



EXPERIMENTAL ARTISTE
Nushratt Bharuccha says switching over from glam roles to de-glam ones is not a conscious effort
LEISURE P2



SINO-US TIES
China hopes Biden admin would view its development objectively and explore a path of peaceful coexistence with China
INTERNATIONAL P10



JADEJA STUMPS RCB
All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja hits 5 sixes in an over and picks up 3 wickets as CSK beat RCB
SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Patient is pleading for oxygen. Shall we take him to hospital or police stations?

SHORT TAKES

82 dead in Iraq COVID hosp fire

Baghdad: At least 82 people died and 110 were wounded in a Baghdad COVID-19 hospital fire overnight Sunday, the Iraqi Interior Ministry said in a new toll. "The interior ministry announces the death of 82 people and injury of 110 in the Ibn al-Khatib fire accident," it said in a statement carried by state media. The fire at the Ibn Khatib hospital in the Diyala Bridge area of the Iraqi capital occurred after an accident caused an oxygen tank to explode, the sources said. Many ambulances were rushing towards the hospital, ferrying away those hurt by the fire. The head of Iraqi civil defense unit said the fire broke out in the floor designated for the pulmonary intensive care unit and that 90 people have been rescued from the hospital out of 120, state news agency INA quoted him as saying.

Lockdown in Delhi extended by 7 days

New Delhi: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday announced extension of the ongoing lockdown in Delhi for another week, saying the severity of COVID-19 is unabated and positivity rate has been as high as 36 per cent in the last few days. The lockdown imposed April 19 night will now continue till 5 AM, May 3, he said. Before extension, it was scheduled to end at 5 AM April 26. "We will have to watch the situation for a few more days whether the cases decrease or increase," he said. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority, in an order for extension of the lockdown, allowed services of courier outlets, electricians and plumbers, repair of water purifiers, and shops selling books and electric fans. The Chief Minister said the onslaught of the coronavirus has not subsided yet.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	43.2°C	40.8°C
TEMP MIN	26.5°C	25.5°C
Humidity	44%	41%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather likely	

Free Covid vax for all above 18 yrs

PROVIDING FREE VACCINE TO ALL ELIGIBLE PERSONS COULD COST THE STATE EXCHEQUER AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN OF ₹2,000 CRORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 25: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday announced free vaccination for all above the age of 18 years in the upcoming vaccination drive from May 1.

In his video message to the people of the state, the CM announced that providing free vaccine to all eligible persons could cost the state exchequer an additional burden of ₹2,000 crore. Nevertheless, the government was committed to go ahead with its free vaccination policy.

"The state government has decided to provide free vaccines to all above 18 years. We will invest ₹2,000 crore for this, but I urge you to become responsible citizens and follow all COVID-19 safety protocols to avoid the disease from spreading in the state," he said. The move will benefit 2 crore people.

During his address, the Chief Minister cited several damages caused by COVID-19 to the state and asked the people to cooperate in controlling the pandemic by changing their social behaviour. He said, "It is very unfortunate that numerous people in the country are being infected by the deadly coronavirus. The situation in several states is very grave and people are suffering due to



shortage of oxygen. India had earlier never seen such a situation before." "Currently, Odisha is supplying oxygen to six states to mitigate the sorrows of the people there," the Chief Minister said. "Many districts of Odisha are also suffering from COVID-19. The people of Odisha have always supported efforts to revive the state. The condition of the state is really serious this time and we are doing our best to bolster the healthcare system in the state," he said. Stating that every life is impor-

tant, the Chief Minister said, "We need to be very careful. If the citizens are not careful the government alone cannot combat the disease. We request the people to work towards checking the infection. Many kids have become orphan due to this. With folded hands I request you to seriously abide by the COVID safety protocols," the CM said. According to the CM, nobody wants lockdown and shutdown and, hence, cooperation from each and everyone is needed to reduce the COVID-19 caseload in the state.

State to procure 387L vax doses

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha Health department Sunday wrote to the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech, manufacturers of Covishield and Covaxin respectively, and placed orders for large stocks of both the COVID-19 vaccines.

The move comes days before the new vaccination session for people between 18 years and 44 years from May 1. Request letters in this connection were sent by the state Health Additional Chief Secretary PK Mohapatra to the two vaccine producers seeking 377 lakh doses of Covishield directly from SII at the price fixed by the company.

The department, meanwhile, also wrote to the Bharat Biotech and asked them to provide 10.34 lakh doses of Covaxin which would be procured directly by the state from the manufacturer. The Managing Director, OSMCL, Bhubaneswar will be the Nodal Officer for procurement process for the state.

COVID-19 IMPACT

FPIs pull out ₹7,622cr from Indian markets in April 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Overseas investors withdrew a net ₹7,622 crore from Indian markets in April so far as a surge in COVID-19 cases and the consequent restrictions imposed by various states dent investors' sentiment.

According to the depository's data, overseas investors pulled out ₹8,674 crore from equities, but invested ₹1,052 crore in the debt segment. The total net withdrawal between April 1 and 23 stood at ₹7,622 crore.

Previously, FPIs invested ₹17,304 crore in March, ₹23,663 crore in February and ₹14,649 crore in January. FPIs have been "net sellers in the equity markets for five weeks in a row now", noted Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India. Srivastava said the recent spate of net outflows could be largely attributed to the enormous surge in the COVID-19 pandemic in India, which has led several states to impose restrictions to bring the situation under control.

While the impact of a more severe second wave of the pandemic on the economy is yet to be ascertained, it has definitely dashed hopes of an early economic recovery, he further added. "For investment in the debt segment, he said, "The uncertainty in the equity markets has made the Indian debt markets relatively attractive from the short-term perspective".

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DESOLATE STREETS



Vani Vihar area in the capital city wears a deserted look on the second day of the weekend shutdown, imposed to contain COVID-19, Sunday

Tweets critical of Centre's Covid mgmt censored

Sources in the government said the accounts were not restricted due to criticism of its handling of the pandemic but for spreading fake news

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: Twitter has pulled down at least 50 tweets at the behest of the Indian government, criticising it for the poor handling of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The data available on Lumen database shows that the micro-blogging platform has deleted more than 50 tweets that belonged to people like Lok Sabha MP Revanth Reddy, an MP from Telangana; Moley Ghatak, a West Bengal state minister;

actor Vineet Kumar Singh and two filmmakers - Vinod Kapri and Avinash Das and others.

First reported by Medianama, the government had sent an emergency order to Twitter to remove these tweets.

A Twitter spokesperson said in a statement that when it receives a valid legal request, it reviews it under both the Twitter Rules and local law.

"If the content violates Twitter's Rules, the content will be removed from the service. In all cases, we notify the account



holder directly so they're aware that we've received a legal order pertaining to the account," the company said in a statement. Twitter said account holders had been notified via emails

linked to their registered account. Meanwhile, sources in the government said the accounts were not restricted due to criticism of its handling of the pandemic but for spreading fake news by posting old pictures to misinform and create panic.

The sources said the government had not requested Twitter to block handles criticising its performance. Only those "circulating fake news, old photos, etc., and trying to mislead and create panic" had been blocked, the sources said.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

US to urgently send raw materials for Covishield

The decision was taken following talks between US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and his Indian counterpart, Ajit Doval

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New Delhi, April 25: The United States will "immediately" make available sources of raw materials required to scale up production of the Covishield coronavirus vaccine - of which there is a critical shortage as India fights daily new cases over three lakh and an active caseload of nearly 27 lakh.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke to his Indian counterpart, Ajit Doval, Sunday to confirm this, and also that his country had "identified supplies of therapeutics, rapid diagnostic test kits, ventilators and PPE suits that will (also) be made immediately available to India".

The US is also "pursuing options to provide oxygen generation and related supplies on an urgent basis" to help India overcome a crippling shortage that has endangered the lives of thousands of both COVID-positive patients and those fighting other diseases.

"Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, the United States is determined to help India in its time of

need," the US said. The White House statement, however, did not mention sending surplus vaccines, as a backlash grows over the fate of a stockpile of some 30 million doses - of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University drug that the Serum Institute makes in India as Covishield - that not been approved for use.

Earlier today US Congressman, a Democrat from Illinois, made an appeal on those grounds.

Spoke today with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval about the spike in COVID cases in India and we agreed to stay in close touch in the coming days. The United States' offer of help on sourcing raw materials for vaccine production comes after appeals from Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla, whose Pune facility manufactures Covishield.

Last week Poonawalla tweeted tagging President Joe Biden and asked him to lift an embargo on the export of raw materials. Imposed in February the "short-term embargo", according to The Washington Post, was to ensure US pharma giant Pfizer had resources to produce its vaccine.

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Huge quantity of detonators seized in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, April 25: One person was arrested for illegally carrying electrical detonators in a car in Balarampasad area of Dhenkanal district Saturday night. The police seized as many as 1,000 units of detonators from his possession.

The accused has been identified as a native of Balarampasad area. According to the police, they were tipped off that huge quantity of explosive was being smuggled in a car.

Taking the tip-off seriously, a team of Balarampasad police station was on the lookout for the vehicle. They chased a car and intercepted it.

Upon searching it, they stumbled upon 40 bundles of detonators kept inside the vehicle.

The driver was arrested under Sections 177/183/184/196 of M.V. Act, Sections 5 & 6 Explosive Substance Act and Section 9(B) of Indian Explosive Act. The police also seized the vehicle used in smuggling the explosive. This apart, a mobile phone and ₹27,000 in cash were also recovered from the accused.

The police are on the job to find out from where the highly explosive materials were procured and where they were being transported to. They are also investigating if a racket is involved in this clandestine act.

INDIA'S SUPER-RICH FLEE 'UNIMAGINABLE HORROR'

AIRFARES SOAR AND PRIVATE JETS IN DEMAND AS RICH INDIANS FLEE COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mumbai, April 25: Airfares soared and demand for private jets boomed Friday as Indians who could afford it scrambled to escape a COVID-19 surge before flights to the United Arab Emirates shut down.

All flights from the UAE to India - one of the world's busiest air corridors - was suspended from Sunday as coronavirus cases in the South Asian nation reach record levels and overwhelm hospitals.

Price comparison websites showed one-way commercial flights from Mumbai to Dubai on Friday and Saturday costing as much as ₹80,000,

around 10 times the usual rate.

Tickets for the New Delhi to Dubai route were going for more than ₹50,000, five times the normal level. No tickets were on offer from Sunday, when the 10-day flight suspension came into force. For private jets, the amount of interest was "absolutely crazy", a spokesman for charter company Air Charter Service India told this news agency. "We had 12 flights going to Dubai Friday and each flight was completely full," the spokesman said.

"I've fielded almost 80 enquiries for flying to Dubai Friday alone," said a spokesman for Entral Aviation, another provider.



Busy traffic at the Dubai airport

"We had requested more aircraft from abroad to meet the demand... It costs \$38,000 to hire a 13-seater jet from Mumbai to Dubai, and \$31,000 to hire a six-seater aircraft," he said.

"People are making groups and arranging to share our jets just to get a seat... We've had some queries for Thailand but mostly the demand was for Dubai."

The UAE is home to roughly 3.3 million Indians, who make up a third of the population - most of them in Dubai, one of the seven emirates that make up the federation. The UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority said those coming from India through other countries must

stay in that third destination for at least 14 days. UAE nationals and passengers in private jets are exempt from that requirement. Cargo flights are not affected. On Friday, a ban on arrivals to Britain from India also came into force, except for British and Irish citizens or third-country nationals with residency rights.

One-way flights from Mumbai or Delhi to London Friday were priced at between ₹100,000 and ₹150,000, at least double the usual rate when booking at short notice.

Seats on routes to the United States were still available but with prices substantially higher; in some cases almost double the normal fare.



KATIE TO REVEAL ALL ABOUT HER COSMETIC SURGERIES

Singer Katie Price is working on a new documentary about cosmetic surgery. She will open up about her experiences with going under the knife for the upcoming short film, which will feature on the show *Stephs Packed Lunch* next week.

PRO-DONALD TRUMP FILM NAMED WORST PICTURE AT RAZZIE AWARDS

The election-fraud film *Absolute Proof* was amongst the top winners at the 2021 Razzie Awards, given to the worst movies and performances of the year. The Golden Raspberry Awards, popularly known as the Razzies, were held a day before the Oscars night, as is the tradition.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today, you may just want to delve deep into yourself. You realise the importance of polishing the mirror of your soul and Ganesha approves. Spontaneity is important too, and spending time with children is an excellent way to keep in touch with it.

TAURUS
Today will be a day of nostalgia as all your good memories bring a smile to your face. You might encounter a few problems that will drive you to the edge of the cliff. Do not delay pending conversations with your better half and bring affection to the table when you do so, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today is an important phase in your life. You will be making a few crucial decisions. At work, you will come up with several fresh ideas, which, along with your willpower, form the winning concoction for your company. In the evening, you may spend a few extra bucks on comforts and entertainment, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will be quite sentimental and emotional today, you will help needy relatives. You will reach new heights in romantic interlude. Ganesha indicates that a member of the opposite sex will attract you and you reap full advantage of this attraction.

LEO
You will find success only after putting in hard work in every task, says Ganesha. On the other hand you will be in the mood to throw a party and enjoy with friends. You will incur expenses on entertainment. You need to carefully watch your finances, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
You don't find it altogether too difficult to understand the importance of a happy family life. Your partner will try to work up the excitement in your relationship in the afternoon. So Ganesha advises you to do your best to keep fanning the fires of love, which is not always such a bad thing.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that today may not be a great day for you professionally as higher ups in your office may try to block your path to success. You will have to spend more time doing work and this will mean spending less time with your family, Ganesha says never forget the sacrifices your family members have made for your success.

SCORPIO
Important discussions in family would keep you occupied almost throughout the day. However, you do not neglect your work for that, says Ganesha. New projects are about to begin. Travel and tours are on the cards, along with expenses.

SAGITTARIUS
It's a profitable day for all the businessmen today. You are likely to crack major deals. You will be appreciated for your professionalism at work. It's high time you take risk and launch new products in the market, tips Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
You will be the centre of attention at work, foretells Ganesha. You will put your best foot forward and impress everyone around, including your boss, with the level of efficiency you bring to the table. Some of your colleagues may have given you a hard time in the past and said mean things behind your back, but today, they will also give you a pat on your back for your achievements.

AQUARIUS
During the first half of the day, the smallest of problems may get on your nerves. But, somehow you will still be able to focus on your goals, says Ganesha. You may have an unexpected but substantial increase in your bank balance in the evening. Identify your career priorities and grab every opportunity coming your way.

PISCES
Hard work and dedication will rule the roost today but all your work and effort won't be in vain, says Ganesha. You will spend your entire day over a problem or to achieve your goal but before the end of the day it will be well within your reach. Your success will depend on your ability to be patient. Restlessness and impatience may sour the fruits of your labour, warns Ganesha.

'Going de-glam not a conscious effort'

MUMBAI: Nushratt Bharuccha rose to fame with her roles in the *Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA* franchise and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweeti*. Moving away from glamorous avatars, she has also portrayed de-glam roles in *Chhalaang* and *Ajeeb Daastaans*.

Nushratt says there is no conscious effort to switch over from roles she may have played before, by taking up characters that are different.

"(There is) No conscious choice or effort in anything. Honestly, I know I have been doing a certain kind of films but I don't look at them that way. I take them as different characters, and I have to do the same kind of hard work to make them different from the films before, which is even more challenging because the genre and the premise is the same but your thinking is to make it different," she said.

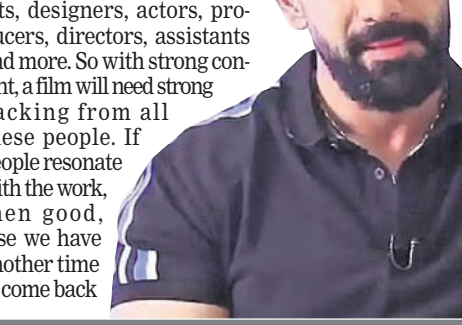
The segment in *Ajeeb Daastaans* featuring Nushratt is titled *Khilauna*, and it co-stars Abhishek Banerjee and child star Inayat Verma. *Khilauna* is directed by Raj Mehta. She plays a house help in the short.



There is nothing like a flop, says Amit

MUMBAI: Actor Amit Sadh says that there is always an audience for your film. The actor adds that a film is a culmination of team work and a good concept.

"Someone very important in my life taught me there is nothing like a flop. People will continue watching (the film) at some point in time. A film is a collective creative expression of the people involved, right from spot boy, technician, art directors, stylists, designers, actors, producers, directors, assistants and more. So with strong content, a film will need strong backing from all these people. If people resonate with the work, then good, else we have another time to come back



with something worthwhile," adds the Sultan actor.

As far as he is concerned, Amit says that he has never felt that he is a celebrity and has always focused on his work.

The actor has been seen in films such as *Kai Po Che*, *Guddu Rangeela* as well as OTT projects such as *Breathe* and *7 Kadam*.

Daisy's mantra to cope with stress

MUMBAI: Actress Daisy Shah says that Covid times are tough and the game can be over if one surrenders to fear.

Talking about how she is coping with the stress, the *Jai Ho* actress says, "One needs to understand that it is not time that defines you. It is you that defines time. No matter how tough the situation is outside, always remember that you are tougher than any situation that erupts. Once you put yourself down and surrender to your fear, the game is over. This is how I deal with stress," she says.

Daisy has been encouraging her fans to get vaccinated for Covid-19 infection as soon as possible.

"Vaccines as a concept are introduced for the citizens to fight the virus and given Covid, it is the only option we must resort to, to be safe. People can be infected by the virus in general so taking the vaccination surely diminishes the effect and the chances of someone contracting the virus. It is our best shot at eliminating Covid-19 and we must promote the vaccination drives across the globe," adds the *Hate Story 3* actress.



