its new digital media platform 'INC TV' on National Panchayati Raj Day to help spread its message directly to the people. The 'INC TV' will highlight news which the government does not allow to be published, so as to enable people to know what is happening in the country, AICC secretary Pranav Jha said



'India may peak at 3.5 mn active cases around May 15'

Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Telangana may see a high of new cases by April 25-30, while Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh might already have reached their peak in new cases



COVID resurge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The ongoing second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India may peak between May 11-15 with 33-35 lakh total active cases and decline steeply by the end of May, according to a mathematical model devised by IIT scientists. A record single-day rise of 3,46,786 coronavirus cases pushed India's tally of infection to 1,66,10,481, while active cases crossed the 25-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Saturday. The death toll rose to 1,89,544 with a record 2,624 more fatalities in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed. With a steady increase, active cases in the country reached 25,52,940 and comprise 15.37 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has further dropped to 83.49 per cent. In predicting that the active cases

would go up by about 10 lakh by mid-May before sliding, scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur and Hyderabad applied the 'Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach' (SUTRA) model. The scientists also said Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Telangana may see a high of new cases by April 25-30, while Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh might already have reached their peak in new cases. We have found that there is a reasonable chance that the active cases in India could peak sometime between May 11-15 with 33-35 lakh cases. It is a sharp slope, but on the way down, it would likely be equally sharp, coming down very fast and by end of May may see a dramatic reduction, Manindra Agrawal, professor at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, IIT-Kanpur, told PTI. The scientists in the as yet un-

Active cases cross 25 lakh

A record single-day rise of 3,46,786 coronavirus cases pushed India's tally of infection to 1,66,10,481, while active cases crossed the 25-lakh mark, according to the health ministry's data updated at 8 am Saturday. The death toll rose to 1,89,544 with a record 2,624 more fatalities in a day. Ten states, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, reported 74.15 per cent of the new COVID-19 cases. Also, 12 states are displaying an upward trajectory in daily cases. These are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Bihar and West Bengal. Most of these states have imposed night curfew, weekend shutdown and other lockdown-like restrictions.

published study said there are several novel features in the SUTRA model. Whereas previous papers divided the patient population into asymptomatic and Infected, the new model also accounts for the fact that some fraction of asymptomatic patients could also be detected due to contact tracing and other such protocols. Earlier this month, the mathematical modelling approach predicted that active infections in the country would peak by April 15 but this didn't come true. The parameters in our model for the current phase are continuously drifting. So it is hard to get their value right, said Agrawal.

2 ONGC staff rescued after encounter near Indo-Myanmar border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 24: Two employees of ONGC were rescued after an encounter near the India-Myanmar border in Nagaland Saturday, while a search for the third personnel is underway, Assam police chief Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said. The three employees of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) were kidnapped by suspected ULFA(I) militants from the Lakwa oilfield in Sivasagar district along Assam-Nagaland border Wednesday. An encounter took place in the forest of Mon district in Nagaland near the international border. Two ONGC employees have been rescued from there. A search operation for the third employee is on, Mahanta told PTI. The operation was carried out by a joint team of Nagaland Police, the Indian Army and other paramilitary forces, who were supported by intelligence inputs from Assam

Police, he added. The rescued persons have been identified as Mohini Mohan Gogoi and Alakesh Saikia. The security forces are looking out for Ritul Saikia, the Assam DGP said. The operation started early in the morning and it is still going on. We will be able to tell more once we get details from the ground team, he said. A senior police official directly involved in the entire case said the militants left one AK-series rifle and escaped from the scene after the encounter. It is clear that these were ULFA(I) militants. While fleeing from the scene, they could managed to take Ritul Saikia with them. The border is about six to seven km from the site and it is not easy to cross as it is surrounded by dense forest, he added. The security forces are carrying out an intense search and rescue operation to find out the third ONGC employee, the senior Assam Police official said.



NCP stunned as CBI books, raids, detains Deshmukh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 24: In a series of swift moves, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR against ex-Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, raided around 10 locations across multiple cities and later detained him in Nagpur, official sources said here Saturday. Following the first information report, the CBI teams wearing PPE kits, swooped at Deshmukh's home in Nagpur and other premises in Mumbai, Thane and Pune, stunning the ruling ally, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Deshmukh, who had been interrogated earlier by the CBI in Mumbai for 8 hours April 14, was likely to undergo a second round of questioning Saturday. The CBI action is part of the primary probe into the corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh last month, sparking off a massive political upheaval. The CBI has registered an FIR in connection with the corruption allegations against Deshmukh, and searches are underway at various places, a CBI official connected to the probe told IANS. In the FIR invoking provisions of



CBI finds prima facie 'cognisable offence'

Mumbai: In a shocking development, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said Saturday that its preliminary enquiry (PE) has found that a prima facie 'cognisable offence' is made out against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and others pertaining to alleged corruption and misuse of power. The CBI said that Deshmukh and some unknown others had attempted to take undue advantage for "improper and dishonest performance of their public duty".

which are awaited. The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party state President Chandrakant Patil and others welcomed the CBI action and demanded a probe against other MVA leaders including Transport Minister Anil Parab and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut. The movements came after the Bombay High Court ordered a preliminary enquiry April 5 by the CBI into the accusations of corruption and misuse of office against Deshmukh and submit its report within 15 days. Shortly after the court-ordered CBI preliminary probe, Deshmukh quit his post and senior NCP leader Walse-Patil was appointed in his place.

BENGAL POLLS

EC deploys forces in bordering districts to avoid intrusion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, April 24: The Election Commission has decided to deploy 653 companies of central forces for the penultimate seventh phase of Assembly elections in West Bengal scheduled for April 26, in which 34 constituencies across five districts will go to the polls. The deployment plan laid down by the Commission shows that the mobilisation of forces in the three bordering districts is far more than in the other two districts, indicating that the poll panel is trying to plug infiltration attempts during the elections. Of the five districts going to the polls in the seventh phase Monday, three districts - Malda, Murshidabad and South Dinajpur - share borders with Bangladesh.



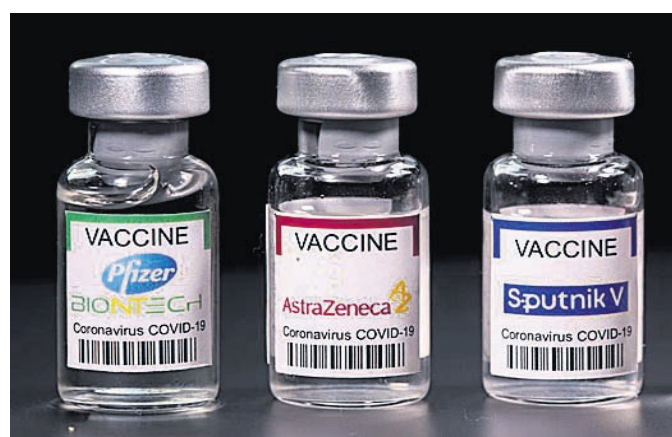
A total of 21 constituencies in these three districts, including nine in Murshidabad and six each in Malda and South Dinajpur, will go to the polls Monday, for which the Commission has deployed as many as 436 companies of central forces. Alternatively, only 217 companies of forces have been deployed for the remaining 13 constituencies where polling will be held Monday - nine in West Burdwan and four in Kolkata.