Hope more Indians enter American showbiz: Savan Kotecha

The Texas-born Indian-American music producer's song on the Will Ferrel comedy *'Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga'* has been nominated at the Oscars

Savan Kotecha, the Indian-American music producer whose song on the Will Ferrel comedy *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga* has been nominated at the Oscars, hopes that it inspires more Indians to enter the music and movie business in America.

"I'm so honoured to represent my Indian community at the Oscars! I hope my nomination inspires more Indians to enter the music and movie business in America! Also, working with Will Ferrel on this movie was such a fun experience. And I'm very proud that this particular song has connected in the way it has," Texas-born Kotecha, who is of Indian descent, said.

The 2020 film's song *Husavik* has received a nomination for the Best Original Song at the 93rd Academy Awards. Kotecha is multi-nominated artist with Grammy, Golden globe and this year the Oscars, held Sunday. His songs have sold over 400 million units and have hit number one all over the globe.

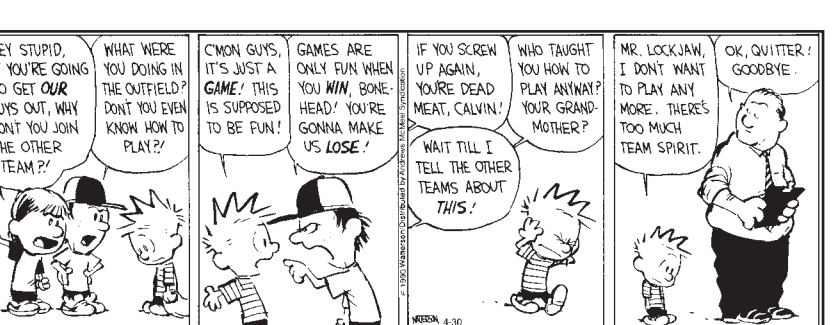


Poster of Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga

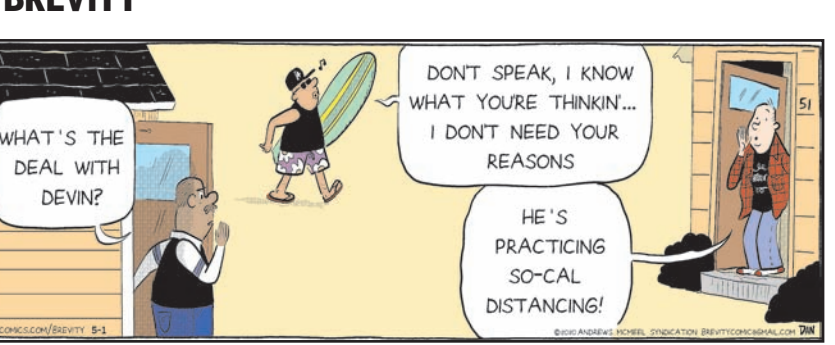
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

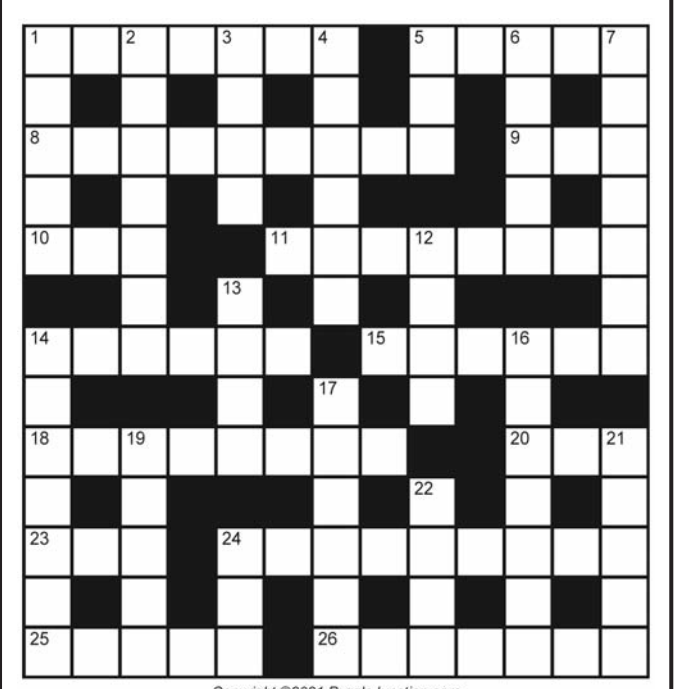


BREVITY



FUN post

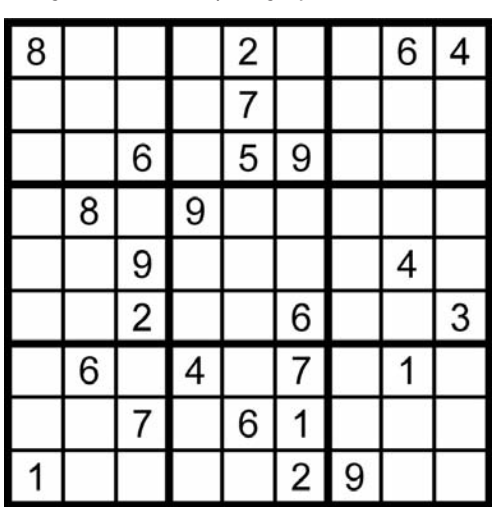
CROSSWORD



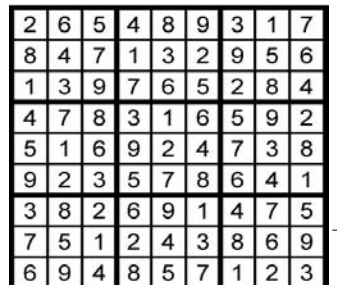
- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 The start of a space trip
 - 5 Inhumane
 - 8 Butt in
 - 9 Old French coin
 - 10 Mattress problem
 - 11 Glowed
 - 14 Kind of justice
 - 15 Lacking neatness
 - 18 Dependable
 - 20 Chest protector
 - 23 Squid's squirt
 - 24 Words to a pest (4,1,4)
 - 25 Rock bottom
 - 26 Whinnied
 - 6 Bowl over
 - 7 Hotel department
 - 12 Like some hands
 - 13 Opinion
 - 14 Ardour
 - 16 Put out, as a book
 - 17 Damaged
 - 19 Requested
 - 21 Sandwich starter
 - 22 Dry riverbed
 - 24 Road crew supply
- Down**
- 1 Dens
 - 2 Exhaustion
 - 3 Paddles
 - 4 Penny-pinching
 - 5 Simple sack

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



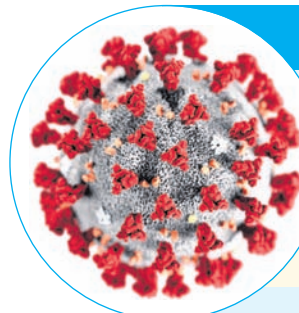
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



STRICT VIGIL

Police warn a person who was found roaming on the street in CDA Sector-7 area of Cuttack during the weekend shutdown, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	14,71,92,753	12,48,50,414	31,15,411
India	1,69,60,172	1,40,85,110	1,92,311
Odisha	4,07,457	3,62,931	1,988

State logs 6K+ fresh nCoV cases for 3rd day in a row

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 25: State's Covid-19 caseload Sunday increased to 4,07,457 after 6,116 more people tested positive for the infection, while seven fresh fatalities pushed the state's death toll in the disease to 1,988, a senior Health department official said.

Sunday was the third consecutive day when the single-day spike of new cases crossed the 6,000-mark, said the official.

Of the new cases 3,546 were reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 2,570 detected during contact tracing, the official said.

Khurda district, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the highest number of 875 new cases followed by Sundargarh (785) and Nuapada (430). The districts which detected cases over 100 are Nuapada (430), Cuttack (343), Jajpur (324), Kalahandi (321) and Nabarangpur (318). The other districts which too reported 100 plus cases are Sambalpur (280), Bargarh (262), Jharsuguda (254), Bolangir (189), Puri (180), Mayurbhanj (158), Angul (151), Ganjam (134), Keonjhar (118), Rayagada (104) and Balasore (102).

Seven new fatalities—reported from Rayagada (two), and one each from Ganjam, Kalahandi, Khurda, Puri and Sundargarh districts, took the toll due to coronavirus in the state to 1,988.

Besides, 53 others died of comorbidities, the Health department official said.

With this, the states active cases number now stands at 45,949, while 3,59,467 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease.

As many as 12 districts reported active cases above 1,000, said the official.



FILE PHOTO

The state has so far tested over 98.78 lakh samples for Covid-19, including 43,765 Saturday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.12 per cent, added the official.

Meanwhile, the state observed the second day of the weekend shutdown Sunday across the urban areas of Odisha.

It is observed that the people under Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissionerate are cooperating with the administration by remaining indoors during the weekend shutdown to check the spread of the infection, Commissioner of Police SK Priyadarshi said.

The Odisha Police, however, said, in a statement, that from the morning of Saturday to the morning of Sunday, six cases were registered, 19 people arrested, 200 vehicles

seized, and a total of Rs 16,05,800 collected as fine for the violation of the Covid-19 guidelines.

Anticipating an influx of migrant workers in the wake of lockdown and shutdown in some states, the Odisha government has decided to open cluster Temporary Medical Centres (CTMC) at the Zilla Parishad zone level to provide institutional quarantines to the workers returning to the coastal state.

Meanwhile, the state government has directed the authorities at the district level to provide security to the doctors and other health workers deployed at the Covid hospitals and Covid care centres.

The government also asked the Fire Services department to take adequate measures to prevent any fire mishaps in the Covid hospitals.

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SK PRIYADARSHI I
 COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

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SWARGADWAR OUT OF BOUNDS FOR NON-PURI RESIDENTS

Puri: The district administration has decided not to allow cremation of bodies at Swargadwar from outside Puri beginning Monday.

The authorities also decided to stop people from performing death rituals at Mahodadhi and Swetganga from April 26.

The decision was taken keeping in view of a surge in Covid cases in the district.

Sources said that the district administration is worried after reports of triple mutants of Covid

were detected in the neighbouring West Bengal and asked the hoteliers as well as guesthouse owners not to entertain visitors from West Bengal without Covid negative certificates or final vaccination certificate.

The district authorities have been inspecting hotels and holiday homes and examining their travel documents. Registration of passengers coming by train is being done at Puri railway station while visitors coming by road in private

tals. The Odisha Fire Services department has deployed its personnel in 48 dedicated Covid hospitals in the state, sources said.

The state government has revised its order allowing any person coming from West Bengal to the state to stay seven day home quarantine instead of earlier 14 days home quarantine for having the RT-PCR negative report 48 hours before arrival and a certificate of two doses of vaccination.

The government had exempted persons coming from West Bengal on emergency official work as well as those on election duty from undergoing 14days mandatory quarantine. All the check posts bordering West Bengal have been put on high alert to ensure that nobody from the neighbouring state entered into the state without the RT-PCR negative report and final vaccination certificate.

As part of their drive against hoarding/ black marketing of Covid essentials, the joint flying squads of the state government continued its verification at various pharmaceutical firms, medical stores, stockist depots and oxygen filling centres, sources added.

VIRUS SCARE

Docs advise spl care for pregnant women

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: Several gynaecologists and obstetricians working in the state capital have advised pregnant women to take special care to avoid any possible threat to them or to their foetuses in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most of the experts, however, said that there was no conclusive study to claim that a pregnant woman, infected with Covid-19, can pass the infection to her foetus.

Sujata Kar, a senior gynaecologist from the city said, "There is very less study based data available on the issue. A few studies have found that chances of vertical transmission of the virus from the mother to her foetus are minimal. Novel coronavirus is not like Zika virus or measles which can cause harm to the foetus."

She further said that there was very little information on the Covid-19 virus last year. As a result, gynaecologists had suggested women to avoid conceiving during the peak of the Covid-19 infections.

"The fear of vertical transmission of virus has dwindled a bit. However pregnant women should take special care to minimise the risk," Kar added.

Alakta Das, another gynaecologist from the city said, "The first three months and the last two months of the pregnancy are very crucial for the mother and her foetus. Pregnant women need to take special care to avoid contracting the virus. They should abide by the Covid-19 safety protocols strictly."

Das cited a few cases of miscarriages in the first trimester after the women tested positive for the Covid-19 safety protocols strictly. She also claimed that there were some instances of stillbirths after the women tested positive for the virus during the last phases of their pregnancy.

Gynaecologist Veena Panda said that there was no proof of any abnormality to the newborns if their mothers contracted Covid-19 during the pregnancy days. "However, if a pregnant woman is severely infected with Covid-19 after 28 weeks of pregnancy, then there is chances of premature delivery. So, the best things women can do are to take special care to avoid the infections," she added.

The gynaecologists said that the government is yet to recommend Covid-19 vaccination for pregnant and lactating women in India. In western countries, m-RNA based vaccines have been recommended for pregnant women, they added.

A few studies have found that chances of vertical transmission of the virus from the mother to her foetus are minimal. Novel coronavirus is not like Zika virus or measles which can cause harm to the foetus

SUJATA KAR I GYNAECOLOGIST



IMD PREDICTS HEATWAVE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 25: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in their latest weather forecast said that heat wave is likely to make its presence felt across the state Monday.

The department has issued yellow warning on the issue. "Heat wave conditions are very likely to prevail at one or two places over the districts of Nayagarh, Khurda and Cuttack," it said. It also said that light rains could also be witnessed in some parts of the state. "Light rain or thunderstorm may occur at one or two places over Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and dry weather is very likely to prevail over the rest of the districts," the bulletin said.

The department predicted similar trends of rains and thunderstorms for next few days while indicating the possibility of temperatures to go higher in the next few days. "Maximum temperature is very likely to rise gradually by 2-3 degree Celsius at many places over the districts of interior Odisha during next 2-3 days. Maximum temperature will be above normal by 3-5 degree Celsius at a few places over the districts of coastal Odisha during next 48 hours," it said.

Oppn slams state govt over utilisation of PM-Cares Fund

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 25: Opposition parties BJP and Congress Sunday attacked the state government on the issue of utilisation of PM Cares Fund and boosting of health care infrastructure in the state.

BJP leader Prithviraj Harichandan said, "The Union government has been helping the state governments to scale up health infrastructure in the country. The Union, through PM Cares fund, has asked the state government to setup seven oxygen plants. The state government has ignored the Centre's directive on the matter."

He also added, "Owing to this, the state government has failed to produce the required numbers of oxygen that was envisioned with the patronage of PM Cares fund. The Centre, through the National Health Mission (NHM), has given funds to the state to ramp up the health infrastructure."

The leader said that many states have announced free vaccination for their people. "But the state government has failed to live upto the expectations of the state. We had been asking for free vaccination for our people. In the vaccination sector, the Union government had

Congress leader Suresh Routray questioned the state government as to why adequate healthcare infrastructure was not created in Odisha apart from the assistance under the PM-Cares Fund

been bearing the burden of the vaccination drive."

Congress leader Suresh Routray also questioned as to why adequate health care infrastructure was not created in the state besides PM Cares fund assistance.

He said, "I would like to thank the Rourkela Steel Plant and TATA for assisting in giving oxygen to other states in need. If the Modi government has been claiming to have sent money to states, what happened to the health infrastructure to the state? The government knew about such a situation but failed to prevent it and now the people of the country are struggling. What happened to the PM Care funds?"

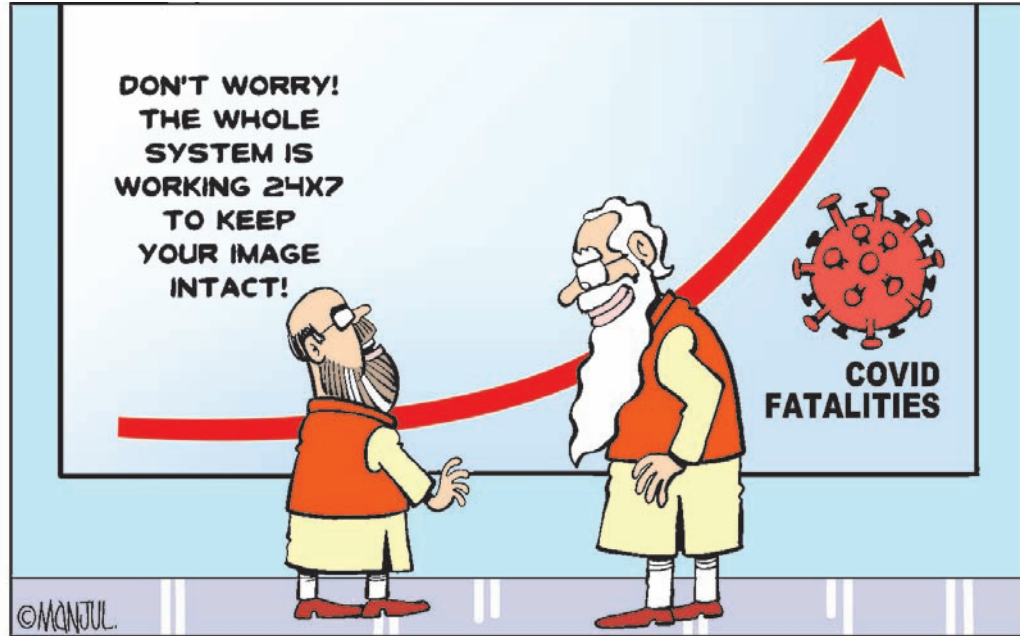
Fake Twitter account spreads misinfo on Class X exams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 25: Some miscreants had tried to spread fake news about Class X exams by using a fake account in the name of School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash. Minister Sunday informed that someone had created a fake account and spread fake news which claimed that Class X exams would be held between June 14 and 26.

The Odisha government April 21 announced that the Class X exams scheduled to start May 3 stands cancelled. Along with it all examinations of the Odisha State Board of Madrasa Education scheduled to start May 19 have also been called off.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Help the needy in your own way: Satbir

SikhAid, a non-profit organisation, is providing oxygen cylinders to quarantined patients free of cost

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: The second wave of Covid-19 is in a carnage mode. Scary visuals from all over the country have been pouring in, adding more to the scare and confusion. Amidst the scarcity of essentials like oxygen cylinders, masks, pulse meters and in many cases, medical assistance, a local group of enthusiastic individuals has come forward to help the needy.

Living upto its name, 'SikhAid' has rolled up its sleeves and has been working tirelessly to provide oxygen cylinders and other medical equipments to the home quarantined infected individuals in the twin city. So far, the organization, which was formed by members of Sikh community, has helped more than 100 people in Bhubaneswar alone.

Speaking to OrissaPOST, SikhAid trustee Satbir Singh said that the organization began working since March, 2020 by providing masks to the Covid warriors and meals to people in need.

He said that after he and his family suffered from Covid in August last year when they too struggled to get Oxygen cylinder, he realized that he had to provide help to those who were suffering from the same.

Satbir said that he gets more than 200 calls daily from different districts of Odisha. He and his team



A volunteer of SikhAid facilitates an oxygen cylinder to a needy, while others sanitise a road in City

mates are not getting enough sleep but will not stop and do all they can to provide help. He requested youths to volunteer and help the needy in their own ways.

Expressing his concerns about the tough times ahead, Satbir said, "The situation will worsen in coming days. As we can see, beds are not available in hospitals." He also advised that government should extend the shutdown in city from weekends to weekdays too. Also the curfew time should be from 6pm instead of 9pm.

He said, "There is no shortage of Oxygen but there is shortage of cylinders so we request people of the twin city not to hoard Oxygen cylinders at their homes expecting a

scarcity in the days to come. By doing so, you might be depriving a needy patient of timely help."

Satbir, who is also a biker, said that they are getting help from his biker groups and several others who are getting inspired from his organization's work. "Recently a person gave me five cylinders free of cost. If every person and community comes forward and helps, we can fight this battle well," he added.

He also requested the state government to provide information on the availability of beds in hospitals so that he can help the patients get beds on time.

He informed that anyone can contact them through their social

media platform and through helpline numbers 8018008021 (Bhubaneswar) and 9040475426 (Cuttack).

When asked about the precautions, Satbir said, "We have to follow the protocols while providing cylinders to patients. We ensure double layered masks, gloves and sanitized hands before and after giving cylinders."

Satbir informed that an oxygen concentrator machine costs around Rs.15,000 to 20,000 but it is being sold at a price as high as Rs 50,000 to 60,000 which is torturous for people. When activities like black marketing of essentials have put a question mark on humanity, SikhAid hopes to answer it by asking samaritans to join in.



Chandi Chhak road in Cuttack wears a deserted look on the second day of the weekend shutdown, Sunday

Oil PSUs to set up seven oxygen plants in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK
New Delhi, April 25: Oil and Natural Gas public sector units (PSUs), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation limited (ONGC), Oil India Ltd and GAIL etc are in the process of setting up Pressure Swing Adsorption medical oxygen generation plants at seven location in Odisha.
According to the ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Oil PSUs are setting up plants at 93 locations across the country to facilitate the hospitals with captive oxygen generation facilities to strengthen availability and supply of medical grade oxygen.
The ministry informed that IOCL has been tasked with removing bottlenecks in the logistics, transport



and supply of medical oxygen. "IOCL is procuring ISO cryogenic containers for transport of LMO. Nine tankers have been contracted, software and app to manage the movement is under progress for roll-out," the ministry informed.
It is to be mentioned here that many hospitals across the country have been witnessing acute shortage of medical oxygen, which has been resulted in death of many Covid-19 patients. The country has

been recording a global high of over three lakh Covid-19 detections everyday for the last few days.
In order to address the humongous challenge posed by the second wave, the Union ministry roped in the oil and gas PSUs to strengthen the public health care infrastructure.
"The PSUs are making all out efforts to respond to the nation's call in strengthening public healthcare infrastructure and ironing out blind spots in supply chains. The oil sector is currently diverting 965 Metric Tonnes (MT) of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) daily. LMO in the range of 2,500-3,000 MT is being diverted daily to hospitals across the country by the steel sector to boost availability of medical-grade Oxygen for treatment of Covid-19 patients," the ministry informed.



Passengers at Baramunda bus stand in Bhubaneswar face inconveniences in travelling to their destinations due to the weekend shutdown, Sunday **OP PHOTO**

Experts for strategy to check nCoV spread in slums

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, April 25: With the second wave of Covid 19 spreading its tentacles fast, medical experts here have suggested that authorities must formulate elaborate plans to check the spread of the virus in the slum areas in the City.
The capital city, which has seen an exponential rise in cases in the past one week, may hit the peak level of Covid infections in the month of May. Several residential buildings and government offices have been sealed in the city over violation of Covid-19 norms. Now, experts have warned that the slums could be the new hotspots for the virus infection.
"We live in a tight-knit society where people from different sections work under the same roof.



The second wave of the pandemic which has brought in a new mutated version of Covid has proven to be more infectious than the earlier ones. If the new version finds its way to slums, then it would be too difficult to control its spread. Social-distancing is nearly impractical in such

places," said Prashant Mohanty, an epidemiologist.
Mohanty said that home isolation which is recommended in most of the cases would not be possible in slums due to space crunch. "Bhubaneswar has several premium health institutes. Many Covid patients from other cities are being

Home isolation which is recommended in most of the cases would not be possible in slums due to space crunch

referred to these hospitals for better treatment. In this context, spread of virus in slums could create more trouble for all of us," he added.
As per the data provided by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the city has about 500 slums with more than 85,000 households having over 3.06 lakh population. The slum dwellers constitute around 36 per cent of city's population. Covid-19 infections were reported from about 20 slums of the city last year.

"Active surveillance at slums by the civic authority is a must. Special strategies can be formulated to keep the virus away from slums. The authorities can take the help of Asha and Anganwadi workers in this regard. The slum dwellers cannot afford to huge medical expenses," said Sanjib Das, an urban planner.
Meanwhile, the first phase of Covid surveillance by the civic authorities came to an end Sunday. As per the report, around 2.53 lakh people of 397 slums were surveyed during the drive. While only 17 people were found symptomatic for Covid-19 while four people had travel history. All symptomatic people have been asked for home isolation under strict vigil of the BMC, sources said.

MCL sanctions ₹9.32 crore for facelift of Maa Hingula temple

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, April 25: Mahanadi Coalfields Limited Board sanctioned Rs 9.32 crore under the CSR fund for development of Maa Hingula Temple at Talcher in Angul district.
Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had earlier requested for the financial assistance for the development of the shrine.
Replying to Pradhan's letter, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi said, "I have been informed that MCL Board has approved sanction of Rs 9.32 crore under their CSR Fund for construction of certain facilities at Gopalprasad, Talcher, for benefit of the local population in general and for providing impetus to tourism in the area in particular."
"MCL has a special bond with Maa Hingula temple. I was touched to know about the generosity of MCL employees, who voluntarily contributed funds from the salary for the construction of the main temple building. Maa Hingula Thakurani Temple Board had submitted a proposal to the management of MCL for CSR project involving construction of Natya Mandap and Jagyan Mandap at an estimated cost of Rs 16.64 crore. These developments will not only improve the devotee facilities but also boost tourist footfalls in the region," Pradhan said.
Maa Hingula temple in Talcher is considered one of the most sacred religious sites in Odisha.

Pvt firm duped of ₹9 lakh in City

Bhubaneswar: A city-based company has duped a wireless firm of Rs 9 lakh on the pretext of installing junction boxes and Wi-Fi in the City. The assistant project manager of the wireless firm, Quadgen Wireless Solutions Private Limited, has lodged a complaint with Laxmisagar police. According to sources, the wireless company has been engaged for the last three years. The company sublet the project to the city-based firm, Whatnot. It also handed over equipment worth Rs 9 lakh to the alleged company for installation in 2019. However, the company neither installed the system nor returned the equipment.

17 OAS deputed for 5 districts

Bhubaneswar: The state government Sunday ordered deputation of 17 Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officers for five districts hit hard by Covid. They have been asked to work with the respective district administrations in order to boost the works on Covid-19 management. These officials would report to the district Collectors.

News channel in soup

Bhubaneswar: A travel agency has sought the help of Commissionerate Police in recovering its dues of Rs 7 lakh from a regional news channel. The owner of travel agency has lodged a complaint with the Chandrasekharpur police. Sources said that the news channel had issued a work order April 14, 2016 which was valid for one year in the name of the travel agency. According to the work order, the channel hired several vehicles from the travel agency. The news company had agreed to pay the rent every month as per the order. However, it did not pay the agreed amount to the tune of Rs 7 lakh. The agency is yet to get the dues despite the lapse of more than two years.

Youth held for killing friend over petty issue

POST NEWS NETWORK
Puri, April 25: Baliapanda police Sunday arrested a youth on charges of killing his friend over a petty issue at Matamatha lane here Friday.
The accused has been identified as Keshab Parida, 22, of Parbatipur area. Police have registered a case in this regard and seized a knife from the possession of Keshab, sources said.
According to police, Keshab along with his friend Somanath had gone to a vegetable shop, owned by the former's aunt, at Matamatha lane Friday afternoon.
An argument ensued between Keshab and Somanath over some issues after they consumed liquor. Somanath reportedly hurled abuses at Keshab's aunt. Enraged, Keshab brought a knife from his aunt's shop and stabbed Somanath repeatedly, police said.



Keshab and his aunt left the place leaving a profusely bleeding Somanath there. Later, some locals spotted an injured Somanath and informed the incident to police, sources added.
Police rescued Somanath and rushed him to a hospital. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival.
Victim's brother Purusottam had lodged a complaint in this regard with police. The accused has been produced in a local court, police said.

LADY TEACHER KILLS HERSELF IN CAPITAL

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, April 25: A 45-year-old lady teacher ended her life at a flat in Jagamarua area under Khandagiri police limits Sunday. The deceased was identified as Shila Varma (name changed), of Durgapur in West Bengal.
According to sources, the deceased had been staying at Siddheswar Nagar in Jagamarua area for the last couple of months. The lady was in a relationship with one Rohan Oram, 25, of West Bengal. Police sources revealed that relationship between them was going through a rough patch for the last couple of months. Sources revealed that Oram, who had come to meet the deceased Sunday, was shocked to see Varma hanging from the ceiling fan of her room.
He immediately informed the police who reached the place and recovered her body. She was later rushed to the Capital hospital where the doctors declared her brought dead.

2 held with leopard skin in Nayagarh

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, April 25: The Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch Sunday claimed to have arrested two persons after recovering a leopard skin and two elephant tusks from their possession in Nayagarh.
STF sources said that acting on a tip-off, the team conducted a raid near Maa Kalapata temple on Gania-Chamundia Road in Nayagarh late Saturday night and arrested Ramesh Pratihari, a resident of Chakragada area under Narasinghpur police limits in Cuttack, and Bimbadhar Tarei of Bethia Sahi under Gania police limits in Nayagarh, after recovering a leopard skin and two elephant tusks from their possession.
A case (16/21) has been regis-



tered with the STF police station under Sections 379, 411 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code and 51 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. "The leopard skin and the tusks would be sent to the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for chemical analysis," said an official.
Last year, the STF has seized 13

leopard skins, nine elephant tusks, five kilogram pangolin scales, three live pangolins, two deer skin, and 460 kilogram of sandalwood. The specialised wing of the Odisha Police to curb the organised crime has so far arrested 27 wildlife criminals and registered 15 cases in the incidents, said a STF source.

RESCUE OF BEAR CUBS

Involvement of international racket suspected, PCCF orders probe

POST NEWS NETWORK
Khurda, April 25: Suspecting involvement of international rackets in the alleged trafficking of five bear cubs which were rescued by forest officials from Pitapalli-Gangapada road April 22, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) has ordered a probe.
According to an official source, the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) has been asked to submit a detailed investigation report in this regard. Two more bear cubs were rescued the same day from Gadakhurda area later in the evening taking the total number of rescued cubs to seven, the source added.
Allegedly, some miscreants might have tried to take advantage of the shutdowns and transport the live wild animals outside the state in exchange of monetary benefit. However, they later discarded the bear cubs fearing the intervention of local police.
Out of the seven bear cubs, two appeared little older. The mother bear was not seen around when the five cubs were seen roaming on the road at the time of rescue, a Khurda forest official stated.
"The rescued bear cubs might not have strayed out of Chandaka forest. Probably, traders of wild animals had been shifting the cubs to elsewhere. As it seems, the cubs do not belong to a single mother," Chandaka Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Kedarnath Swain said.
"The place from where the bear cubs were rescued is a well-known passage of elephants. Usually, bears do not prefer to tread in nearby areas where the pachyderms wander. These species of bear are also not seen in this region. The PCCF has ordered for an inquiry in the



File photo of the bear cubs rescued from Pitapalli-Gangapada road

TURN OF EVENTS

In the first incident, a few commuters spotted five bear cubs roaming on Pitapalli-Gangapada road in the afternoon of April 22. Soon, many people gathered at the spot and a few of them treated the cubs with fruits. Some villagers informed the police following which Forest officials reached the spot and rescued the cubs

In the second instance, Forest officials rescued two bear cubs from Gadakhurda area as the young ones were spotted near the backyard of a villager in the same evening

The PCCF has asked the RCCF to submit a detailed investigation report in this regard

In the second incident, the Forest department officials rescued two bear cubs from Gadakhurda area April 22. The cubs were spotted near the backyard of a villager in the evening. They too were taken to NZP, sources said.

matter," Khurda range officer Asit Mishra said.
It may be mentioned here that bears are in great demand in international markets as their bile fetches good prices - mostly in China.
Notably, some commuters had spotted five bear cubs roaming on Pitapalli-Gangapada road in the afternoon of April 22. Soon, many people gathered at the spot and a few of them treated the cubs with fruits, sources said.
Some villagers informed this to police following which four Forest department officials reached the spot and rescued the bear cubs.
Later, the bear cubs were taken to Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) in Bhubaneswar.

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WATER WASTAGE



Drinking water goes waste as a tanker receives it from a loading point in Sambalpur, Sunday.

OP PHOTO

Govt apathy leads to closure of 5 sugar mills

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 25: Closure of five sugar mills in Odisha has dealt a heavy blow to the sugarcane cultivation in the state, a report said. Many alleged that this has happened due to the apathetic attitude of the Odisha government which has only been promoting mineral-based industries while completely ignoring agri-based cooperative industries. The shutting down of Bargarh, Nayagarh, Badamba, Krushnanagar and Bijayananda sugar mills are cases in point.

The Aska sugar mill is the lone functioning sugar mill in the state, but is going through a rough patch. This development has led to a sharp decline in sugarcane cultivation in Odisha.

The matter came to fore from a reply submitted by deputy registrar (marketing) of the cooperative society in the State Assembly over a question by MLA Prafulla Samal. The deputy registrar said that among the closed down sugar mills, the one at Bargarh and another one in Bolangir district are lying defunct.

The sugar mills at Nayagarh and Badamba have been handed over to Nayagarh Sugar Complex Ltd and Lakshmiapati Balaji Sugar and Distillery Pvt Ltd respectively following sale agreements in 2004 and 2005.

The Bargarh sugar mill was



A view of the defunct sugar mill at Krushnanagar under Bari block

OP PHOTO

closed down after it suffered loss in the 2017-18 fiscal which pushed it into financial crisis.

The authorities failed to repair or replace old machines following which crushing of sugarcanes and sugar production came to a grinding halt in this mill.

The Bijayananda sugar mill in Bolangir was closed down from April 6, 2014 following serious financial losses due to severe irregularities. A sum of ₹52.23 crore given as loan by the state cooperative bank in Bhubaneswar is lying outstanding on the sugar mill following which the bank initiated process to auction the mill.

The Odisha government tried to make the Bargarh sugar mill functional and roped in two experts from the Central Institute

of Sugar (CIS) in Kanpur to make a feasibility study.

The experts visited the sugar mill and submitted a detailed project report to the state government comprising a plan outlay of close to ₹22 crore for its revival. Earlier the government had allocated over ₹40 crore during the last 11 years to the mill. However, misappropriation of funds led to the closure of the mills.

While the Odisha government is trying to revive other sugar mills it has overlooked the one at Krushnanagar village under Bari block in Jajpur district. The sugar mill was inaugurated by former minister Kanhu Charan Lenka in 1975. Over 100 workers and other officials were working in it. Among them 20 were permanent staff while

The sugar mills at Nayagarh and Badamba have been handed over to Nayagarh Sugar Complex Ltd and Lakshmiapati Balaji Sugar and Distillery Pvt Ltd respectively following sale agreements in 2004 and 2005

The Bargarh The authorities failed to repair or replace old machines after it suffered loss in the crushing of 2017-18 fiscal sugarcanes and which pushed sugar production into a grinding financial crisis halt in this mill

The Bijayananda sugar mill was closed down from April 6, 2014 following serious financial losses due to severe irregularities. A sum of ₹52.23 crore given as loan by the state cooperative bank in Bhubaneswar is lying outstanding on the sugar mill following which the bank initiated process to auction the mill

the rest were casual workers.

The sugarcane farmers of Gamu, Krushnanagar, Serpur, Panikana, Benjarapur, Matiapada, Haladibasant and Balia used to supply their harvest to the mill. However, it became defunct from November 21, 1988. Nobody seems to be interested for revival of this mill while the priority is being given to establish of industries at Kalinganagar in the district.

Kumbh returnee dies while waiting for Covid-19 report

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 25: A Kumbh returnee died at Dhalapur village here Saturday night. What left the local residents shocked is that the administration took nearly 12 hours to reach the village and cremate the body as per Covid-19 protocols.

The deceased has been identified as a retired Sanskrit teacher of a school in Dhalapur area. He was a native of Ganjam district.

Being a Kumbh returnee, he was subjected to RT-PCR test upon his arrival in this district. However, the real problems for his family began after the man breathed his last. Locals or neighbours did not come forward to help in cremation. It was clear they were afraid they would contract the disease if they touched the deceased.

None of the district administration officials turned up at the scene despite being informed immediately after the person's



death, it was alleged.