A district-wise analysis shows that of the three bordering districts, Murshidabad has the highest allocation of 204 companies of central forces for nine constituencies, followed by Malda (122 companies for six constituencies) and South Dinajpur (110 companies for six seats). As far as the non-bordering districts are concerned, 154 companies of central forces have been allocated to the nine constituencies in West Burdwan, while only 63 companies will man the four seats in South Kolkata.

More post-vax deaths from Pfizer than Astra: Sputnik

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 24: Russian Covid vaccine Sputnik V, which is now the third Covid-19 vaccine in India, has claimed that the available public data suggests more people died after taking the Pfizer job than AstraZeneca. Sputnik V study shows that there are significantly more deaths following vaccination with Pfizer than with AstraZeneca vaccine per 1 million administered doses, based on official publicly available data by 13 international health regulators, Sputnik V said in a tweet late Friday. The causes of such major discrepancies in the number of death cases among different vaccines should be the focus of honest scientific and



public discussion, it added. Both Pfizer and AstraZeneca were yet to react to the Sputnik V study.

In January, 23 elderly patients reportedly died in Norway following their immunization with the

Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine against Covid-19. On the other hand, several countries have halted the use of AstraZeneca as the shot may have caused some recipients to develop blood clots. Recently, the regional health authorities in Italy's Lombardy region have said that public confidence in the country's use of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine has been hindered by the jab's safety fears. This week, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), Australia's medical regulator, has ruled that a 48-year-old woman's death due to blood clotting was a side effect of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine. Meanwhile, Hyderabad-based

pharmaceutical major Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) has received permission from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to import the Sputnik V vaccine in India for restricted use in emergencies. After Covishield and Covaxin, Sputnik V, developed by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology in Moscow, is now the third Covid-19 vaccine to get emergency use approval in India. This week, the Gamaleya National Research Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology and the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) reported that the Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine showed a 97.6 per cent efficacy.

international



No country that managed to break the third wave of the pandemic and then loosen restrictions again did so without tough measures such as nighttime curfews
ANGELA MERKEL | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

OUT OF THE CAVE

After 40 days in voluntary isolation in a dark, damp and vast cave, eight men and seven women who took part in a scientific experiment are expected to emerge Saturday from their self-segregation in the Pyrenees, France



of the day quote

We express our support to the people of India in the wake of the current wave of #COVID19 infections that has hit our region hard. On behalf of the people of Pakistan, I extend our heartfelt sympathies to the affected families in #India
SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI | FM, PAKISTAN

The UK already faces a number of problems at home. Those British lawmakers should mind their own business and do something tangible for their own constituency
ZHAO LIJIAN | SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

We can in fact carry on trade and other relations with countries while also calling out the fact that a government cannot get away with murdering its own citizens
MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU | FM, TURKEY

Climate partnership core pillar of US-India cooperation: Biden

The partnership includes deploying 450 gigawatts of renewable power to meet the ambitious 2030 target for climate action and clean energy



TWO MAIN TRACKS:
STRATEGIC CLEAN ENERGY PARTNERSHIP
CLIMATE ACTION AND FINANCE MOBILISATION DIALOGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 24: US President Joe Biden has said that he wants to make achieving climate and energy goals "a core pillar" of bilateral cooperation with India and is looking forward to work with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the matter.

Biden's remarks came a day after the two countries announced a "US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership" to create stronger bilateral cooperation on actions in the current decade to meet the goals of the landmark Paris Agreement.

"I'm looking forward to working with India's Prime Minister Modi in a new partnership to achieve our climate and energy goals, making this a core pillar of our bilateral cooperation," Biden said in his address to the two-day virtual summit on climate change Friday. The partnership includes deploying 450 gigawatts of renewable power to meet the ambitious 2030 target for climate action and clean energy.

Addressing the final session of the virtual climate summit on Friday, Biden said this is about the opportunity that addressing climate change provides.

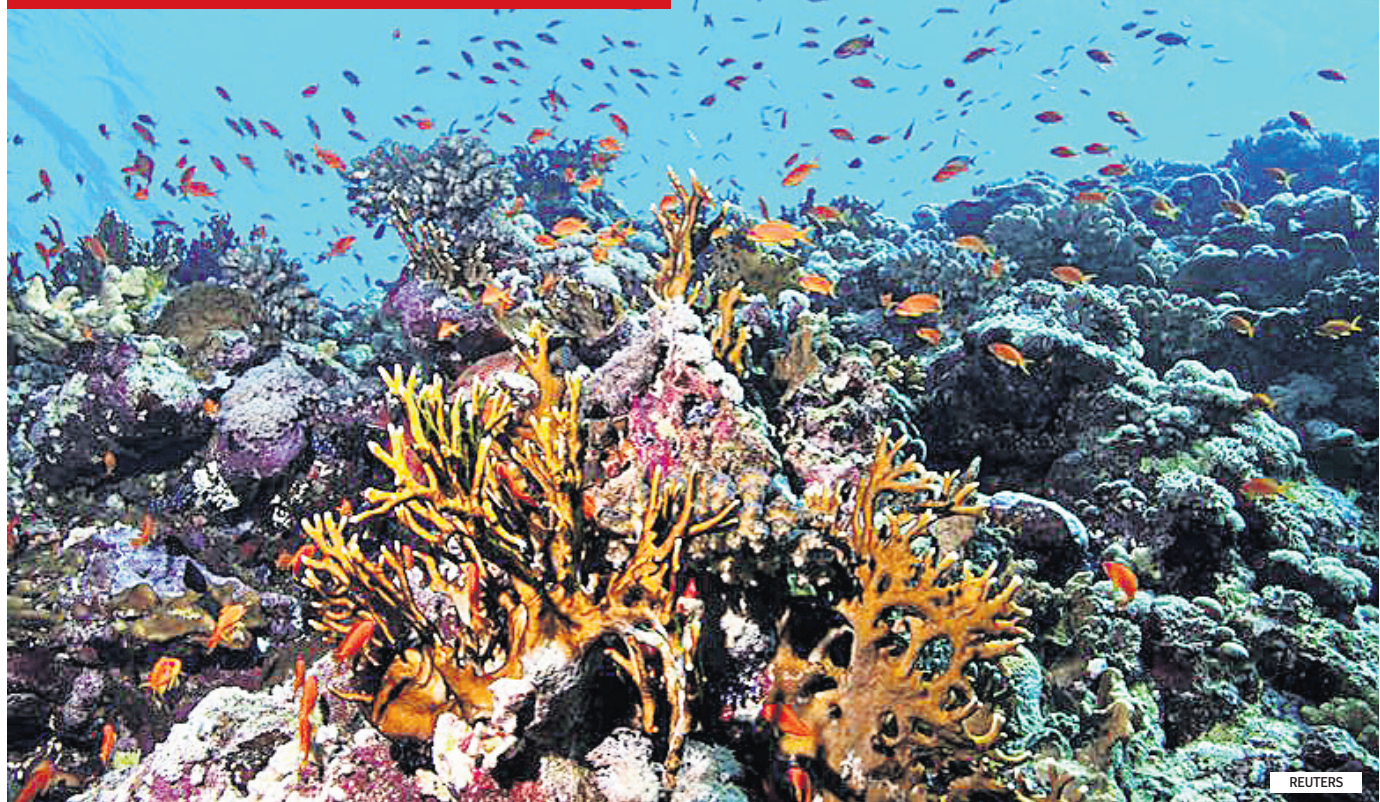
It's an opportunity to create millions of good-paying jobs around the world and innovate - in innovative