When contacted, chief district medical officer (CDMO), Boudh, Dr Trilochan Pradhan said that the deceased's test report still has not arrived. He said as a precautionary measure swab samples have been collected from his family members and people who came in contact with him.

As per the latest information, block development officer (BDO), tehsildar and other officials reached the village Sunday and initiated the process of cremation, following Covid protocols.

Return of migrants fuels infection fears in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

MV-79, April 25: Even as infections are growing due to the second wave of Covid-19 in Malkangiri district, migrant workers have started arriving in hordes from various hotspots and other states. Their arrival has added to the worries of the district administration and the Health department, a report said.

Hundreds of migrants are returning to the district through the Motu bridge route every day. The administration has taken a host of measures for their registration and health screening at the entry points. Strict vigil is being maintained on the arrivals and their movements.

Over 5,000 migrants have entered Malkangiri till date, with 3,000 of them belonging to the district.

When the pandemic first broke



in India, thousands of migrant labourers lost their jobs in other states and came back home. As restrictions were eased a large number of local workers had returned to their workplaces.

Now, with second wave of Covid hitting India, it is feared that the arrival of migrants could give rise to the infection rate in the district.

The administration has intensified checking at the Motu bridge, a major entry point on the Andhra

Pradesh border with Odisha.

A team of officials led by Motu tehsildar has started registration of migrants and thermal checking. The administration is readying isolation centres in each block. It is taking all possible steps to ensure that no migrant go inside the district without registration. The district reported 32 Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 5405 Sunday. Till date, 25 have died of Covid in the district.

SELF-IMMOLATION IN SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY

Casual worker gave suicide note to registrar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 25: The Dinabandhu Mishra self-immolation case took a new twist Sunday after it was learnt that he had given his suicide note to registrar Sitaram Patel of Sambalpur University an hour before taking the extreme step. Both vice-chancellor Sanjib Mittal and police have come to know about the note.

According to reports, Dinabandhu self-immolated April 20 over regularisation of his contractual job. He alleged that the VC had misbehaved with him. He succumbed to his injuries on way to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

It has been alleged that had the registrar taken timely step, Dinabandhu's life could have been saved.

Moreover, it was learnt that after getting the suicide note, the registrar had not informed the vice-chancellor about it. In the suicide note, Dinabandhu mentioned the names of the VC and two other employees and blamed them for his condition.

On the other hand, DSP



Sishuranjan Mohapatra said that police investigation has suffered due to the two-day shutdown. He also stated that police are investigating all angles.

Mittal termed the suicide by Dinabandhu 'unfortunate'. "We came to know that the registrar received the suicide note an hour before the unfortunate incident. The registrar will be served a notice about why he did not prevent Dinabandhu from taking such an extreme step and also why he did not alert the university authorities," the VC informed.

4 seriously injured as 2 groups clash

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ganjam, April 25: Four persons sustained grievous injuries as two rival groups clashed Saturday night during a meeting of the village committee at Agasti Nuagaon under Ganjam police limits of this district, a police official informed Sunday.

The injured were immediately rushed to district headquarters hospital (DHH) at Chhatrapur. Later, they were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur after their conditions deteriorated, a local villager stated.

The village committee meeting was underway at Agasti Nuagaon peacefully. All of a sudden, severe altercations started between the two factions. Five persons armed with sharp weapons attacked the members of the other group leaving four critically injured.

DGP happy with Covid measures in north Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasure, April 25: In the wake of triple mutant variant of Covid-19 having been detected in West Bengal, police have intensified checking at border posts with the neighbouring state in Balasure and Mayurbhanj districts.

Amid the intensified Covid prevention exercise, DGP Abhay visited this city Sunday to review the enforcement measures, implementation of night curfew, weekend shutdown, functioning of border check posts and preparedness to ramp up police deployment at strategic points.

The DGP held a review meeting with Additional DG(Law and order) Jashwant Jethua, Balasure SP Sudhansu Sekhar Mishra and Mayurbhanj SP Smit P Parmar at the office of Eastern Range IG, Diptesh Patnaik in the afternoon.

Addressing a presser, the DGP



said that enforcement of Covid-19 norms in Balasure and Mayurbhanj districts has been satisfactory. "I thank the people of the districts for cooperating with police in the enforcement drive. I urge them to continue their support to keep the virus in check," he said.

ADG (Law and Order) Yaswant Jethwa said that there are many

porous village routes through which people may enter the coastal district from West Bengal.

"A strict vigilance is being maintained and checking has been intensified at all these routes. Tight surveillance is also in force at three major check posts and all the routes which pass through Balasure and Mayurbhanj districts," he added.

Tight surveillance is also in force at three major check posts and all the routes which pass through Balasure and Mayurbhanj, ADG said

Two permanent border check posts at Laxmannath and Udaypur, Talasari in Balasure and at Hatibari and Chakuliapada in Mayurbhanj are active round the clock on Bengal border. Further, 22 temporary check posts have been set up in Balasure district and 32 in Mayurbhanj district to seal the borders.

Seven platoons of police in Balasure and four platoons in Mayurbhanj have been deployed to ensure Covid enforcement.

The Odisha government has declared a 14-day mandatory quarantine for those returning from West Bengal.

Covid-19 patient reaches hospital wearing raincoats

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, April 25: A Covid-19 patient here reached the hospital Saturday night wearing a pair of raincoats and riding pillion on a bike. Since then the patient has become the talk of this town.

According to a source, Dushmant Pradhan from Ichhapali village under Padmapur sub-division had been under isolation after testing positive for COVID-19. However, his conditioned deteriorated Saturday. His family members

called up 108 for an ambulance. They then waited for more than three hours, but the ambulance did not turn up.

Since he could not afford to wait any longer, Pradhan put on his raincoats, rode pillion a motorcycle and reached the Padmapur sub-divisional hospital.

Locals, meanwhile, blamed the local administration for not being able to provide an ambulance to a serious patient.

The district Sunday registered 262 fresh Covid positive cases.

Minor boy charred to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, April 25: A nine-year-old boy was charred to death in wee hours of Sunday after the house in which he had been living along with other family members caught fire at Sankara village in Subarnapur district.

The boy sustained grievous injuries in the mishap. Some local residents rescued the boy in a critical condition and rushed him to a nearby hospital for treatment. However, the doctors at the hospital declared him dead while undergoing treatment.

The inferno broke out all of a sudden owing to a leakage in the gas cylinder which was kept in the kitchen. Within minutes, the blaze engulfed the entire house.

The boy was sleeping when the incident took place.

2 more succumb to injuries in crusher unit explosion



critical injuries in the incident and were admitted to different hospital for treatment.

Among them, P Sai Gopal, 33, of Kukudakhandi who was undergoing treatment at a private hospital died while Deepak Patra, 35, undergoing treatment at AIIMS also breathed his last Sunday. Sadar police IIC Santoshini Oram said. The bodies will be sent back after conducting post-mortem in Bhubaneswar.

Meanwhile, police has arrested Susant Kumar Rout, the husband of the proprietor of the crusher unit Anupama Rout and manager of the stone quarry Amita Bachhan Bisoyi for the offence. It has been alleged that Susant illegally stored explosives and smuggled them. Anupama and the explosive supplier Rama Sahu are absconding.

RETURN OF NATIVES



People from Odisha working in other states return home in trains at Angul railway station, Sunday

OP PHOTO

FOCUS ECONOMY

LOOMING STAGFLATION



With the spread of the coronavirus, economic activity is being adversely impacted sending ripples across sectors as varied as auto, real estate, tourism and banking

In March compared with 5.03 per cent in February and 4.06 per cent in January. Similarly, Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation soared to 7.39 per cent in March, the highest in the series that started in 2011-12. It was 4.17 per cent in February. Core inflation also increased to a series-high 7 per cent.

Unemployment is increasing. As per CMIE's latest data, unemployment as of March 31 had stood at 6.52 per cent. It has mounted to 8.4 per cent as of April 18. But urban unemployment has increased from 7.21 per cent on April 4 to 10.72 per cent for the week ended April 18. This reflects a shift in the burden of job losses to urban India, reversing the trend of rural India largely bearing the brunt of Covid-induced stress on employment. In the organised sector, companies will try and cut down expenditure, retrench employees, cut wages to maintain or enhance profits, thus affecting aggregate demand of the overall economy adversely.

The banking crisis is going to be further aggravated. The excess money in the banking system, (that banks park with the RBI) had stood at Rs 3.8 lakh crore as of March 31. It has since grown to Rs 5.55 lakh crore as of April 18, indicating that lending by banks is slowing down intensely. The ratings agency ICRA estimates that banks have accumulated bad loans worth Rs 1.3 lakh crore between September and December 2020. An economic downturn likely to have a significant increase in NPAs and credit losses could lead to a lower economic risk score.

The state has got a role and responsibility towards those who are languishing under poverty and starvation or any natural calamity or pandemic. To recall Albert Einstein, "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them." The need of the hour is we introspect and address the old thinking which plunged the world into the worst public health and economic collapse since the Spanish Flu of 1918 and Great Depression of 1929.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

The coronavirus pandemic is the greatest global trauma since the Second World War and unprecedented in most of our lives. Calling the pandemic, the world's worst public health crisis in 100 years, an Oxfam report in 2021 said it triggered an economic crisis comparable in scale only with the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The global economy has shrunk by 4.3 per cent in 2020 – the sharpest contraction since the Great Depression that began in 1929 and far higher than the 1.7 per cent reduction during the Great Recession of 2009. The ILO estimates it cost the equivalent of 25.5 crore people full-time jobs.

Indian economy is believed to have contracted by 8 per cent in 2020-21 while China's economy grew around 2.3 per cent. China's GDP galloped to a record 18 per cent in the post-Covid comeback in January-March 2021 while India may revise its growth forecast downward. But neither people nor politicians learnt from first wave of the pandemic. India is witnessing resurgence of the second wave in a ghastly shape. The Indian government had enough time to prepare for the second wave to at least lessen its cataclysmic impact. But complacency, arrogance, greed for power and apathy for poor hindered the ruling dispensation from foreseeing the danger ahead. The scenario appeared like Covid never hit India or will not hit again and the main issue before the ruling dispensation was to capture more power.

India's daily Covid cases have already breached the 3-lakh mark, the only second country after the US to have reached this ugly milestone. India is now the worst affected in terms of daily infections, second worst affected in term of total number of infections, and fourth worst affected in term of the death toll. This portends a scary future for the Indian economy which has been already sliding due to the draconian demonetisation and complex GST system, defective policies and the first wave of the pandemic. The second wave is going to exacerbate the beleaguered economy further.

As some states resort to localised

lockdowns to tame spike in Covid-19 cases, India's GDP growth will be hit hard further, delaying the fragile economic recovery and pulling down overall economic growth for the current fiscal. Some economists and rating agencies have started trimming India's expected economic growth in 2021-22. Some say the permanent GDP loss stemming from the brunt of the coronavirus is massive at 10 per cent.

In countries where poverty levels are already high, the immediate impact of even a small downturn in economic activity can be devastating. Recently the US-based Pew Research Centre reckoned the global middle class shrank for the first time since the 1990s. It finds that the middle class in India is estimated to have shrunk by 3.2 crores in 2020 as a consequence of the pandemic induced downturn while the poverty rate in India likely rose to 9.7 per cent in 2020, up sharply from the January 2020 forecast of 4.3 per cent.

Meanwhile, the number of people who are poor in India (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) is estimated to have increased by 7.5 crores. China fared much better, with the number of people in the middle-income tier decreasing by only 1 crore, while the poverty level remained virtually unchanged in 2020. As the Covid-19 recession has exacerbated inequality, the increase in the number of poor is likely greater than estimated in this analysis. The middle class may have shrunk by more than projected.

An aura of uncertainty further looms large unless the monstrous

pandemic is incarcerated. The assumption of smooth economic recovery is now in question as the production chain is going to be disrupted again. The IMF says the surge in new Covid cases represents a 'worrysome downside risk' to India's economy, and it's the poorest who may be worst hit.

With the spread of the virus, economic activity is being adversely impacted—sending ripples across sectors as varied as auto, real estate, tourism and banking. Some of this is bound to spill over into the so-called informal sector as well, where the vast majority – 90.7 per cent of India's workers operate, without written contracts, paid leave, health benefits or social security.

Further, the government tax collections will plummet with debt-burden getting escalated. It may be noted that India's public debt as a percentage of GDP has increased from 72 per cent in 2019-20 to 89 per cent in 2020-21. This means debt is not spurring growth. The RBI Current Situation Index has been negative in all surveys conducted in the past four years except the one in March 2019. On April 7, RBI released updates to its regular Consumer Confidence Survey. The households are found wary of discretionary spending.

What will also make things difficult is the fact that inflation has been rising, eroding purchasing power of people and India that witnessed recession is now facing stagflation. Consumer Price Index inflation stood at 5.52 per cent



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE FOR THE SECOND WAVE TO AT LEAST LESSEN ITS CATAclysmic IMPACT

Covid Complacency

There is no doubt now what complacency and sycophancy have done to India. The country is breaking its previous record to count over 3.46 lakh infections a day on April 24, the highest recorded anywhere in the world since the pandemic began.

The daily casualties and the callousness of the government lowering its guards to dish out a false narrative that its leadership is the best in the world in beating the virus have attracted global media attention and sounded alarm bells across the world. The appalling situation in India is featuring on the front pages of newspapers across the globe. The Washington Post has described it as "avoidable and tragic".

The Guardian has been brutally honest in its assessment that the Indian Prime Minister's overconfidence lies behind the country's disastrous Covid-19 response. The PM, according to the paper, "suffers from overconfidence in his own instincts and pooh-poohs expert advice. The buck stops with him".

However, it is not the immense increase in figures of Covid infected that should worry citizens. What should be of great concern is the total unpreparedness of the Central and state governments' machineries that has resulted in creating today's scenario. It is interesting to note how people have been cleverly burdened with various responsibilities under direct command of the Prime Minister. Starting from Swachh Bharat, Demonetisation, giving up of LPG subsidies to banging of thalis, clapping and lighting of lamps 'at 9 pm for 9 minutes', the citizen has been misled to believe that s/he is actively participating in the reconstruction of the nation. This smart idea of asking the citizen to run around in circles has also given rise to the feeling that any fault finding in the government's response is akin to attacking that citizen.

While the pains of Demonetisation were supposed to be over in 50 days, the crisis in Kashmir, after the abrogation of Article 370, was to die out in 30 days. The nation's economy has not been able to revive after Demonetisation nor has the situation in Kashmir normalised. Kashmir now has a much larger concentration of Indian armed forces which is bleeding the nation's finances even more. Covid-19 played out soft on India in 2020. Instead of the childish dramatics of taali and thaali, the government could have focussed on building emergency healthcare facilities and asking states to ramp up tests and vaccinations. All that got ignored. Initially, the Prime Minister started what was termed as international vaccine diplomacy. India exported vaccines to a few countries. It also agreed in the last Quad Summit to supply vaccines to Asian countries that would not side with China. In the meantime, a regional leader piped in a brilliant idea of making vaccines available in the free market. This one statement completely changed the narrative. PM Modi, all along, had been tomming India's vaccine production capabilities and claiming that Indians will get access to free vaccines. Now suddenly, both Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India are putting up the MRP of their vaccines. When people are talking of the cost of vaccines, most are forgetting that an amount of Rs 35,000 crores was earmarked in the last Union budget 2021 for vaccines. Now it is entirely up to the individual's imagination as to where this large amount of money could have been invested.

WISDOM CORNER

- Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without. **CONFUCIUS**
- The time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time. **BERTRAND RUSSELL**
- Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company. **MARK TWAIN**

WORDSWORTH

Mortarboard

The academic cap often called a mortarboard is quite ancient, but that word for it only dates from the middle of the nineteenth century (a less slangy way to identify it is to call it a square). The literal mortar board is the wooden plate, usually with a handle underneath, on which bricklayers carry small amounts of mortar. A similar tool is used by plasterers, but they usually call it a hawk. What seems to have happened is that the similarity in shape between the brickie's board and the academic cap led some wag, probably at Oxford University, to apply the name of the one to the other. Our first recorded use is in a book of 1853-6, The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green, an Oxford Freshman by a clergyman named Edward Bradley, who wrote under the pen name of Cuthbert Bede (the names of the two patron saints of Durham, where he went to school). Verdant Green is a sort of undergraduate Pickwick and the book recounts his adventures. This magisterial reprimand by a don appears after one such escapade: "I will overlook your offence in assuming that portion of the academical attire, to which you gave the offensive epithet of 'mortar-board'; more especially, as you acted at the suggestion and bidding of those who ought to have known better".

Mortsafe

Medical schools in the eighteenth century, and increasingly so in the early nineteenth century, found it difficult to teach anatomy because the supply of bodies for dissection was limited (legally, only the corpses of executed murderers might be used, and even those were often hard to obtain because of public revulsion against the practice). So a clandestine trade grew up of grave-robbing: the anatomists paid resurrectionists to go out at night, especially in winter when the cold would slow putrefaction, to dig up freshly interred bodies and convey them to the schools. At the time, a dead body was not legally regarded as property, so body snatchers could not be convicted of theft. When this supply proved inadequate, some gangs – such as that of the infamous Burke and Hare – turned to murder to meet demand, leading to the verb to burke and to burkism as a name for the practice. Various methods were tried to thwart the resurrectionists, such as setting guards or traps over the grave. Another was to employ metal coffins, such as the patent coffin invented by Edward Bridgman in 1781. In Scotland the most common method in the eighteenth century – for those who could afford it – was the watch box or mortsafe. This was an iron grid or cage either placed over the coffin or set in mortar above ground to cover the whole area of the grave. Some of the latter type can still be seen in churchyards. Poor people sometimes erected communal mortsafes or placed huge coffin-shaped pieces of stone or metal on new graves (they were called jankers; the source of this word is unknown, but may derive from the name of the device employed to move the weights; it's probably not connected with the twentieth-century sense of a military punishment, whose origin is also unknown).