sectors - jobs that bring greater quality of life, greater dignity to the people performing those jobs in every nation, he said. "For a line worker, electricians, utility workers - laying transmission lines, connecting battery storage, and making our electric grid more modern. For automotive workers - building electric cars, trucks, and buses. Skilled workers installing and charging stations to collaborate and advanced carbon dioxide removal. America is once again stepping into the leadership role, Biden said.

"We will be joining and a partner - for the nations and efforts to decarbonise critical sectors across the board, including the industrial sector, where we'll join with Sweden and India," Biden said. Biden also welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for carbon dioxide removal.

"I'm very heartened by President Putin's call yesterday for the world to collaborate and advanced carbon dioxide removal. And the United States looks forward to working with Russia and other countries in that endeavour," the US president said. "It has a great promise. This is a moment for all of us to build better economies for our children, our grandchildren, and all of us to thrive not just now, but beyond for the next generations," Biden said.

UNDERWATER ECOSYSTEM



Fish swim above a coral reef in the Red Sea offshore of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) near the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Jerusalem tension triggers Gaza-Israel fire exchange

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, April 24: Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired some three dozen rockets into Israel overnight Saturday, while the Israeli military struck back at targets operated by the ruling Hamas group.

The exchange came as tensions in Jerusalem spilled over into the worst round of cross-border violence in months.

The barrage of rocket fire came as hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli police in east Jerusalem. The clashes, in which at least four police and six protesters were injured, have become a nightly occurrence throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and show no signs of stopping.

The UN envoy to the region, Tor



Wennesland, condemned the violence and said the United Nations was working with all sides to restore calm. "The provocative acts across Jerusalem must cease. The indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres violates international law and must stop immediately," he said. "I reiterate my call upon all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid

The Israeli military said a total of 36 rockets were fired into Israel throughout the night. It said six rockets were intercepted, while most of the others landed in open areas

further escalation, particularly during the Holy month of Ramadan and this politically charged time for all.

The US also appealed for calm, while neighbouring Jordan, which serves as the custodian for Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, condemned Israel's actions.

Jerusalem, home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, has long been a flashpoint in the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2014, similar tensions erupted into a 50-day war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group.

The Israeli military said a total of 36 rockets were fired into Israel throughout the night. It said six rockets were intercepted, while most of the others landed in open areas. There were no reports of injuries or serious damage, but the incoming rocket fire set off air-raid sirens throughout southern Israel.

In response, the army said fighter jets and helicopters struck a number of Hamas targets in Gaza, including an underground facility and rocket launchers. Hamas did not claim responsibility for the rocket fire, but Israel considers the group responsible for all fire emanating from the territory.

SHORT TAKES

Iran bans flights from India, Pak

Tehran: Iran's state-run IRNA news agency is reporting the country's civil aviation agency has banned all flights to and from India and Pakistan because of the dramatic surge in coronavirus cases in the two nations. IRNA says the decision was made by Iran's Health Ministry and it takes effect Saturday at midnight. Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh, spokesman for Iran's Civil Aviation Organization noted there are no routine flights between Iran and India and "flights are operated occasionally."

Indonesian sub sank; no survivors

Banyuwangi (Indonesia): Indonesia's navy Saturday said items were found from a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sank and there was no hope of finding survivors. Navy Chief Yudo Margono said rescuers found several items from the KRI Nanggala 402, which disappeared after its last reported dive Wednesday off the resort island of Bali, including parts of a torpedo straightener, a grease bottle believed to be used to oil the periscope and prayer rugs.

Former Lankan minister arrested

Colombo: Sri Lankan Police Saturday arrested a former minister and his brother for allegedly aiding and abetting the suicide bombers responsible for the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks in which 258 people, including 11 Indians, were killed. Rishad Bathiudeen, the leader of a minority Muslim party that is part of the main Opposition party, the SJB, and his brother Riyaj Bathiudeen were arrested from their respective residences.

4 killed in helicopter crash

Harare: Four people were killed after an Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) helicopter crashed into a house in Arcturus, 32 km east of the capital Harare. The four victims were two pilots and a technician onboard as well as a child on the ground, the AFZ said in a statement Friday. Another young girl and her mother sustained burn injuries and were taken to hospital, the Xinhua news agency reported Saturday. The AFZ said that the Agusta Bell 412 helicopter left Manyame Air Force base with two pilots and one aircraft technician on a training mission.

ASEAN leaders discuss crisis in Myanmar with junta chief

The gathering of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta is the first coordinated international effort to ease the crisis in Myanmar



China, India and Thailand. Myanmar is part of the 10-nation ASEAN.

Jakarta, April 24: Southeast Asian leaders began a crisis meeting on Myanmar Saturday aiming to persuade Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who led the military takeover that sparked turmoil in his country, to forge a path to end the violence.

The gathering of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta is the first coordinated international effort to ease the crisis in Myanmar, an impoverished country that neighbours

With participants attending in person despite the pandemic, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Saturday that the summit reflected the "deep concern about the situation in Myanmar and ASEAN's determination to help Myanmar get out of this delicate situation".

It's unusual for the leader of a military government in Myanmar to attend an ASEAN summit - usually the country has been represented by a lower-ranked officer or a civilian. Min Aung Hlaing was seen disembarking after arriving on a special flight from Naypyitaw the Myanmar capital, according to footage on the official video channel of Indonesia's presidential palace. About two dozen protesters gathered nearby, beating pots and pans and holding signs saying "Democracy for Myanmar" and "We stand against the military coup". Police quickly moved them on.