LOL

Arguing about the sign

A man was driving down a local street one day and approached a stop sign. He barely slowed down and ran right through the stop sign after glancing for traffic. What the driver didn't know was that a policeman was watching the intersection. The policeman pulled out after him and stopped the car two blocks away. Policeman: "Licence, registration and proof of insurance please."



Driver: "Before I give it to you, tell me what the heck you stopped me for, man." Policeman: "Watch your tone sir; you ran the stop sign back there!!!" Driver: "Man, I slowed down, what the heck is the difference?" The police officer pulled out his night stick and began smashing it over the man's head and shoulders. Policeman: "Now, do you want me to just slow down or stop?"

SPECTRUM PANDEMIC

The worst is yet to come

India has been completely shaken by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new vaccine policy encourages local manufacturers to expand their facilities with the help of the Centre's financial assistance and logistics, though such measures ought to have been taken after the first wave of infections receded last year.

The Prime Minister's recently announced "liberalised and accelerated Covid-19 vaccination strategy" has been criticised by former AICC president, Sonia Gandhi, who termed it as arbitrary and discriminatory. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi compared it with demonetisation and dubbed it as primarily meant for benefiting a few industrialists in the country.

Due to the non-availability of oxygen, Covid-19 patients are dying every minute and the situation is horrible in Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other states. The crisis is being attributed to lack of timely formulation of policy to establish new oxygen plants besides creating a distribution system for the states. A Delhi court had to pass stringent orders to the Centre saying "you are not exploring all avenues

to augment oxygen supply. Beg, borrow or steal. Provide oxygen, whatever, means to hospitals treating Covid-19 patients." While taking suo motu cognizance of the matter, the Supreme Court told the Centre that the Covid-19 situation in the country is a like national emergency and hence a plan must be drawn up to deal with the crisis.

Experts say the Centre and state governments went into a 'silent mode' and none of them chalked out strategies to deal with the second wave. Union Health Minister, Harsh Vardhan declared that the country had entered "the endgame" of its own battle against the pandemic. Even the Reserve Bank of India announced in unusually enthusiastic tones that India had "bent [the Covid-19 curve] like Beckham" and that "soon the winter of our discontent will be made glorious summer."

Civilians too can play a pivotal role in this dismal scenario which warrants a complete check on congregations like the Kumbh Mela, crowded meetings, rallies during Assembly polls and social gatherings like marriages.

In the backdrop of the shortage of vaccines, the Prime Minister defended the decision to supply Covid-

19 vaccines to 80 needy and poor nations as he supports an idea of the dire need of ensuring equitable access to the vaccines across the world.

The government's projected population for the year 2021 for the 18-44 years age group is 595 million. With two doses per person, this translates to 1,190 million doses. This huge population has not been included in priority groups to have access to vaccines and it would be covered solely by the state governments and the private sector.

India, with the biggest pharma manufacturing base in the world, had earmarked Rs 35,000 crore for Covid vaccination in the 2021-22 Budget, and export to other nations has been halted till national demand is fulfilled. In April, the Centre approved Rs 3000 crore for Serum Institute of India and Rs 1500 crore for Bharat Biotech.

Serum Institute of India, CEO, Adar Poonawalla had flagged the need for financial assistance recently and had opined to look at other sources of funds in form of bank loans and advances against supplies to increase capital expenditure and repurpose capacity.

United States President, Joe Biden, has conveyed to Prime

Minister Modi that it understands India's pharmaceutical requirements and promised to give the matter due consideration thereby, making it clear that the current hurdle in the export of critical raw materials needed to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines is mainly due to an Act which enforces American companies to prioritise domestic consumption.

International Monetary Fund experts had predicted a GDP increase of 11.5 to 12.5 per cent for India but the country is facing threat of a downfall. As per economists' assessment, nine million job-losses was estimated last year due to restrictions on factories and commercial establishments which will swell in huge proportions in view of the current situation in the country. The Index of Industrial Production has been badly affected which was recorded as low as 3.6 per cent for February 2021 and the slide continues. Experts believe that the worst is yet to come as more states resort to restrictions to prevent the surge in infections from overwhelming the medical infrastructure.

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist.



KS Tomar

THE CENTRE AND STATE GOVERNMENTS WENT INTO A 'SILENT MODE' AND NONE OF THEM CHALKED OUT STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THE SECOND WAVE

Case pendency

Sir, The High Courts in India are running short of judges. There are 411 vacancies in 25 high courts out of the sanctioned strength of 1080 judges. In the absence of alternative disputes redress mechanisms, the issue becomes all the more excruciating. There will be disproportionate number of cases filed on a daily basis; so the problem is chronic. Outgoing Chief Justice SA Bode, in the course of a hearing, has pushed for retired High Court judges, based on their expertise, as ad-hoc judges for a limited period, in a specific branch of law that has a whopping backlog of cases for a very long time. Justice Bobde is not the only CJI who has advocated the ad-hoc judges' idea. Justice Ranjan Gogoi, during his tenure as CJI, had written three letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the appointment of former judges to dispose of pending cases. Besides, many legal luminaries, time and again, have backed the proposal of the CJIs. The former judges will bring in tremendous amounts of experience and talent, familiarity with the task at hand, and focusing on the job with no worries over interference, promotion or transfer. The Constitution of India, too, is unambiguous over appointing former judges. Article 224A has dealt with the same. Actually, Article 228 has the provision for retired Supreme Court (SC) judges as ad-hoc SC judges. Also, the retirement age for HC judges needs to be increased. The HC is the entry point for higher judiciary. Appointments to the HC are done both from the lower judiciary and the bar. Many District Judges inching towards their retirement are elevated as HC judges. By the time they settle in their groove and get going, it is time to pack-up.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)

Startup booster

Sir, The Government of India has launched the Startup India Seed Fund scheme with a view to boost startups in India. The scheme will help companies to finance their first steps which includes market research and product development. It will support about 3600 entrepreneurs in the next 4 years. The Expert Advisory Committee will be set up to look for its execution and monitoring. It will encourage young entrepreneurs to think and choose their career by grabbing an opportunity in the field of entrepreneurship. India already had much of its talent among youth, now the problem of lack of finance is somewhat fixed by the government with this scheme. Surely, the scheme will help and promote entrepreneurs to execute their dreams into successful business ventures.

Anjali Verma, BATHINDA (PUNJAB)

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

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Bodies keep arriving, belie official virus death count



COVID-19 victims before being cremated, as coronavirus cases surge in record numbers across the country, in Kanpur, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanpur (UP), April 25: As coronavirus cases surge, the number of cremations taking place at the city's crematoriums has increased several-fold - far more than the 66 deaths officially attributed to the virus in the entire district over the past six days.

Data from Bhairoghata and Bhagwatghat crematoriums shows 462 bodies were consigned to flames from April 19 to April 24.

People have to wait with the bodies for the last rites and the situation is no different at burial grounds.

In the six-day period, Kanpur Nagar district officially recorded 66 COVID-19 deaths, while 406 cremations took place at Bhairoghata and 56 in Bhagwatghat alone. The Bhairoghata crematorium also includes an electric crematorium.

"The number of cremations has risen several fold in the last week," said Qamruddin, a Kanpur Municipal Corporation employee at the Bhairoghata electric crematorium. "Until last month, we were cremating less than 10 bodies a day, but for the last 10 days, we have been handling over 50 bodies every day," he said. Data shows that 91 of

Over 400 bodies were cremated in the last six days, while the official coronavirus death toll stood at 66 during the same period. We are working with 100 per cent capacity to cremate the bodies on time

DHANIRAM PANTHER | SOCIAL WORKER

the 406 funerals were performed at Bhairoghata April 21 alone, he added.

The spurt has forced the people to wait for hours to cremate the dead, Qamruddin said.

"We are working for long and incinerators are running full time, but many people still have to wait with the bodies for the last rites," he said. Additional District Magistrate Atul Kumar said information about all the COVID-19 patients as well as their recovery or deaths is uploaded on the government portal, so "it is impossible to hide or alter the death toll".

He, however, refused to comment over the large number of bodies being brought to the crematoriums,

contrary to the COVID-19 death figures being shared with the media and displayed on the official portal. The divisional commissioner and the district magistrate were not available for their comments.

According to Dhaniram Panther, a social worker who voluntarily performs last rituals of unclaimed bodies, the electric and firewood funerals at the crematoriums have been running without a break almost everyday during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Over 400 bodies were cremated in the last six days, while the official coronavirus death toll stood at 66 during the same period. We are working with 100 per cent capacity to cremate the bodies on time," Panther said.

The Bhairoghata crematorium has cremated 50 to 90 bodies a day during the last week, far in excess of the city's official daily coronavirus death toll of approximately 10, said Panther. "I have been regularly performing cremations of unclaimed bodies for decades, but I haven't seen bodies in such large numbers awaiting funeral. Sometimes the crematorium ran out of wood and people were asked to bring it themselves," Panther said.

Pictures don't lie: Akhilesh slams UP govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 25: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said Sunday that the Uttar Pradesh government was spreading "rumours" about no shortage of oxygen in the state amid soaring coronavirus infections.

"People occupying responsible posts in Uttar Pradesh should not indulge in making irresponsible statements and try to silence the public by threatening them to attach their properties," Yadav tweeted.

"It's the BJP government that's spreading rumours about no shortage of oxygen. The pictures on the roads do not tell lies," he said. "Sir, please open your eyes."

Yadav also demanded free tests, free vaccination and free treatment for the people.

"At a terrible time amid the pandemic when the country and Uttar Pradesh are struggling for oxygen and medicines, news of black marketing symbolise failure on the part of the government," he said.

"The SP demands that instead of uniformity in the prices of vaccines, there should be instant and free vaccination," Yadav added.

The Samajwadi Party also hit out at the Adityanath government.

"Owing to non-availability of oxygen, beds and medicines, there's an emergency in Lucknow and in UP," it tweeted.

"Till when will the chief minister show insensitivity and turn deaf ear to the cries of aggrieved family members? A BJP MP is threatening to stage a sit-in over oxygen



Family members of COVID-19 patients wait to fill their empty cylinders with medical oxygen outside an oxygen filling center, as demand for the gas rises due to spike in coronavirus cases, in Kanpur, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

(shortage). The CM should stop speaking lies and pay attention on management."

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday hit out at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's remarks that there is no shortage of oxygen in any private or public COVID-19 hospital in the state, and asserted that "only an insensitive government" will give such a statement.

Asserting that there is no shortage of oxygen in any private or

public COVID-19 hospital in Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath on Saturday had said that the state government would conduct an audit of the life-saving gas in collaboration with various institutes.

Tagging a media report on his remarks, Priyanka Gandhi, in a tweet in Hindi, said, "Just imagine yourself in the place of those patients who are told that they will not get admission due to lack of oxygen. 'Oxygen is low, take your patient.'"

"Only an insensitive govern-

ment will give such a statement," she said.

Tagging another media report on Adityanath's remarks, the Congress general secretary also said, "Mr. Chief Minister, there is an oxygen emergency in the entire state."

"If you want to file a case against me, seize my property, do so. But for God's sake recognise the seriousness of the situation and get down to saving people's lives immediately," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

₹7,594 crore paid to wheat growers through DBT scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 25: A sum of Rs 7,594 crore has been transferred to the bank accounts of 2.26 lakh wheat growers in Punjab under the newly implemented direct benefit transfer scheme, officials said.

Over 93 per cent of the total arrival of wheat has been procured during the ongoing Rabi marketing season, Punjab Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan said.

She said 71.48 lakh metric tonnes of the 76.32 LMT arrivals had already been procured, which accounts for over 93 per cent of the total arrival.

This was despite the fact that



nearly 300 per cent more wheat has arrived in the mandis this year as compared to 29.32 LMT arrival recorded during the corresponding period last year, she said in a statement here.

The official said the state government has already set up 'farmers help desks' in the grain markets across the state wherein Mandi Board officials and IT professionals assist the peasants for registering on the Centre's 'Anaj kharid' portal to ensure timely payment directly into their bank accounts under the direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme.

As many as 7 lakh of the 10 lakh farmers have already uploaded their documents on the said portal in the state till date.

Principal Secretary Food and Civil Supplies, KAP Sinha said there was no shortage of gunny bags in the grain markets.

However, there were initially some problems due to the non-functioning of jute mills in Kolkata at its full capacity due to the ongoing assembly elections in West Bengal, which had adversely impacted the supply of gunny bags in Punjab.

He also said that 14.2 crore gunny bags had already been used for packaging of wheat, besides one crore bags per day were being supplied to all the grain markets across the state.

Meanwhile, the Shiromani Akali Dal demanded immediate sacking of Food and Supply Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu for allegedly failing to make proper arrangements in mandis for the wheat season.

Punjab shuts steel industries to divert O2 for medical use



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, April 25: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Saturday ordered the shutdown of operations in the state's iron and steel industries to divert oxygen for medical use, along with immediate establishment of its control rooms at the state and district levels amid the escalating oxygen crisis in the state.

Six patients died of oxygen shortage at a private hospital in Amritsar. The CM also directed the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Amritsar to initiate a thorough investigation into the tragic incident at the Amritsar hospital. The DC has been asked to ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the deaths at the hospital, which prima facie seemed to have flouted orders given to all private hospitals with oxygen shortage to shift their patients to Government Medical Colleges.

The DC has set up a two-member committee, comprising Rajat Oberoi, Deputy Director Local Bodies, who is also in charge of the death analysis committee, and a civil surgeon, to probe the matter, an official spokesperson said.

Taking stock of the situation in view of the oxygen shortage being reported from various hospitals, and the fact that the current allocation to Punjab is not sufficient to meet the urgent needs, the Chief Minister said he had already taken up the matter with the Centre, seeking an increase in the quota on an urgent basis. Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan was following up the matter. The sudden influx of patients from neighbouring states had put an added burden on the oxygen requirement in Punjab, he noted.

Ordering closure of industrial operations at the iron and steel plants, the Chief Minister said the state government will convey its decision to the Centre.

The Chief Minister has also asked for a feasibility report from the Power Department on the use of thermal plants for providing oxygen for medical use.

Punjab has witnessed a sharp increase in demand over the past few days. The demand for oxygen currently stands at 250 metric tonnes (MT) per day and is expected to go up to 300 MT in the coming days on account of the spiralling Covid cases.

Punjab sees huge influx of Covid-19 patients from neighbouring states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 25: Amid reports of shortage of hospital beds and oxygen supplies, COVID-19 patients from Delhi and neighbouring states are getting admitted to health facilities in Punjab, said officials Sunday.

Many patients from Delhi have been admitted to hospitals in Patiala, Jalandhar and other places, they said, adding that those from Haryana and Himachal Pradesh too are turning to the state.

"Presently, there are 13-14 patients from Delhi who are admitted to Rajindra Hospital," Patiala Civil Surgeon Dr Satinder Singh.

Doctors said Delhi-based COVID-19 patients, many of whom need oxygen support, are coming to Punjab as they could not get hospital beds in the national capital.

Many patients whose relatives are

Delhi-based COVID-19 patients, many of whom need oxygen support, are coming to Punjab as they could not get beds in the national capital

living in Punjab are approaching them to get themselves admitted, said doctors, adding that as a moral obligation, they could not refuse treatment to anyone even if they were from outside Punjab.

Around 35-40 patients from other states are getting treatment in Jalandhar hospitals.

"Of these patients, 12-13 are from Delhi while the rest are from Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Jammu," said Jalandhar Deputy Commissioner Ghanshyam Thori.

Several private hospitals in

Punjab are getting frequent calls from Delhi-based patients who want to get hospitalised for coronavirus treatment.

"I am getting five to six calls daily from patients, a majority of whom are from Delhi," said Dr Navjot Dahiya, who runs a hospital in Jalandhar.

Sudden influx of patients has added more pressure on health facilities in the state, the officials said.

Several private hospitals are already complaining of shortage of oxygen, thus refusing to admit more patients.

Punjab has witnessed a sharp increase in demand for oxygen over the past few days.

The demand for oxygen currently stands at 250 metric tonnes a day and is further expected to go up to 300 MT in the coming days on account of spiralling COVID cases.

Gurdwara's 'oxygen langar' aids patients battling for breath

REUTERS

Ghaziabad, April 25: Coronavirus patient Vidhya Devi, 70, should have been in emergency care at a New Delhi hospital, but instead she lay on the backseat of a car outside a Sikh temple, battling for breath, as she was connected to an oxygen tank on the street.

A massive surge in COVID-19 cases in India, which set a new global record of the most number of infections in a day Sunday, has left many infected people struggling to find treatment, with hospitals overcrowded and many running out of oxygen.

Total infections stand at 16.96 million and deaths at 192,311, health ministry data showed.

At the Sikh gurdwara (temple) in Ghaziabad city on the outskirts in Uttar Pradesh, the humanitarian tragedy is visible on the street.

Sikh aid group Khalsa Help International has been buying small quantities of oxygen as and when it becomes available to help those in urgent need.

Cars, vans and rickshaws plying COVID-19 patients and their families choked the street outside the temple Saturday, as volunteers holding black oxygen cylinders spread out to help.

"I came here because I didn't get help anywhere else," said Manoj Kumar, who sat next to his mother Devi in the car as a volunteer monitored the flow of oxygen from the tank to her masked mouth.

"I called the gurdwara and they asked me to reach here fast," said Kumar. A middle-aged woman in a



van appeared to be palpitating as her adult son, holding her arm tried to keep her conscious, calling out: "Mummy? Mummy?" In another van, a man lay un-

conscious on a car seat, legs stretching out of the door, as one volunteer vigorously rubbed his chest, while another pumped his feet to try to revive him. Rummy, who is presi-

dent of the gurdwara and founder of Khalsa Help International, said he began providing the service three days ago as cases started spiking in New Delhi.

"People are dying on the streets. That's why we started this," said Rummy. Over 36 hours up to Saturday evening, Rummy estimates the Khalsa Help International group has saved around 700 patients, but some didn't survive.

Reuters witnessed two deaths there that evening.

As breathless patients arrived seeking oxygen, the street outside the temple resembled the emergency ward of a hospital, but crammed with cars not bed trolleys. Rummy called out to those gathering, requesting them to disperse.

"Please remove the cars from the middle of the roads. Please keep to one lane," he said. "You will all get oxygen."

of the day quote

I want to be able to help people through this crisis as best I can because I know what's it like to have a loved one in hospital fighting against COVID



At a time of a national emergency like this with an ineffectual and callous government landing us in this mess, the job of everyone is to assist and help every other person. Only social solidarity can take us through



The Modi government is guilty of permitting brazen profiteering of vaccination. The Modi government is also guilty of abdicating its responsibility and abandoning the young of India between the age group of 18 and 45 years



SHORT TAKES

Free Covid vax to all 18+ in Maha

Mumbai: In a significant decision, Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government has decided to vaccinate all the people in the state aged 18-45 free of cost, a minister said Sunday.

SC Judge passes away

New Delhi: Justice Mohan M Shantanagoudar, a sitting Supreme Court Judge passed away Saturday. He was 62 years old and breathed his last at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugam, Haryana.

Mukhtar tests nCoV+ve in jail

Banda (UP): Bahunjan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA and mafia don Mukhtar Ansari has tested positive for Covid-19 in Banda jail.

Chamoli avalanche death toll rises to 12

Gopeshwar: The death toll in an avalanche at Sumna near the Indo-China border in Chamoli district rose to 12 Sunday with the recovery of two more bodies, officials said.

Night curfew in HP

Shimla: The Himachal Pradesh government imposed a night curfew in four districts from April 27 to May 10 and made it mandatory for people visiting the state to produce a negative coronavirus report.



People are no longer interested in Narendra Modi's 'Maan ki baat' programme, they, instead, want to hear 'COVID ki baat'(COVID- related talks) as the pandemic has left lakhs gasping for breath, amid shortage of vaccines and oxygen cylinders

MAMATA BANERJEE | BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

KERALA IN MINI LOCKDOWN MODE

After 26,685 fresh Covid-19 cases were recorded in Kerala Saturday, the state government Sunday decided to continue the tough measures to contain the infections in the state



COVID VACCINATION

Online booking must for 18+

Vaccination for everyone above 18 years of age will start from May 1. The government opened vaccinations for all adults amid a massive Covid surge in the second and more deadly wave of the coronavirus



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: The government has made it mandatory for the 18-44 age group to register themselves on the CoWIN portal and get an appointment for vaccination against coronavirus, saying walk-ins will not be allowed initially to avoid a "chaos" at immunisation centres once the inoculation drive opens up substantially.

However, those aged 45 years and above can still avail the facility of on-site registration to get vaccinated, officials said. Amid an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases in the country, the government has decided to allow everyone above 18 years of age to get vaccinated from May 1.

Registration for vaccination for all those aged 18-44 years will begin on the CoWIN platform and Aarogya Setu App from April 28. The inoculation process and documents to be provided to get the jab remain the same.

"An increased demand is expected once the vaccination is opened for all. For the purpose of crowd control, registering on CoWIN portal and making an appointment to get a vaccine will be mandatory for those aged between 18 and 45 years. Walk-ins will not be allowed in the beginning so that there is no chaos," an official said.

From May 1, the present system of private COVID-19 vaccination centres receiving doses from the government and charging up to Rs 250

per dose from people will cease to exist and private hospitals will procure directly from vaccine manufacturers. According to the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy, COVID-19 vaccination will continue to be free at government vaccination centres that receive doses from the Centre for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above the 45 years of age.

Vaccine manufacturers would make an advance declaration of the price for 50 per cent supply that would be available to state governments in the open market before May 1. Based on this price, states, private hospitals, industrial establishments may procure vaccine doses from manufacturers.

Private hospitals would have to procure their supplies of COVID-19 vaccine exclusively from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for "other than the Government of India channel".

"While the Centre has liberalised the vaccination policy, it does not mean that vaccines will be sold in pharmacists or chemist shops in the open market," Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan had clarified Wednesday.

The price charged for vaccination by private hospitals would be monitored, he had said, adding, "The present dispensation where private COVID vaccination centres receive doses from the government and can charge up to Rs 250 per dose will cease to exist."

Centre bans use of liquid O2 for all non-medical purposes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The Centre Sunday barred the use of liquid oxygen for any non-medical purpose and asked manufacturing units to maximise its production and make it available to the government for medical use.

The order by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla came amid a scarcity of medical oxygen in many parts of the country, particularly in Delhi, that have been hit by a fresh wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Exercising the powers conferred under the Disaster Management Act, the union home secretary directed the state and union territory governments to ensure that "use of liquid oxygen is not allowed for any non-medical purpose and all manufacturing units may maximise their production of liquid oxygen, and make it available to the government for use for medical purposes only, with immediate effect and until further orders."



Further, Bhalla directed that all stocks of liquid oxygen should also be made available to the government for use for medical purposes and no exception is allowed to any

industry with regard to use of liquid oxygen.

The home secretary referred to various measures taken so far to ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen across the country.

He said it was considered necessary to restrict industrial usage of oxygen for ensuring availability of adequate and uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen across the country for management of COVID-19 patients and necessary order in this regard was issued on April 22 to restrict the use of industrial oxygen.

The central government has reviewed the oxygen supply situation and has decided that with immediate effect, use of liquid oxygen, including the existing stock, will be allowed for medical purposes only, and that all manufacturing units may be allowed to maximise their production of liquid oxygen, and make it available to the government, for use for medical purposes only, the order said.

OVER 550 OXYGEN PLANTS TO BE SETUP THROUGH PM CARES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 25: In line with Prime Minister's direction to boost availability of oxygen to hospitals, the PM CARES Fund has given in-principle approval for allocation of funds for installation of 551 dedicated Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) medical oxygen generation plants inside public health facilities in the country.



In a statement, the Prime Minister Office (PMO) said, "the Prime Minister has directed that these plants should be made functional as soon as possible. The Prime Minister said that these plants will serve as a major boost to oxygen availability at the district level."

These dedicated plants will be established in identified Government hospitals in district headquarters in various States/UTs. The procurement will be done through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The PM CARES Fund had earlier this year allocated Rs 201.58 crore for installation of additional 162 dedicated Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Medical Oxygen Generation Plants inside public health facilities in the country. The basic aim behind establishing PSA Oxygen Generation Plants at Government hospitals in the district headquarters is to further strengthen the public health system and ensure that each of these hospitals has a captive oxygen generation facility.

"Such an in-house captive oxygen generation facility would address the day to day medical oxygen needs of these hospitals and the district. In addition, the liquid medical oxygen (LMO) would serve as a "top up" to the captive oxygen generation," the PMO said.

HARVEST OF HOPE



A farmer ploughing his field on the outskirts of Belagavi, Karnataka

UNI PHOTO

EU, GERMANY SAY READY TO HELP INDIA IN COVID CRISIS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: The European Union, Israel and Germany today promised aid to fight the second wave of Covid that's ravaging India and is threatening to overwhelm the healthcare system.

Europe has been anxiously watching India since the Covid numbers started spiralling in early March. The assurance of help came this afternoon, as the daily Covid numbers almost touched 3.5 lakh - the fourth straight day of 3 lakh-plus fresh infections. "Upon request for assistance by #India, we have activated the #EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The EU will do its utmost to mobilise assistance to support people of IN. Our #ERCC is already coordinating EU MS that are ready to provide urgently needed #oxygen & medicine rapidly,"



tweeted Janez Lenarcic, the European Commissioner for Crisis Management.

A confirmation came from Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission.

"Alarmed by the epidemiological situation in India. We are ready to support. The EU is pooling resources to respond rapidly to India's

request for assistance via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. We stand in full solidarity with the Indian people!" her post read.

While there is no official message from Israel yet, Amichai Stein from the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation tweeted on Israel's decision to extend help, quoting officials.

Women can take Covid jabs during menstruation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 25: Women can take Covid-19 vaccines during their periods, the government has clarified in wake of various reports on social media platforms against taking the jabs at such a time.

A social media post, being circulated widely, said that women should not take Covid-19 vaccines five days before and after their period cycle as their immunity is very less during the time.

"#Fake post circulating on social media claims that women should not take #Covid19Vaccine 5 days before and after their menstrual cycle. Don't fall for rumours! All people above 18 should get vaccinated after May 1," the PIB said in a tweet. Many reports have emerged in the US claiming that periods change after they got their coronavirus vaccines.

'1 Covid-19 patient in Delhi now infecting 9 contacts'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged all citizens to be vaccinated and exercise caution, saying the "storm" of infections had shaken India, as the country set a new global record of the most number of COVID-19 infections in a day.

Hospitals in Delhi and across the country are turning away patients after running out of medical oxygen and beds.

Hospitals and doctors have put out urgent notices saying they are unable to cope with the rush of patients.

Outside a gurudwara in Ghaziabad, the street resembled an emergency ward of a hospital but crammed with cars carrying COVID-19 patients

hooked up to hand held oxygen tanks.

"Every day, it the same situation, we are left with two hours of oxygen, we only get assurances from the authorities," one doctor said on television.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal extended a lockdown in the capital that had been due to end on Monday for a week. COVID-19 is killing one person every four minutes in the city.

Epidemiologists and virologists say more infectious variants of the virus, including an Indian one known as B.1.6.1.7, have fuelled the ferocious surge.

Doctors at All India Institute of Medical Sciences have found that one patient is now infecting up to nine in 10 contacts, compared with up to four last year.

Delhi's slum dwellers grapple with smoke, fear of disease

FOR THE RESIDENTS OF SHAHEED BHAGAT SINGH CAMP, LIVING NEXT TO A CREMATORIUM IS AS MUCH A STRUGGLE AS KEEPING COVID AT BAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The smoke hangs in an ash grey cloud over their homes and the acrid smell from more than 200 cremations a day doesn't leave, they say, permeating as it were their very pores. For the residents of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Camp, living next to a crematorium is as much a struggle as keeping COVID-19 at bay.

Being in such close proximity to a crematorium is never easy, say the residents of the slum colony in west Delhi. But when the number of bodies being burnt goes up from about three to four a day to about 200-250, it's about visitations of death and also the fear of the contagion looming large over every aspect of their lives.

They wake up to the smell of burning bodies and sleep to it at night, said Saroj, one of the 1,500 odd people living in the 900 shanties in the slum colony located just a few metres away from the Paschim Puri crematorium.

"It is a very scary situation. We keep seeing ambulances pass by and constantly there is smell and smoke, whether it is day or night," the 38-year-old ragpicker told PTI.

The fear of contracting COVID-19 is constant and the glowing fires from the crematorium that now operates 24x7 allows neither peace of mind nor sleep, she said.

On the night of April 14, a fire broke out in the slum cluster and Saroj and scores of her neighbours are still recovering from that. There were no casualties but 30 shanties

LURKING THREAT



were burnt.

Half of Saroj's house also got burnt in the fire. And just as she was recovering came the weeklong lockdown aimed at breaking the chain of COVID-19 transmission.

Though there are no official figures, Saroj's neighbour, 35-year-old Kakoli Devi, said about 300 bodies were cremated Thursday. In the last two days, about 200-250 bodies were cremated.

"We have arranged for a truck and we will leave this place for our village in Maharajganj (in Uttar Pradesh). At least we will be spared this constant looming feeling of death," Kakoli said.

"Everyone is holed up inside the house. We don't even switch the fans on because we fear we will get corona through the air. The atmosphere has been particularly

traumatic for children," said the widow with three children.

Many others, mostly from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, are also planning to leave for their villages. Several people had left earlier as the second wave of COVID-19 gathered pace and those that are left fear their homes won't be livable for much longer given the continuous smell and stench.

Many residents said it was not so bad earlier because the cremations took place at the far end of the crematorium. Now with the numbers going up - Delhi on Saturday recorded 357 deaths, its highest yet, and over 24,000 fresh cases - the entire area is being used. When the residents protested, officials, they said, told them they have government orders to do so.

national



In this crisis, the country needs responsible citizens. I request my Congress colleagues to leave all political work. Just provide all help and ease the pain of our countrymen
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

AIR INDIA TO BRING 600 OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS

Air India will bring around 600 oxygen concentrators on its two US-India flights in the next two days, aviation industry sources said. These oxygen concentrators have been ordered by private entities, the sources mentioned



of the day quote

Delhi is my home and I will keep serving the people till my last breath. With many requests for beds, oxygen and medicines, we are helping as many as we can. These are really tough times and every help in this gloom comes as a ray of hope



I request hospitals not to raise alarms unnecessarily. Such acts hamper efforts to provide assistance to hospitals that really need help. The media should crosscheck before reporting such cases



We have to come out of the horror show of 'shamshaan and kabristan' and we need to unite and work to instill confidence and trust in the society



SHORT TAKES

Three arrested for selling Remdesivir

New Delhi: The Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested three people Sunday for alleged black marketing of remdesivir injections, which are in high demand for treating coronavirus patients, an official said. Those arrested have been identified as Alok Tyagi, a resident of Hapur, Abhishek, a resident of Gaziabad and Somel Gupta, a resident of Noida. The trio was arrested during a raid in Laxmi Nagar Sunday morning. According to the police, the accused were selling a remdesivir injection at ₹40,000.

Bhopal 'Corona curfew' extended

Bhopal: The 'corona curfew' imposed in Bhopal of Madhya Pradesh to tackle the surge in COVID-19 cases has been extended till May 3, an official said Sunday. The curfew in the state capital was set to end at 6 am April 26. It has been extended in Bhopal and Berasia town of the district till 6 am May 3, an order by Collector Avinash Lavaniya said. A week-long 'corona curfew' was first imposed in Bhopal city from 9 pm April 12 to curb the rising cases of COVID-19. It was further extended for another week from April 19 to April 26.

3 drug smugglers attack cops, held

Chandigarh: Three drug smugglers were arrested after they opened fire at a police team and tried to flee near in Punjab's Pathankot district, police said Sunday. Police recovered 265 grams of heroin, a USA-made 7.62mm pistol and five cartridges from them. The accused have been identified as Karandeep Singh, alias Karan; Mandeep Singh, alias Happy; and Hardeep Singh, alias Saba, all residents of Mehma Chak village in Gurdaspur district. The incident took place at 7.40 pm Saturday evening when a police team was carrying out special checking near Jhakhohlahri in Pathankot.

NCB seizes 28 kg cannabis, 1 held

Mumbai: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Sunday seized 28-kg cannabis which was hidden in a car in Badlapur in neighbouring Thane district of Maharashtra and arrested a 25-year-old man, an official said. A team of NCB sleuths found nine packets of cannabis hidden in two separate cavities in the Toyota Innova while five packets were hidden in the bonnet, he said.

2ND COVID WAVE HAS SHAKEN COUNTRY: PM

The Centre will continue to provide jobs free of cost to the eligible people (those above 45 years): Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Noting that the second wave of COVID-19 is testing people's patience and their capacity to endure pain, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday that this "toofan" (storm) has shaken the country after it was full of enthusiasm and self-confidence after successfully tackling the first wave.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat broadcast, Modi spoke to doctors, nurses and frontline workers, who shared their experience and views on the disease, and expressed confidence that people will soon come out of this crisis. The over-30-minute broadcast was entirely focused on the pandemic, which has been rampaging across the country for weeks, with Modi asserting that defeating the disease is the biggest priority.

Modi began the programme by taking note of people's sufferings. "Many of our near and dear ones have left us untimely. After successfully confronting the first wave of Corona, the country was full of



enthusiasm, full of self-confidence, but this storm has shaken the country," he said. He urged people to go for vaccination against the disease and cautioned them against rumours about it. The Centre, he said, will continue to provide jobs free of cost to the eligible people (those over 45 years of age).

"We have to accord priority to the expert and scientific advice at this time to win this battle," he said.

Modi also appealed to states to extend the benefit of the Centre's free vaccine campaign to the maximum number of people. "The government of India is applying its entire might to give a fillip to endeavours of state governments. The state governments too are trying their best to fulfil their responsibilities," he said. A doctor, whose conversation

with the prime minister was played in the programme, noted that people are a bit scared about the pandemic situation, while saying that there is absolutely no need for it as 80 to 90 per cent of the infected people do not show any of these symptoms. It is imperative that treatment protocol is as per the doctor's advice, he said. Echoing his view, Dr Naveed Nazeer Shah from Srinagar urged people to follow COVID guidelines to avoid getting infected and to get inoculated. The Prime Minister said while people are getting infected by the disease, they are also recovering from it in big numbers, and also spoke to one Preeti Chaturvedi of Gurugram, who shared her experience of dealing with the disease. She has now recovered.

4 Cong-ruled states express inability to jab 18-45 age group

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Four states ruled by the Congress and its allies Sunday accused the Centre of hijacking vaccine stocks from manufacturers, and expressed doubts they would be able to launch the inoculation drive to cover those between 18-45 years of age from May 1.

They also accused the Centre of mulling over step-motherly treatment to them, and urged the Union government to provide them free vaccine doses to vaccinate all adults.

Addressing a virtual joint press conference, the health ministers of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jharkhand (ruled by Congress-JMM alliance) asked as to how they will vaccinate all adults when the Centre has already taken away the stocks and shots are not available to them. They said they are prepared for the next phase of vaccination drive from May 1, but the manufacturers have expressed inability to provide them vaccine shots. How do we vaccinate adults of 18-45 years as Serum Institute has said they will not be able to provide vaccine till May 15, Rajasthan Health Minister Raghu Sharma said.

We have the capacity, but not the vaccine, he said. States should get the supplies. The Government of

India should provide vaccine as per their requirements. The success of the drive depends on availability of shots, he said. Sharma said, "Our demand is that the Centre fully funds the vaccine. How can we fund it from our budget? No provision has been made by us in the budget."