Diplomats and government officials who asked not to be named said many ASEAN leaders want a commitment from Min Aung Hlaing to restrain his security forces, who monitors say have killed 745 people since a mass civil disobedience movement emerged to challenge his Feb. 1 coup against the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

"This is what Myanmar must avoid: geographical, political, social and national disintegration into warring ethnic parts," said Philippines Foreign Secretary Teddy Locsin on Twitter. "Myanmar on its own must find peace again."

barking after arriving on a special flight from Naypyitaw the Myanmar capital, according to footage on the official video channel of Indonesia's presidential palace. About two dozen protesters gathered nearby, beating pots and pans and holding signs saying "Democracy for Myanmar" and "We stand against the military coup". Police quickly moved them on.

Diplomats and government officials who asked not to be named said many ASEAN leaders want a commitment from Min Aung Hlaing to restrain his security forces, who monitors say have killed 745 people since a mass civil disobedience movement emerged to challenge his Feb. 1 coup against the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

"This is what Myanmar must avoid: geographical, political, social and national disintegration into warring ethnic parts," said Philippines Foreign Secretary Teddy Locsin on Twitter. "Myanmar on its own must find peace again."

Dispute over Russian pipeline tests Biden's Europe outreach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 24: Pressure is growing on President Joe Biden to take action to prevent the completion of a Russian gas pipeline to Europe that many fear will give the Kremlin significant leverage over U.S. Partners and allies.

Yet such action could provoke an enormous rift in trans-Atlantic relations, notably with Germany, at a time when Biden has made restoring good ties with Europe a priority. As the Nord Stream 2 pipeline nears completion, U.S. Lawmakers from both parties have stepped up demands on a reluctant White House to impose new sanctions on Russian and European companies to halt the project.

However, prospects of that happening would seem slim: Germany continues to support the project as it steps up consumption of natural gas, and the pipeline is roughly 95% finished.

Biden has said he opposes the pipeline, which is owned by Russian



state company Gazprom, with investment from several European companies. He has been keen to portray himself as tough on Russian President Vladimir Putin while being a strong supporter of Eastern European countries like Poland and Ukraine that are dead set against it as it bypasses both.

Of potentially greater concern to the U.S., the Russia-to-Germany pipeline would increase Western Europe's already heavy dependence on Russian energy while U.S.-Russian tensions are soaring over a number of issues, including Ukraine, election interference, cyber intrusions and the crack-down on opposition figure Alexei Navalny and his supporters.

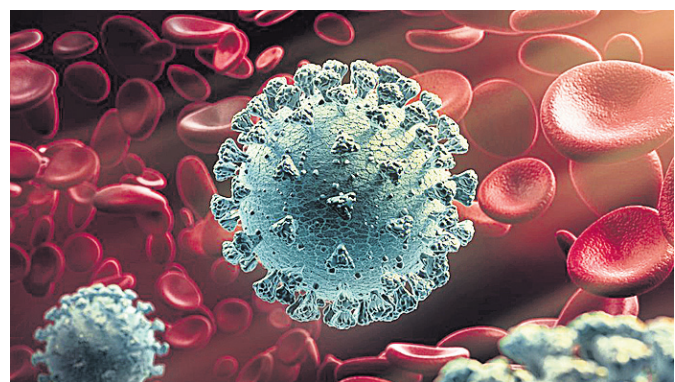
More potent strain of Covid detected in Sri Lanka

REUTERS

Colombo, April 24: A new coronavirus strain that is airborne and more potent than all those found previously in Sri Lanka has been discovered in the island nation, according to a top immunologist in Colombo.

The variant, which is highly transmissible, can remain airborne for nearly an hour and is spreading fast, Neelika Malavige, the head of the Department of Immunology and Molecular Sciences of the Sri Jayawardenapura University said. "This variant of coronavirus is more highly transmissible than all found so far in the island. The new strain is airborne, the droplets can remain airborne for nearly an hour," Malavige said.

Health authorities feared that the new variant is spreading rapidly



after last week's New Year celebrations with more younger people getting infected. "In the next two incubation periods, the disease can progress to a third wave," Upul Rohana, of the Public Health Inspectors said, adding that the real situation would emerge only in

the coming 2-3 weeks. Meanwhile, the ministry of COVID prevention issued new guidelines, which would remain in force until May 31.

The guidelines dictate a 50 per cent capacity operation for most institutions with all forms of revelry being banned.

This variant of coronavirus is more highly transmissible than all found so far in the island. The new strain is airborne, the droplets can remain airborne for nearly an hour
NEELIKA MALAVIGE | HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMUNOLOGY AND MOLECULAR SCIENCES

The countrywide cases, which were around 150 before the mid-April New Year, have now shot up to over 600 a day.

Sri Lanka is also running out of its health care capacity, officials said. Sri Lanka, like many other nations, is witnessing a surge in

the number of coronavirus cases, with the current figure standing at 99,691 cases and 638 deaths due to the disease.

Director General of Health Services Dr Asela Gunawardena said hospitals still have enough ICU capacity to treat COVID-19 patients but it is more important that health guidelines are followed in order to avoid infection. "Previously the symptoms were not very apparent. Now they are much more visible and young people are more likely to develop them," he said.

Those who have tested positive now develop more breathing difficulties, requiring ICU admission and oxygen, he said.

Sri Lanka is not the only nation to have witnessed new strain of COVID-19 but also other Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Indonesia among others.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, April 24: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced Saturday that they have determined to lift the pause regarding the use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine, allowing its resumed use for adults.

The decision was made following a thorough safety review, including two meetings of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), said a joint statement of the two agencies.

The pause was recommended on April 13 after reports of six cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals following administration of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine, the Xinhua news agency reported Saturday.

During the pause, medical and scientific teams at the FDA and CDC examined available data to assess the risk of thrombosis involving the cerebral venous sinuses, or CVST (large blood vessels in the brain), and other sites in the body along with thrombocytopenia, or low blood platelet counts, according to the statement.

The teams at FDA and CDC also conducted extensive outreach to providers and clinicians to ensure they were made aware of the potential for these adverse events and could properly manage and recognise these events due to the unique treatment required for these blood clots and low platelets.

"The FDA and CDC have confidence that this vaccine is safe and effective in preventing Covid-19," said the statement.

"At this time, the available data suggest that the chance of TTS (thrombosis-thrombocytopenia syndrome) occurring is very low, but the FDA and CDC will remain vigilant in continuing to investigate this risk," said the statement.

CDC's ACIP advisors met Friday to discuss the latest data on TTS, and voted to recommend resuming the use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine for adults.



The Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to an increase of scams and fraud that prey on consumers' fears and financial insecurities
TONY CARDENAS | US REPRESENTATIVE

SNAP ACQUIRES FIT ANALYTICS

Snap, the parent company of snapchat, has paid \$124.4 million to acquire Berlin-based Fit Analytics, a startup in the field of apparel and footwear technology



business

of the day quote

We will calibrate our growth in the near term based on the operating environment and conditions resulting from the second wave of the Covid pandemic



SANDEEP BATRA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ICICI BANK

I feel that entering the premium segment for Mi India is currently aimed at gaining a bigger mind-share, expanding its premium portfolio and then building upon the initial buzz to create a definitive space in months to come



TARUN PATHAK | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, COUNTERPOINT RESEARCH

India's vaccine pricing being complicated/politicised... government should pay manufacturers reasonable price. This is not the time for haggling and creating uncertainty for private sector, domestic or foreign



SHORT TAKES

HDFC deploys mobile ATMs

Mumbai: HDFC Bank Saturday said it has deployed mobile ATMs across India to assist customers during the lockdown. "At restricted, sealed areas, the 'Mobile ATMs' will eliminate the need for general public to move out of their locality to withdraw cash," the bank said in a statement. "During the lockdown last year, HDFC Bank successfully deployed mobile ATMs in over 50 cities and facilitated lakhs of customers in availing cash to meet their exigencies."

Ransomware attacks up 767%

New Delhi: The ransomware attacks on high-profile targets such as corporations, government agencies and municipal organisations globally increased by a whopping 767% in one year, finds a report. Targeted ransomware attacks have become a major concern globally in the past few years, especially for organisations and businesses in the APAC region, especially India. "At least 61 entities from the region were breached by a targeted ransomware group in 2020 with Australia and India logging maximum incidents across APAC," said Chris Connell, MD, Kaspersky (APAC).

'Traders in Delhi to observe lockdown'

New Delhi: Traders in Delhi will observe voluntary lockdown for one more week to assist the government in bringing down the Covid numbers, the CAIT said Saturday. Accordingly, more than 100 leading associations from all parts of Delhi have decided to observe 'Voluntary Self Lockdown' from April 26 to May 2. In a virtual meeting held Friday, CAIT urged Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal to extend the current 6-day lockdown, for one more week.

Linde, Tata Group get 24 O₂ tanks

New Delhi: Linde Group and the Tata Group have sourced 24 cryogenic oxygen tanks to help augment oxygen delivery in the fight against COVID, the German firm's India unit said in a statement. "To respond to the national urgency, Linde India has joined hands with Tata group and Government of India to undertake measures to augment the availability of LMO across the country," it said.

Centre exempts customs duty, health cess on O₂, vax



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 24: Centre Saturday waived basic customs duty on oxygen, oxygen related equipment and vaccines. The decision comes after the Prime Minister chaired a meeting to review steps taken to boost oxygen availability in the country.

In a statement, Ministry of Finance said: "The PM emphasised that there was an immediate need to augment the supply of medical grade oxygen as well as equipment required for patient care both at home and in hospitals." "PM stressed that all ministries

and departments need to work in synergy to increase availability of oxygen and medical supplies."

During the meeting, it was suggested that import of equipment related to providing oxygen to patients needs to be expedited.

In order to augment their production and availability and to meet the rising demand, it was decided to grant full exemption from 'Basic Customs Duty' and health cess on import of items related to 'Oxygen and Oxygen related equipment' for a period of three months with immediate effect.

Besides, it was decided that basic customs duty on import of

NEED OF THE HOUR

In a statement, the MoF said that, the PM has laid emphasis on the need to boost immediate supply of medical grade oxygen as well as equipment required for patients

In order to augment oxygen's production and availability amid its rising demands, it was decided to grant full exemption from 'Basic Customs Duty' and health cess on import of items related to oxygen and oxygen-related equipments

It was also decided that basic customs duty on import of Covid vaccines will also be exempted with immediate effect for 3 months

Covid vaccines be exempted with immediate effect for a period of 3 months.

"This will boost availability of these items as well as make them cheaper. The PM directed the 'Revenue Department' to ensure seamless and quick custom clearance of such equipment."

Furthermore, the statement cited that Centre has taken a lot of measures in the last few days to improve supply of oxygen and medical supplies. "IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore. IAF is also transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times."

"Similarly, in a major decision yesterday, free food grains will be given to 80 crore Indians for the month of May and June 2021."

Tata's ₹100cr tea packaging unit to start production soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The tea packaging unit of Tata Consumer Products located in Gopalpur Industrial Park (GIP) of Tata Steel Special Economic Zone will soon start commercial production, a company official said. The unit has been set up at an investment of ₹100 crore.

Constructed over an area of 16 acres, the unit has an annual production capacity of 60 million kg. Trial production has already commenced at the unit. It will be operated by Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd. (APPL), an associate company of Tata Consumer Products.



APPL is a plantation company and the second largest tea producer in India with an annual production of around 40 million kg. It is also one of the leading public-private partnership contract packers for Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL) for their FMCG business and currently operates three tea packaging factories (two in Assam, one in West Bengal).

Currently, the GIP is host to a 55,000 TPA ferro chrome plant by Tata Steel, a defense manufacturing unit by Anadrone Systems Private Limited, and chrome based industries by East Coast Overseas Private Limited and Odimet Resources Private Limited.

Serum Institute defends Covid-19 vaccine pricing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Serum Institute of India (SII), which makes the most used Covid-19 vaccine in the country, Saturday, defended pricing Covishield vaccine at 1.5 times the initial rate, saying the earlier price was based on advance funding and now it has to invest in scaling up and expanding capacity to produce more shots.

The world's largest vaccine maker, which manufactures Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine at Pune, earlier this week announced a price of ₹600 per dose for private hospitals and ₹400 per dose for state governments and for any new contract by the central government. It currently charges the central government ₹150 per dose for the existing supplies.

The opposition parties had criticised the differential pricing for Covid-19 vaccines, saying it was discriminatory and will benefit only a "few big industrialists" while common people will suffer.

They had demanded the Centre and state governments pay the same price for the Covid-19 vaccine.

Serum Institute of India (SII) in a statement clarified that there was an "inaccurate comparison" done between the global prices of the vaccine with India. "Covishield is the most affordable Covid-19 vaccine available in the market today," SII said.

The initial prices were kept very



SII earlier this week announced a price of ₹600/dose for private hospitals and ₹400/dose for state governments

low globally as these were based on advance funding given by those countries for at-risk vaccine manufacturing, it added. "The initial supply price of Covishield for all government immunization programme, including India, has been the lowest", SII said.

Government procurement for countrywide immunisation programmes in all countries, including India, has been at a far lower price as the volumes are very large, it added.

Emphasising that the company has to ensure sustainability, SII said, "The current situation is extremely dire; the virus is constantly mutating while the public remains at risk."

BIZ BUZZ

Realme launches 5G smartphone in India

Bhubaneswar: Realme unveiled its much anticipated first 5G smartphone in its number series— Realme 8 5G. The company claimed that the new 5G model is India's first smartphone with MediaTek Dimensity 700 5G processor with dual 5G dual standby. It features an 8.5mm super slim design, a 16.5cm (6.5") 90Hz Ultra Smooth Display, 5000mAh Massive Battery with smart 5G power saving mode, 48MP Nightscape Camera, and 16MP AI Beauty Selfie front camera. realme 8 5G is available in two colours - Supersonic Blue and Supersonic Black and comes in two storage variants priced at ₹14999 (4GB+128GB) and ₹16999 (8GB+128GB). The sale will be up April 28 at 12noon onwards on Flipkart.com, realme.com and mainline channels.



Sony India launches BRAVIA X75

Bhubaneswar: Sony India announced the new BRAVIA X75 android television series with 4K Ultra HD LED display. These next generation televisions are defined by delivering a personalized and true-to-life viewing experience. With BRAVIA X75, enter the world of Android TV and experience thrilling games, movies in beautiful color and incredible 4K clarity with clear and natural sound. It offers powerful sound with dolby audio and open baffle speaker in X75 series. The newly launched X75 series will be available across all Sony Centers, major electronic stores and e-commerce portals. The KD-50X75 model is priced at ₹72,990 while KD-43X75 is at ₹59,990.



Credai Odisha urges govt to hike cost limit of affordable houses

THE HOUSING SALES IN THE STATE CAME DOWN BY 10-15% LAST YEAR DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Credai Odisha, an association of the leading real estate developers in the state, urged the state government to hike cost limit of affordable houses from ₹45 lakh to ₹75 lakh. The president of Credai Odisha Swadesh Kumar Routray said, "The association has requested the government to hike the cost considering tremendous cost hikes of building materials and labour charges."

Apart from this, Routray also urged the government to introspect the appeals of the state confederation in matters relating to GST inputs, tax sops in GPA & development agreement, benchmark value of land, statutory fees, single window approval, prioritising involvement of local builders and policy immunity against dreggy processing by RERA.

The state confederation also urged government to reduce the stamp duty like other states has done the same.



"The cases of initiatives taken by other states in case of execution of GPA & development agreement, they have reduced the stamp duty to maximum of ₹1 lakh or 1% of the registration value.

Besides registration, charges for housing units have been fixed 1% or 2% maximum for two years, which is the same conciliatory incentives from the government of Odisha," the president said.

He asserted that their tax sops shall not result in reduction of Government revenue, rather it will result in its multiplication due to more and more execution

of GPA & registration of sales deeds.

He also stressed upon 'single window approval' of housing projects for speedy disposal of professional proposals.

The Credai Odisha President also appealed that the benchmark value of land should not be hiked, besides relaxation by way of allowing payments of statutory fees such as labour cess and other charges in five equal installments in five years.

The state confederation claimed that housing sales in 2020 came down by 10-15%.

Amazon to soon let sellers connect with customers directly

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, April 24: Amazon may soon allow sellers to directly connect with customers via emails about new product announcements and sales. The e-commerce giant is currently testing this new feature called "Manage Your Customer Engagement" that will help sellers contact Amazon users who have specifically chosen to follow a particular company, reports CNBC.

The new email campaign option is a free service for sellers, but it's only available to brands registered through Amazon's Brand Registry programme.

Launched in 2015, Brand Registry helps businesses curb the sale of counterfeiters and more than 350,000 brands have registered to be part of the programme.

"Shoppers' contact information will continue to remain private. Amazon will give companies aggregate data when they use the tool that shows them how many emails will go out when they decide to share marketing campaigns with their followers," the report mentioned on Friday.

Amazon will tell brands how many customers have opted to receive the emails, along with performance metrics for the campaign.

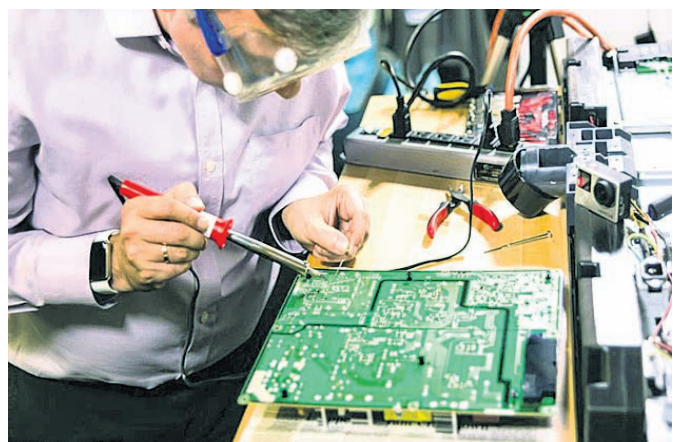
'Electronic repair market can create over 5mn jobs'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 24: The electronics repair market in India can help generate over five million direct jobs, with a potential to generate revenues of \$20 billion per annum, a new report has emphasised.

According to MAIT, the apex body representing the ICT and electronics manufacturing sector in India, the repair and calibration of electronic subassemblies and products is a \$100 billion industry worldwide.

"High costs of repairing electronic goods in developed countries like the US and Europe are compelling the corporates to send goods overseas, where such repair services are provided at lower prices due to both skills and cost arbitrage," said the report titled



'Electronic Hardware Repair Services Outsourcing' (ERSO) launched at the Electronics and Telecom Manufacturing Summit 2021 (MAIT-ETMS).

The report made recommenda-

tions to the Centre to streamline and simplify procedures to make India a repair and refurbishment hub for IT and electronic products.

"The electronics repair industry has the potential of becoming an

The electronics repair industry has the potential of becoming an emerging sector for employment growth in India. With the right regulatory support from the government of India, the domestic repair service sector in India can experience a tremendous boost

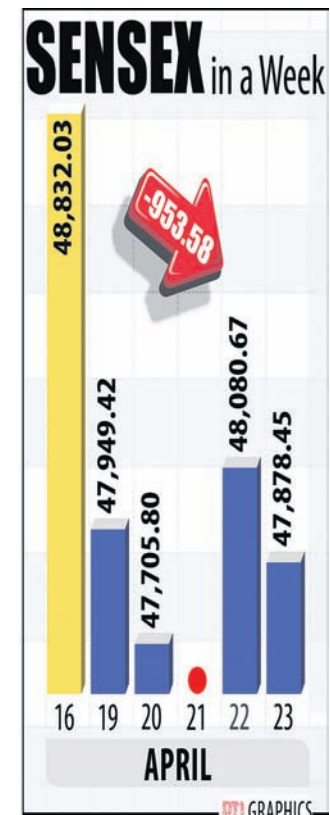
NITIN KUNKOLIENKER | PRESIDENT, MAIT

emerging sector for employment growth in India. With the right regulatory support from the government of India, the domestic repair service sector in India can experience a tremendous boost," said Nitin Kunkolienker, President, MAIT. "It will, thereby, generate

valuable Forex revenue as well as create employment, especially during these COVID-19 times, which has made millions of Indians jobless," he added.