Chhattisgarh Health Minister T S Singh Deo said, "There is no way shots can be administered if the vaccine is not available. How will we provide vaccination? We are ready to vaccinate, provided we have the vaccines. He also alleged politics is being played on vaccination the way prime minister's photo is put on the certificate of vaccination. The country is being misguided. The Centre has made a joke of this, he said. Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said, "We are being meted out step-motherly treatment. The Centre should provide the vaccine and essential life-saving medicines." "If the Centre does not support us, how can we roll out the vaccination drive? We are only hand-to-mouth on vaccines. The Centre should allot the vaccine and provide it to us," Sidhu said.

Jharkhand Health Minister Banna Gupta alleged the prime minister is trying to derive political advantage even during this raging pandemic.

IAF to deploy 2 copters to douse Mizoram forest fire

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aizawl, April 25: The Indian Air Force (IAF) would deploy two helicopters to douse the forest fire in Mizoram even as the state's fighters and disaster management personnel are battling the blaze in Lunglei district and its adjoining areas, officials said Sunday.

IAF spokesperson Wing Commander Ratnakar Singh said the two IAF Mi-17V5 helicopters equipped with Bambi buckets would be positioned to douse the wildfire in Lunglei district and adjoining areas.

Chief Minister Zoramthanga Sunday sought help from the IAF as well as the locals in dousing the major forest inferno in the mountainous district, which shares borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Officials here said that Zoramthanga has earlier asked the Chief Secretary Lalunmawia Chuauango to talk to the IAF authority to urgently deploy helicopters to douse the forest fire which has been rapidly spreading in the adjoining localities and small towns of Lunglei and the adjacent district in southern Mizoram. Assam Rifles, Border Security Force (BSF), hundreds of volunteers, disaster management and Fire and Emergency Services personnel are continuing their efforts to control the inferno.

Railways deploys Covid care coaches in Delhi, Maha, UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 25: The Railways Ministry is re-mobilising its initiative of Covid Care isolation Coaches, devised during the initial wave of Covid-19 with add-on conveniences, a statement said Sunday.

As a measure of preparedness, Covid Care coaches have been readied to serve as additional health care facilities for isolation of Covid patients with mild symptoms. These coaches have now been additionally fitted with conveniences like coolers, jute mats and so on in view of the current hot weather conditions.

In Delhi, 50 coaches (with 800 beds) are deployed at Shakurbasti station (four patients are currently admitted), while 25 coaches (with 400 beds) have been made available at the Anand Vihar Terminal.



In Maharashtra's Nandurbar, 21 coaches (with 378 beds) are positioned and currently 55 patients are admitted at this facility. Twenty coaches have been positioned in Bhopal station and an equal number in Jabalpur, while 50 coaches have been readied for deployment in Punjab.

The state governments have been advised on the modalities and standard operating procedures (SOP) in place. Nearly 4,000 Covid Care Coaches with 64,000 beds have positioned at various railway stations in the country, some of which have already served the isolation needs of patients in the first wave of Covid.

GAGANYAAN MISSION

ISRO to launch data relay satellite

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The Indian Space Research Organisation will launch a data relay satellite that will help maintain contact with the Gaganyaan mission throughout after the launch, sources said.

The satellite will be launched before the final leg of the Gaganyaan mission, which will send astronauts to the Lower Earth Orbit (LEO). The first leg - the unmanned mission - is to be launched in December.

We're planning to launch our own satellite, which will act as a data relay satellite before going for the first human space flight, the sources said. The ₹800-crore project has been approved and work has been going on, they added.

Satellites in orbit cannot pass along their information to the ground stations on Earth if the satellite does not have a clear view of the ground station. A data relay satellite serves as a way to pass along the satellite's information.

The NASA, with a robust human space mission programme, also has its own data relay satellite.

Its Tracking and Data Relay Satellite allows it to have global

coverage of all the satellites round the clock without having to build extra ground stations on Earth.

The ISRO uses several ground stations spread across the globe - Mauritius, Brunei and Biak, Indonesia. Last month, ISRO Chairperson K Sivan had said the space agency was also in talks with the Australian counterpart to have a ground station at the Coco Islands for the Gaganyaan mission.

However, there are blind spots, due to which there is a possibility of not receiving signals, sources added. The data relay satellite will help address the issues.

Earlier this month, the ISRO signed an agreement with French space agency CNES for cooperation for the Gaganyaan, a move that will enable training of Indian flight physicians in French space agency's facilities.

Under this agreement, CNES-developed French equipment, tested and still operating aboard the International Space Station, will be made available to Indian crews.

The CNES will also be supplying fireproof carry bags made in France to shield equipment from shocks and radiation, it said.



Kuru Kolumn

Kumbh takes toll on UP, Uttarakhand

Contrary to popular perception that Maharashtra is on top of Covid infections in the country, it is UP and Uttarakhand which are leading the pack. A close study of

data on the government website from April 1 to April 17 revealed these startling facts. It emerged that UP and Uttarakhand have left Maharashtra behind compared to the BJP ruled states. Maharashtra had 43,183 cases April 1 and rose to 67,123 cases April 17 thereby witnessing a rise of 155% cases in 17 days. But in UP, Covid cases rose by 1,055%, almost seven times. In UP, there were 2,589 cases as on April 1 and rose rapidly touching a record 27,334 cases April 17. In West Bengal the rise in Covid cases was more than 650% in 17 days. The cases were 1,274 April 1, and rose to 7,713 April 17. Home Minister Amit Shah may be claiming that Kumbh Mela did not spread coronavirus as

is being alleged, but data revealed that Uttarakhand had 500 cases April 1. They rose to 2,757 cases April 17 - a jump of 551% in 17 days. This is much higher than Maharashtra's 155% rise.

How the mighty are facing Covid music

For the first time ever, the high and mighty in Lutyens Delhi are having a taste of super-sonic second Covid wave as they do not know where to go. They are politely being told rooms are not available at the AIIMS. The 300 plus bedded state-of-the-art Trauma Center has been converted into a Covid

hospital once again since April 5 and it is packed to capacity. A Union Minister of State struggled to get admission for his near and dear ones. But there was no luck for him in Delhi. Deputy leader of Congress in Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma was told there is no VIP room available. A BJP MP was so enraged for being refused a room at the AIIMS that he dashed off a letter to the PM. But even that didn't help.

Congress' tactical retreat from WB

In a tactical move, the Congress seems to have taken a back seat in the West Bengal poll campaign.

The retreat began Monday after Mamata Banerjee reported to have talked to Sonia Gandhi seeking her cooperation in defeating the BJP in the last three phases of Assembly polls. The Congress decided to virtually suspend its poll campaign Monday itself. In all, 112 seats out of 294 are crucial due to the presence of 41% Muslim population in the last three phases and Mamata Banerjee wants to prevent splitting of these votes between the TMC and Congress-Left. Mamata had written a letter to Sonia two weeks ago and a telephone call was a follow up. What came out of the telephonic conversation that took place in the presence of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

is not immediately known. But Monday, West Bengal Congress Chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury went into home isolation as he got Covid positive. The same day, West Bengal's AICC in charge Jitin Prasad decided not to enter the state due to rising cases of Covid. The Congress got another jolt when Rahul Gandhi tweeted Monday night that he had been tested positive with mild Covid and canceled his rallies in West Bengal. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also decided to stay put in Delhi instead of campaigning. As if this was not enough, the Congress high command decided not to send any of its star campaigners to West Bengal for the remaining phases.

international



Our focus now ... Is to our own region, to providing support to our near neighbors. We need to recognize our region is changing. China is militarizing ports across our region. We need to deal with all of that, and that's exactly what we're now focused on

CHINA'S MOON PROBE WILL CARRY FRENCH, RUSSIAN GEAR

China will launch its next robot lunar lander in 2024, and it will carry equipment from France, Sweden, Russia and Italy. Plans call for Chang'e 6 to land near the lunar south pole and collect samples before returning to Earth



of the day quote

This is a place of tragedy and memory, but it is also a place where you can see how a person can overcome the consequences of a global catastrophe. We want a new narrative to appear - it was not a zone of exclusion, but a zone of development and revival

To the people of India I want to express my sympathy on the terrible suffering that Covid-19 has again brought over your communities. The fight against the pandemic is our common fight. Germany stands in solidarity with India and is urgently preparing a mission of support

We received underwater pictures that are confirmed as the parts of the submarine, including its rear vertical rudder, anchors, outer pressure body, embossed dive rudder and other ship parts

'US holds on to misunderstandings'

Beijing, April 25: The differences between the US and China are continuing as Washington is yet to find the right way to deal with Beijing while holding on to "misunderstandings", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said, warning that playing the "Taiwan card" is "playing with fire".



We think that the right approach to deal with the US-China relations should be strengthening communication, deepening cooperation, narrowing differences and avoiding confrontations

China hoped that the Biden administration would view its development objectively and rationally, and explore with China a new path of peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, Wang, also the State Councillor, said in a video conference with the US think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) on Friday.

the Chinese Foreign Minister asked the US not to interfere in China's internal affairs. The US cannot expect China to cooperate on issues of America's interests while repeatedly challenging China's rights and interests, he said. Speaking of Taiwan, which China considers as its part, Wang stressed that playing the "Taiwan card" is "playing with fire" and urged the US to strictly abide by the one-China principle and honour its commitments under the three China-US Joint Communiqués.

Saudi to ship 80 metric tonnes of oxygen to India



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 25: Saudi Arabia is shipping 80 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen to India as the country is running low on supplies due to an unprecedented spike in coronavirus cases. India logged a record of 3,49,691 new coronavirus infections in a day on Sunday, taking its total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,69,60,172.

across the world. This first shipment of 4 ISO cryogenic tanks with 80 tons of liquid oxygen is now on its way from Dammam to Mundra, Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani said in a tweet. India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

Bangladesh closes border Dhaka: Bangladesh will close its land borders with India for the next 14 days due to the unprecedented surge of coronavirus cases in the neighbouring nation, Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen announced Sunday. India logged a record of 3,49,691 new coronavirus infections in a day on Sunday, taking its total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,69,60,172.

The Indian Air Force on Saturday brought four cryogenic tanks, to be used for transporting oxygen, from Singapore. The containers were airlifted from Singapore by C17 heavy-lift aircraft of the IAF. The aircraft "with 4 cryogenic containers for storage of liquid O2 from Singapore landed at Panagarh air-base" in West Bengal Saturday, a home ministry spokesperson tweeted.

Syrian smuggling attempt thwarted

Beirut: Lebanese troops aborted early Sunday an attempt to smuggle dozens of Syrian migrants to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, the military said. The attempt to smuggle 69 Syrian citizens comes as Lebanon is witnessing a severe economic and financial crisis that has thrown more people into poverty. There have been attempts over the past year to smuggle migrants to European Union member Cyprus during which some of the migrants were killed. The Mediterranean island and Lebanon have an agreement to curb the arrival of boats loaded with migrants from reaching Cyprus.

Canberra, April 25: Australians and New Zealanders paid tribute to their war dead Sunday as both nations prepared to withdraw from their longest war in Afghanistan. The neighboring countries commemorate Anzac Day every April 25, the date in 1915 when the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on Turkey in an ill-fated campaign that provided the soldiers' first combat of World War I.

JERUSALEM BURNING



A Palestinian sitting next to a burning barricade flashes a "V" sign during clashes with Israeli police, as the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan continues, in Jerusalem

'US will rapidly deploy additional support to India amid Covid surge'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 25: The US will rapidly deploy additional support to India and its health care heroes amidst the horrific COVID-19 outbreak, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said. Blinken's remarks came as pressure grew on the Biden administration to ship COVID-19 vaccines along with several life-saving medical supplies to India.



REUTERS

3,49,691 new coronavirus infections, India's total tally of COVID-19 cases climbed to 1,69,60,172, while active cases crossed the 26-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Sunday. The death toll increased to 1,92,311 with a record 2,767 daily new fatalities. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Friday that the US was working closely with Indian officials at both the political and experts' level to identify ways to help address the crisis.

Oz, NZ commemorate war dead on Anzac Day

THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES COMMEMORATE ANZAC DAY EVERY APRIL 25, THE DATE IN 1915 WHEN THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS LANDED ON TURKEY IN AN ILL-FATED CAMPAIGN THAT PROVIDED THE SOLDIERS' FIRST COMBAT OF WORLD WAR I



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Canberra, April 25: Australians and New Zealanders paid tribute to their war dead Sunday as both nations prepared to withdraw from their longest war in Afghanistan. The neighboring countries commemorate Anzac Day every April 25, the date in 1915 when the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps landed on Turkey in an ill-fated campaign that provided the soldiers' first combat of World War I.

Australia to focus on its own region, where China was changing the security environment. "Our focus now ... Is to our own region, to providing support to our near neighbors," Dutton told Nine Network television, referring to natural disaster and pandemic relief.

with few people wearing masks. Commemorative events were canceled in the city of Perth because of a three-day lockdown that started Saturday due to recent coronavirus infections. Western Australia state Premier Mark McGowan and thousands of others remembered the fallen in dawn ceremonies on their own on driveways, as they did last year.

spreading in the community, veterans have complained that pandemic restrictions have been excessive in parts of the country. Services and marches were live-streamed for those who could not attend or did not wish to take the infection risk of attending.

SHORT TAKES

Afghan airstrikes kill 12 militants

Ghazni (Afghanistan): Afghan fighting planes targeted the Taliban hideouts in the restive Muqar and Gilan districts of eastern Ghazni province on Saturday, killing 12 insurgents and injuring six others, the Defense Ministry said in a statement Sunday. The short statement also noted that a good quantity of arms and ammunitions of the militants were also destroyed during the air raids.

Armenian PM resigns

Yerevan: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Sunday announced his resignation to pave the way for scheduled snap parliamentary elections in June. "In order to implement the decision on holding snap parliamentary elections on June 20, today I resign from the position of the Prime Minister of Armenia," Pashinyan said in a televised address to the nation.

Bangladesh closes border

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business



While the (airline) sector is facing temporary headwinds, we at GoAir believe that the airline is uniquely placed with its inherent ultra-low-cost structure that has always stood us in good stead

KAUSHIK KHONA | CEO, GOAIR

INDIA TO BE TOP SPENDER

Driven by increased cloud adoption and massive work-from-home migration, Australia and India will account 26% of the overall security spending in the APAC region in 2021. They are the next two largest countries in terms of security spending due to the presence of large number of businesses catering to domestic as well as international customers



of the day quote

Employee wellbeing is the biggest aspect that we are focused on. A lot of the first-line help is provided to HCL employees and their families through the helpline that we've set up. We have an active vaccination campaign, including on our campus and have set up facilities in some of the locations



C VIJAYAKUMAR | PRESIDENT & CEO, HCL TECHNOLOGIES

Diagnostic is one sector that is growing. If you remember that before, we barely had one thermometer at home, that too, a mercury thermometer. Usually there was one thermometer in the whole building that you would borrow if somebody had fallen sick



SUSHIL SURI | CHAIRMAN AND MD, MOREPEN LABORATORIES

Previously, buyers of under-construction homes had one major advantage. Their patience and willingness to court construction risk were rewarded by notably lower prices



ANU PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

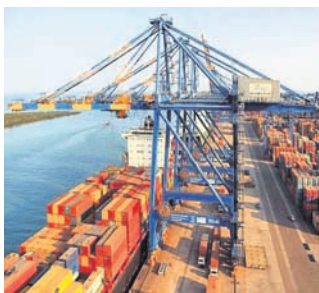
Country's major ports to waive-off charges for oxygen related cargo

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: The government Sunday said it has directed all major ports to waive all charges for ships carrying oxygen and related equipment amid a massive surge in coronavirus infections across the country.

In a statement, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said it has directed all major ports to accord the highest priority in the berthing sequence to the vessels carrying consignments of medical grade oxygen, oxygen tanks, oxygen bottles, portable oxygen generators and oxygen concentrators. "In view of the excessive requirement of oxygen and related equipment in the country, the Government of India has directed all major ports, including the Kamarajar Port Limited, to waive off all charges levied by major port trusts (including vessel-related charges, storage charges, etc.," the statement said.

Port chairpersons have been asked to personally supervise logistics operations to ensure unhindered movement of such consignments for berthing of such vessel on top priority in the port, unloading of oxygen-related cargo, coordination with customs and other authorities for speedy clearance/ documentation and expeditious evacuation, it further said. "We are facing an emergency situation due to the second wave of



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Covid-19. The major ports will start implementing the direction from today onwards," a senior government official said.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterway Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet, "Ship 'MV Hai Nam 86' reaches @Deendayal Port, carrying steel cylinder tubes used for making #Oxygen cylinders. Vessel was given the highest priority for berthing on arrival at Cargo Jetty, owing to oxygen shortage in the country."

Second wave to impact fashion retailers: Report

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 25: The second wave of coronavirus infections reported from various pockets of the country has come as a "strong headwind" to fashion retailers, and is expected to delay the recovery back to pre-Covid-19 levels till FY23, domestic rating agency ICRA said Sunday.

The industry is set to show a revenue growth of 23-25% on a low base in 2021-22, but that will not be sufficient to get the business performance back to the pre-Covid-19 levels, ICRA said in a report.

The rating agency said the industry was recovering well till the second wave hit and sales had touched over 70% of pre-Covid-19 levels by the December quarter of 2020. "A sharp spike in the number of new Covid-19 cases since March 2021 throws up strong headwinds for the sector."

Its Sector Head Sakshi Suneja said industry players adopted to several cost-saving measures by fashion retailers, including rental negotiations, salary and overheads rationalisation in FY21 to protect the businesses. They are expected to continue the same in FY22 also pending a revival in discretionary demand.

"This is expected to support the operating profit margins (OPM) at around 4.1% in FY22, though these will remain lower by around 2.50% from FY20 levels," she said.

Credit profiles of retailers will improve in 2021-22 as compared to the year-ago period courtesy deleveraging in balance sheets after



Expectations of increasing and widespread availability of vaccines in the coming months will drive recovery of the sector's revenues and profitability to pre-Covid-19 levels in FY'23

PRIYESH RUPARELIA | CO-GROUP HEAD, ICRA

capital infusions in FY21, she said. The credit profiles will remain weaker than the pre-Covid-19 levels, Suneja added.