The report highlighted background on the regulatory landscape and emphasised bottlenecks and difficulties being faced day to day by the repair units in India, such as various regulatory approvals, import/ export restrictions, investment and infrastructure cost, lack of skilled workforce and technology, e-waste related constraints, etc.

"The initiative to make India an electronics repairs outsourcing hub is the next sunrise sector for the country with the potential to generate over 5 million new direct jobs and attract investment from across the globe," the report mentioned.



Royal challenge awaits Super Kings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: It would be nothing short of a clash of the titans when Virat Kohli's on-a-roll Royal Challengers Bangalore takes on MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings in a top-of-the-table IPL showdown here on Sunday with two points and momentum at stake.

RCB has won all its four matches so far and sits on top of the standings. CSK, on the other hand, has hit back after losing its opener to claim three straight wins for the second spot in the points table.

RCB, boosted by a 10-wicket hammering of Rajasthan Royals, will be keen to continue its winning streak. However, the task is easier said than done as CSK is riding high with three good results of its own.

Kohli and the highly-rated Devdutt Padikkal toyed with the Rajasthan Royals bowling the other day and will look to lay a strong



foundation again for RCB against a varied CSK bowling attack.

RCB, who have more often not under-performed amid high expectations, have started well. And, Kohli will be aware of the importance of maintaining the intensity in a long league.

The RCB batting appears to be top heavy and reliant on the performances of Kohli, South African maes-



tro AB de Villiers and Australian maverick Glenn Maxwell. Padikkal's good form also augurs well for the team. However, the RCB batting unit will front up to Deepak Chahar, who is known for his ability to strike early. It remains to be seen if the team has what it takes to bounce back in case there is loss of wickets early in the innings.

The RCB bowling has done the job

so far with Mohammed Siraj being impressive. However, they come up against a formidable CSK which bats deep and the importance of early wickets can't be emphasised enough.

Ruturaj Gaikwad emerged from three failures with an impressive knock against Kolkata Knight Riders and forms a strong opening partnership with Faf du Plessis.

A good start will help their cause and with an in-form Moeen Ali pencilled in at No.3 and Suresh Raina to follow, CSK has the firepower to strike late as well. Skipper Dhoni is yet to hit his straps but coach Stephen Fleming believes he would get better with every outing.

While Chahar has been in the thick of things at the start, spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali have also struck crucial blows. Shardul Thakur has proved expensive at times but is a vital cog in the CSK bowling unit.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

2022 ODI WC TO BE MITHALI'S SWANSONG

Cricketing Greatness, published by Harper Collins and co-authored by Boria Majumdar and Gautam Bhattacharya. "The last year is equal to the 20 years of my international cricket," she added.

Mithali, the only women batter with 7,000-plus ODI runs, also spoke about how she had to keep herself motivated during the COVID-19 times which also pushed the global event by one year.

"I know we are in difficult times but it takes a lot out of me to keep working on my fitness. I am not getting any younger, in fact I am getting older and I know the importance of fitness," Mithali said.

"The importance of being in a very good emotional and mental set-up, knowing that there will be very few tours before the World Cup."

Indian women are set to play four bilateral series—away tours in England, Australia and New Zealand

and a home series against West Indies sandwiched in between. "Every tour (from now on) is important for me as a batter as to how I am going to get the team to regroup and build a team for the World Cup," she said.

"Yeah, I am very optimistic looking at the girls and in the manner they have been working with whatever facilities they have in these times and focus and enthusiasm that a series is coming up."

She admitted that fast bowling is one area that the team needs to improve upon and build a pool looking at the future as Jhulan Goswami also hits the business end of her career.

Mithali also got some words of advice from the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, who was a co-panellist during the discussion. Gavaskar feels that Mithali and her bunch could take a leaf out of Virat Kohli's playbook of looking at opponent's eyes and giving it back without getting intimidated.

"I was with my wife at Lord's watching the 2017 Women ODI World Cup final. What I saw was that English girls came hard at your lower order and intimidated them with their attitude," Gavaskar said.

"I would want the girls to glare back at the opposition instead of looking down. I feel body language is a very important aspect. Look at Virat Kohli, he stares at opposition and the rest of the team does that."

ROYALS OUTWIT KNIGHTS



Chris Morris reacts after dismissing Andre Russell during Rajasthan's match against KKR, Saturday

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 24: Rajasthan Royals rode on brilliant performances from Chris Morris (4/23) and skipper Sanju Samson (42 n o, 41b, 2x4, 1x6) to move to sixth position in the points table with a six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders, who are now struggling at the bottom in the eight-team standings, Saturday.

Put into bat, KKR managed to post 133/9. Morris was the wrecker in chief for the Royals. In response, skipper Samson led the chase with caution before helping his side bag two important points with seven balls to spare. Varun Chakravarty (2/32) bowled well for KKR.

Chasing 134, Royals lost Jos Buttler early, but small contributions from the other batters along with Samson's effort guided them home. From 21/1, RR were reduced to 40/2

in 4.5 overs, when the other opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (22) was dismissed off Shivam Mavi (1/19).

Samson then added 45 runs with Shivam Dube (22) for the third wicket. They were then reduced to 100/4 when Rahul Tewatia got out. However, Samson and David Miller (24 n o) ensured Royals of no more hiccups.

Earlier, Morris was effective at the death yet again as Royals pacers combined accuracy and guile to re-

strict KKR to 133/9. The other pacers, Jaydev Unadkat (1/25), Chetan Sakariya (1/31) and Mustafizur Rahman (1/22), were also impressive.

The highly rated Shubman Gill (11) disappointed yet again. The Royals pacers were impressive with their variations and did not offer the batsmen any freebies in the powerplay as KKR laboured to 25/1 in six overs.

It became 45/2 in the eighth over when Gill's opening partner Nitish Rana (22) was dismissed. Skipper Eoin Morgan sent Sunil Narine ahead of himself to give the innings a much needed boost but it did not work, leaving KKR at 55/3 in 10 overs.

KKR's troubles worsened after Morgan got run out without facing a ball following a bad mix-up with Rahul Tripathi (36). Their most destructive batsman Andre Russell had to wait till the 16th over to get into the middle with the innings not going anywhere at 94/5. Dinesh Karthik (25) came up with some badly needed boundaries in his bid to improve the scoring rate. Morris removed both Russell and Karthik in the same over which allowed Royals to limit KKR to under 140.

BRIEF SCORES

Kolkata Knight Riders 133/9 (Rahul Tripathi 36, Dinesh Karthik 25; Chris Morris 4/23) **lost to Rajasthan Royals 134/4** (Sanju Samson 42 n o, David Miller 24 n o; Varun Chakravarty 2/32) **by 6 wickets.**

TODAY'S MATCHES

RCB

VS

CSK

TIME 3.30 PM

DC

VS

SRH

TIME 7.30 PM

Telecast: Star Sports channels

Pant vs Rashid on slow Chepauk

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 24: Rishabh Pant's brute power will be put to test against Rashid Khan's bagful of tricks in an IPL encounter where Delhi Capitals will start as favourites against Sunrisers Hyderabad due to their better bowling resources.

The much-criticised Chepauk track will host its 10th and final IPL game of the season in which both Pant and his opposite number David Warner would pray for a decent surface for their flamboyant batters.

With only a couple of first innings total in excess of 170 across nine games here, the slow and gripping surface at the MA Chidambaram Stadium tests the skills of the batsmen in a different manner.

Possibly, it's the ability to muscle the ball that will come in handy on this track and hence the DC skipper's role as a batsman will become all the more important.

While Shikhar Dhawan is in good form and Prithvi Shaw in not so great touch after the first game, the willow-wielders, who depend on sheer timing compared to power may struggle.

In fact, Hyderabad, after playing all its four games in Chennai, has only now started to crack the code of a slow track, evident dur-



ing the team's comfortable victory over Punjab Kings after a hat-trick of defeats.

With Kane Williamson back in the mix, Sunrisers seemed to have got a better balance in a set-up which is acutely short of quality India internationals.

With T Natarajan's death bowling unavailable for this season and Manish Pandey only able to manage a strike-rate of 112 odd, bulk of the responsibility is on overseas recruits Warner, Jonny Bairstow, Williamson and Rashid.

The wily Afghan has again been very consistent and his duel with Pant could be one of the most eagerly-awaited match-ups that can send the TRPs soaring.

SRH's weak link is certainly its



bowling attack with none among Sandeep Sharma, Siddharth Kaul or all-rounder Vijay Shankar inspiring any sort of confidence whatsoever.

So DC will have 12 overs out of 20 on which they can feast upon if one takes away the eight bowled by Rashid and the seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

One area of slight concern for DC will be Ashwin's form. The Chepauk track could just give him some breathing space after mostly flat decks in Mumbai.

Similarly, Pant would also like to check out if Chris Woakes is a better option with his pace and also some all-round skills in place of Kagiso Rabada, who has been off colour till now.

Women's team sail into gold medal tie

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guatemala City, April 24: Recurve women's team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari assured India of its first medal in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 after cruising into the final with a straight-set win over Spain here.

However, the men's team, which qualified as third seed, lost in the quarterfinals to its Spanish rivals 26-27 in a shoot-off after both teams were tied 4-4.

India are also in the medal hunt in three more events with newly-wed

Atanu Das and Deepika advancing into the mixed pair bronze playoff. The duo will also vie for individual medals, having made the last-four in their respective sections.

In the women's semifinal, Spanish trio of Elia Canales, Ines De Velasco and Leyre Fernandez Infante were no match to the top seeded Indians, who drilled in consistent scores of 55, 56 and 55 to seal a 6-0 win and make their first World Cup final since Shanghai, 2016.

The women's team will take on seventh-seed Mexico in the gold medal clash Sunday. They will start

firm favourites in a depleted field without Asian heavyweights Korea, China and Chinese Taipei.

Indian recurve women's team have won team gold in World Cup four times (Shanghai-2011, Medellin-2013, Wroclaw-2013 and 2014) with former World No.1 Deepika being a constant in each event.

The women's team has a mix of youth and experience in former world number one Deepika, Ankita and reigning U-18 World Champion Komalika Bari, the latest rising star from Jharkhand.

Deepika will also be fancied to add

a third individual stage gold on Sunday when the No.3 seed faces seventh seed Mexican Alejandra Valencia. All eyes would also be on her husband Das who is in the race for his first maiden World Cup individual medal. Das' previous best in the individual section was a fourth place finish in Antalya, 2016 where he lost to Kim Woojin in the bronze playoff.

Das faces 20-year-old Mexican youngster Angel Alvarado in the semifinal but it's the Dutch heavy-weight Steve Wijler, who would be his biggest opponent.

Tough outings for Liverpool, Arsenal

AGENCIES

London, April 24: Mohamed Salah made Liverpool history, with the Egyptian becoming the first man to hit 20 goals for the Reds in three different Premier League campaigns. He achieved the landmark during their 1-1 draw against Newcastle United, Saturday.

Earlier, Everton ended their 25-year wait for a win at Arsenal and moved to within three points of the Premier League's top four after Bernd Leno's calamitous



own goal secured a 1-0 victory amid supporter protest at the Emirates Stadium.

Richardson's cross flashed through the Arsenal goalkeeper's legs with 14 minutes remaining as a tumultuous week at Arsenal, which began with the club's intention to join a European Super League, ended in a home defeat.

The hosts thought they had been awarded a second-half penalty when Dani Ceballos was fouled by Richardson, but Nicolas Pepe was deemed offside in the build-up upon VAR review.



At the Anfield, Liverpool took the lead in the third minute. Salah took a gentle touch, after some classy work by Sadio Mane, before unleashing an unstoppable rising shot into the top right.

However, Newcastle didn't lose hope and they finally got their reward in the dying minutes of stoppage time. A simple long ball wasn't cleared. Dwight Gayle headed down into the path of Joe Willock, whose shot was deflected past Liverpool goalie Alisson Becker and into the corner.

Tough outings for Liverpool, Arsenal



MO SALAH

AGENCIES

London, April 24: Mohamed Salah made Liverpool history, with the Egyptian becoming the first man to hit 20 goals for the Reds in three different Premier League campaigns. He achieved the landmark during their 1-1 draw against Newcastle United, Saturday.

Earlier, Everton ended their 25-year wait for a win at Arsenal and moved to within three points of the Premier League's top four after Bernd Leno's calamitous

own goal secured a 1-0 victory amid supporter protest at the Emirates Stadium.

Richardson's cross flashed through the Arsenal goalkeeper's legs with 14 minutes remaining as a tumultuous week at Arsenal, which began with the club's intention to join a European Super League, ended in a home defeat.

The hosts thought they had been awarded a second-half penalty when Dani Ceballos was fouled by Richardson, but Nicolas Pepe was deemed offside in the build-up upon VAR review.

At the Anfield, Liverpool took the lead in the third minute. Salah took a gentle touch, after some classy work by Sadio Mane, before unleashing an unstoppable rising shot into the top right.

However, Newcastle didn't lose hope and they finally got their reward in the dying minutes of stoppage time. A simple long ball wasn't cleared. Dwight Gayle headed down into the path of Joe Willock, whose shot was deflected past Liverpool goalie Alisson Becker and into the corner.