"Expectations of increasing and widespread availability of vaccines in the coming months will drive recovery of the sector's revenues and profitability to pre-Covid-19 levels in FY'23," its co-group Head Priyesh Ruparelia said.

The agency said the fashion retailers industry is set to invest

₹2,400 crore in capital expenditure in 2021-22, largely on store expansions that got deferred as a result of the pandemic, and added that attractive rentals are a pull.

The pandemic has also spurred the adoption of online retailing in India, with most of the retailers reporting more than 50% jump in online sales in the first nine months of the fiscal albeit on a low base, leading to increased proportion of online sales within the overall mix, Ruparelia said.

In contrast to the fashion retailers, the food and grocery retailers fared relatively well during the pandemic and have reverted to pre-Covid-19 level sales and profits in the third quarter of 2020-21 itself, the agency said.

While the segment is yet to see a recovery in footfalls to pre-Covid-19 levels, a higher transaction size is adequately compensating for the same, the agency said.

Steel makers produce 3,474 ton/day LMO, more than capacity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Domestic steel industry produced 3,474 metric tonne of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) Saturday, higher than its daily production capacity to meet the shortage of the life-saving gas being used in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Steel on Sunday, there are 33 oxygen plants in the Indian steel sector, of which 29 are tapped regularly.

The total daily oxygen production capacity of steel plants is 2,834 metric tonne (MT). The production of LMO is 3,474 MT as reported April 24, 2021, the statement said.



"This is higher than the LMO production capacity because most units have reduced the production of Nitrogen and Argon and only producing LMO. With all these efforts, 2,894 tonnes were dispatched to different states April 24 by public and private steel plants as against 1500/1700 tonne/day a week earlier," it said.

The ministry further said all efforts are being made by the industry to enhance the production of LMO and dispensing the same.

SHORT TAKES

JSW Steel to raise daily O₂ supply

New Delhi: Private steel maker JSW Steel on Sunday said it will increase its daily oxygen supply limit to 900 tonne/day by the end of this month. On the directions of the Ministry of Steel, steel plants in the country are supplying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to various states for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. JSW Steel Thursday had informed it is supplying 185 tonne of LMO per day. A company statement Sunday said, "JSW Steel gears up daily supply to 900 tonne."

'3rd O₂ plant to begin operation'

New Delhi: Fertiliser cooperative IFFCO Sunday said its third oxygen plant being set up at Phulphur, Uttar Pradesh, will commence operation by May 30 and provide free oxygen supply to hospitals in the state and adjoining areas. IFFCO is setting up a total of four oxygen plants in India at a cost of about ₹30 crore. Two plants will be established in UP (in Barilly and Prayagraj). One each plant is coming at Paradeep (Odisha) and Kalol (Gujarat).

Muthoot Microfin to raise ₹350 crore

New Delhi: Muthoot Microfin is planning to raise ₹350 crore by selling shares during the current year, to fund business growth. Besides, the microfinance arm of Muthoot Pappachan Group is also looking to raise ₹100 crore from Tier-II bonds. "We are looking to garner \$50 million or about ₹350 crore equity capital to grow and build balance sheet of the company," Muthoot Microfin CEO Sadaf Sayeed said.

Arzoo plans fintech solution for partners

New Delhi: Retail-tech startup Arzoo will soon launch a credit-driven fintech solution integrated with its B2B commerce platform that aims to create a working capital cushion for about 10,000 partner stores on its network, by allowing them certain number of days to pay for the products they bought. Arzoo said about 500 stores on its platform have already signed up for the product in the pilot phase, and that the solution will be available by July.

BIZ BUZZ

FIA teams up with Steelbird

Bhubaneswar: Steelbird and FIA are collaborating for its global road safety programme. The objective of this programme is to provide, with the support of the FIA Member Clubs' worldwide network, high quality helmets meeting 'United Nations Regulation 22.05' in those territories which have faced problems with low quality helmets in their local market. Steelbird production capacity for this programme is 240,000 helmets per year with a total production capacity secured by all the partners of 420,000 helmets per year. This is the second partnership with a helmet manufacturer as part of the FIA Safe & Affordable Helmet initiative. This project recently received the support of the Keep Fighting Foundation, founded by the family of Michael Schumacher, with a donation of five thousand helmets.



Canara Robeco MF launches fund offer



Bhubaneswar: Canara Robeco Asset Management Company Limited announced the launch of their new fund offer (NFO), Canara Robeco Focused Equity Fund - an open-ended equity scheme, investing in maximum of 30 stocks in large-cap, mid-cap and small-cap companies across diversified sectors. The 15-day NFO period will close May 7, 2021. The new scheme, Canara Robeco Focused Equity Fund, has the objective of taking a concentrated exposure in not more than 30 high conviction stocks across market capitalisation, and would aim for improved risk-adjusted return characteristics while yet staying diversified. The Fund Manager adopting this approach, would identify businesses with sustainable and high growth opportunity, and quality, and scalable earning potential, to be a part of the new scheme portfolio.

Oil min tells ONGC to sell oilfields; hive off drilling

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: The petroleum ministry has told India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC to sell stake in producing oil fields such as Ratna R-Series to private firms, get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields, monetise existing infrastructure, and hive off drilling and other services into a separate firm to raise production.



Amar Nath, additional secretary (exploration) in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, April 1 wrote to Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Chairman and Managing Director Subhash Kumar giving a seven-point action plan, 'ONGC Way Forward' that would help the firm raise oil and gas production by one-third by 2023-24.

The action plan calls on ONGC to consider sale of stake in its maturing fields.

'India failed to prepare for second Covid wave'



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 25: Indian Institute of Management - Ahmedabad professor Chinmay Tumbhe Sunday said India failed to prepare for the second Covid-19 wave due to the complacency of the government and society, and failure to keep track of the different strains of the virus.

Tumbhe, who recently authored the book titled 'The Age of Pandemics: How They Shaped India and the World', further said India will have to be alert for at least two more years to the possibility of a repeated wave of this crisis.

"I think there are two major factors (India's failure to prepare for the second wave). One is, of course, complacency from the government

level, from the society level where everybody assumed that the pandemic is over, but serious pandemic rarely gets over in a few months, so that was a big mistake.

"Second is failure to keep track of the different strains of the virus, it's clear that this particular strain that is right now is quite different from the first one," he said.

India is grappling with a spiralling number of COVID cases as well as related deaths, forcing many state governments to put in place restrictions on the movement of people.

Asked what India could have done differently to fight Covid-19, Tumbhe said if you see what countries like New Zealand and Australia have done, they have been very very slow to go back to full economic activity.

POST-PANDEMIC SCENARIO

'Richer nations in APAC may recover faster than poorer counterparts'

THE REPORT SAID THAT WHILE INCOME EQUALITY FELL IN MOST OF THE REGIONS GLOBALLY DURING 1995-2015, IT ROSE OVER 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS IN ASIA AND PACIFIC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The richer countries in the Asia-Pacific region are likely to recover quickly from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic than their poorer counterparts because of variation in degree of immunity, healthcare system and vaccine roll-out, according to a report.

Referring to the much-talked-about K-shaped recovery, which means some groups or countries recover much faster than others, the report said most countries will take years to attain pre-pandemic income levels.

"A K-shaped global economic recovery...Appears plausible. Most countries will take years to attain pre-pandemic income levels," said a joint report 'Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leaving no Country Behind' by the ADB, UNDP and the UNESCAP.

Reflecting back to the economic recovery process after the 1997-98 fi-



ancial crisis, the report said the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to be "worse".

Advocating that there should not be premature withdrawal of fiscal support by the governments across the globe, it said more action is

needed including income support through well-targeted cash transfers, wage subsidies, unemployment insurance tax deferrals, moratoria on debt services as well as equity-like injections into viable firms.

The report said that while income

equality fell in most of the regions globally during 1995-2015, it rose over 5 percentage points in Asia and Pacific.

"In some 40% of countries in the region, income inequality increased. Worryingly, the market income Gini coefficient soared in China, Indonesia, Bangladesh and India, which are among the five most populous countries in the region and account for over 70 per cent of its population," the report said.

According to the report, the differences in infections and immunity, financial positions, quality and coverage of healthcare systems and COVID-19 vaccine rollout are likely to lead to an uneven recovery across countries in Asia-Pacific.

The region's most-affluent countries are likely to recover more quickly than the poorer countries, said the report.

"There is a fear of multispeed access to vaccines. Developed countries, together with Singapore, the

Republic of Korea, China, India, Russian Federation and Turkey, may achieve herd immunity within 2021; while for other developing Asia-Pacific countries, inoculations are likely to have a significant impact on immunity only in 2022," as per the report.

The pandemic has impacted the economic sectors and households unevenly, like the digital and technology divide.

Gaps in economic capability may lead to substantial cross-country divergence in adapting transformative change brought about by teleworking, digitalisation and automation, in the post-pandemic economy.

"The pandemic may drive greater inequality and social instability, especially in some of the poorest and most fragile parts of the region. A K-shaped recovery and a widening chasm between developing and developed countries remains a major risk," it added.

KOHLI'S SIDE FINISH 2ND BEST AGAINST CSK, SUFFER 1ST DEFEAT IN 2021 IPL

JADEJA STOPS RCB JUGGERNAUT



CSK players congratulate Sam Curran (jersey number 58) after the dismissal of RCB skipper Virat Kohli

It was RCB's first defeat in this edition of the IPL. Jadeja propelled CSK to 191 for four after skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni opted to bat in a top-of-the-table clash. Then, with his left-arm spin, the star all-rounder picked up the important wickets of AB de Villiers (4) and Glenn Maxwell (22) to derail RCB's run chase on a sluggish Wankhede pitch. RCB had started their chase in

through having Virat Kohli caught behind by Dhoni.

Jadeja began the final over of the CSK innings by clobbering four consecutive sixes off Harshal Patel before adding another off the fifth ball. He smashed the last ball over square leg for four as Harshal, who had figures of three for 14 going into the final over, finished with 4-0-

Brief scores
CSK 191 for 4 (Ravindra Jadeja 62 n o, Faf du Plessis 50, Harshal Patel 3/51) beat RCB 122 for 9 (Devdutt Padikkal 34, Ravindra Jadeja 3/13, Imran Tahir 2/16) by 69 runs.

51-3. However, Jadeja was lucky as Dan Christian dropped the batsman off Washington Sundar when he was on zero.

The left-handed Jadeja made full use of the reprieve to ruin what was turning out to be an excellent outing for 'Purple Cap' holder Harshal, with his brutal last over onslaught.

Playing for RCB, Chris Gayle had also scored 37 runs, against Kochi Tuskers Kerala in the 2011 edition, the bowler being Prasanth Parameswaran on that occasion.



Ravindra Jadeja

Earlier, a second straight half century for Faf du Plessis (50, 41b, 5x4, 1x6) propelled CSK before Harshal delivered a double blow for RCB in the 14th over, getting rid of Suresh Raina (24) and the former South African captain off successive deliveries. Then Ambati Rayudu (14) also holed out in the deep off Harshal and CSK were in a spot of bother.

However, then came the Jadeja histrionics and CSK posted a total close to 200 that was always going to be difficult on a pitch which was on the slower side.

WILLIAMSON'S HEROICS IN VAIN

DC overcome SRH in thrilling match

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 25: Kane Williamson (66 n o, 51b, 8x4) brought Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) to the brink of victory against Delhi Capitals (DC) in their IPL encounter played here Sunday. It was Williamson's knock that took the game to the Super Over; after all had seemed lost for SRH with the side requiring 28 runs in 14 balls. However, Jagdeesha Suchith (15 n o, 6b, 2x4, 1x6) struck some crucial blows in the last over bowled by Kagiso Rabada. And suddenly from nowhere, SRH had managed to tie the score with both teams finishing on 159. DC lost four wickets, while SRH seven, but that did not matter as the game went into the Super Over.



Kane Williamson

table as they have a better run rate. Earlier riding on a brilliant half century by Prithvi Shaw (53, 39b, 7x4, 1x6), DC scored 159 for the loss of four wickets. Shaw and Dhawan (28) gave Delhi a rousing start putting on 81 in 10.2 overs. However, after that the DC batsmen lost their way as batting became increasingly difficult with the pitch aiding the spinners.

Brief scores
Delhi 159 for four (Prithvi Shaw 53, Siddharth Kaul 2/31). SRH 159 for 7 (Kane Williamson 66 n o, Avesh Khan 3/34, Axar Patel 2/26).
Super Over:
SRH 7 without loss; DC 8 without loss

TODAY'S MATCHES

PKS VS KKR

TIME 7.30 PM
Telecast: Star Sports channels

In the Super Over SRH scored seven without loss as Axar Patel bowled a brilliant over to Williamson and SRH skipper David Warner. It was not easy for DC also when they embarked on their chase for eight runs. They just managed to get to the target in the last ball with Shikhar Dhawan and Rishabh Pant running a leg bye.

The win means that DC also now have eight points in their kitty along with CSK and RCB from five games. However, CSK are at the top of the

SHORT TAKES

Women archers win WC team gold

Guatemala City: The Indian women's recurve team held their nerves to pip Mexico 5-4 (27-26) in an intriguing final to grab a gold medal in the Archery World Cup (WC) Stage 1 here Sunday. Locked 4-4 in the shoot-off, the Indian team comprising seasoned Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari shot 27 to edge out their Mexican rivals by one point and claim their first World Cup team gold after seven years. This is Deepika's fifth World Cup stage event team gold medal. Deepika drilled a perfect 10 in the final arrow of the shoot-off. However, her adversary, 2012 London Olympics silver medalist Aida Roman who needed a nine but only to drift away for a poor eight score.

Bronze for Amit

New Delhi: Olympic-bound Indian boxer Amit Panghal (52kg) settled for a bronze medal at the Governor's Cup in St Petersburg, Russia after going down to World Champion and familiar foe Shakhobidin Zoirov in the semifinals. Amit lost 0-5 to the Uzbek, who is also the reigning Olympic champion. This was the Indian's second loss to Zoirov after the 2019 World Championships. In that event, Amit had lost to Zoirov in the finals. It should be stated here that Amit was the only Indian boxer to make it to the medal round of the event.

Veda bereaved

New Delhi: Indian women's team cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy's mother, Cheluvamba Devi, has died due to COVID-19. The Bangalore-based cricketer tweeted about her mother's demise Sunday. "Appreciate all the messages I have received Saturday about the loss of my Amma. As you can imagine my family is lost without her. We now pray for my sister. I have tested negative and appreciate if you can respect our privacy. My thoughts and prayers go out to those going through the same!" Veda wrote. Veda has represented India in 48 ODIs and 76 T20s. AGENCIES

Laporte goal helps Man City win title



Aymeric Laporte

London, April 25: They were expected to win a quadruple of trophies this season. However, that hope of Manchester City has already been dashed. However, Pep Guardiola's side added Sunday the season's first silverware to their trophy cabinet by winning the Carabo Cup.

Aymeric Laporte scored an 82nd minute goal which helped Manchester City beat Tottenham Hotspur and seal their title triumph. A lovely free-kick by Kevin de Bruyne saw Laporte out-jumping the defenders of the Spurs to nod the ball home. It was indeed a fulfilling moment for the City fans who had waited for this moment.

Man City were deserved winners, there can be no doubt of the fact. However, at point of time it seemed that their profligacy in front of the opposition goal would hurt them. With the triumph Sunday, City have now become the most successful team in the history of the tournament jointly with Liverpool. Both sides have won the title eight times.

City added another goal in the dying minutes of the game, but Phil Foden was ruled off side.

Man City have now won this competition every year since 2018, and counting, except this one felt rather hollow. Not to the 2,000 or so fans, here to see it. They sounded as delighted as always with the success of their club.

Bess started hating cricket in bio-bubble

AGENCIES

London, April 25: England off-spinner Dom Bess has revealed that he started 'hating cricket' after his prolonged stay inside a bio-bubble during the Test tour of India earlier this year. In the two Tests he played, Bess got five wickets as England lost the series 1-3.

After spending around seven weeks inside the bio-bubble in India, the 23-year-old Bess is currently playing county cricket for Yorkshire.

"After India I had a good break, because I really did start hating cricket," Bess was quoted as saying by a cricket-specific website. "It got too much at times, certainly in that bubble in India, there's a lot of pressure going on and it was really important for me to come back (to England) and get away from it," he added.

Bess on returning from India, had 'two or three weeks off', getting to know his new home in Leeds and spending time with his girlfriend and the puppy they have adopted. "It was nice to see them and get away from it (cricket), because in India, in the bubble, everything was about cricket. It is fine when you're going well, but when things aren't going well it is very tough and hits you mentally," Bess pointed out.

MIXED FORTUNES FOR WORLD'S TOP 2 PLAYERS

Easy for Rafa, not so for Djoko

AGENCIES

Barcelona, April 25: World No.2 Rafael Nadal entered his 12th Barcelona Open tennis tournament final with a 6-3, 6-2 win against countryman Pablo Carreno Busta. He will now meet World No. 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece who beat Jannik Sinner of Italy 6-3, 6-3. Nadal had played Tsitsipas here in the 2018 final and had won easily, but the Greek is a much-improved player now.

Nadal, the 11-time champion landed 13 forehand winners and had four service breaks to extend his unbeaten head-to-head record against Carreno Busta to 8-0 Saturday night. The match lasted just 69 minutes.

"I am very happy to be back in a final here at an historic event, a home event and an important one for me," Nadal was quoted as saying by the ATP Tour website. "I think I did things well, better than the other days. I have been improving every single day a little bit more," the Spaniard added.

Nadal owns a combined 23-1 record in Barcelona semifinal and final matches. The Spaniard's only loss here came in 2019 when he lost in the semifinals to eventual champion Dominic Thiem.

The 34-year-old will be seeking revenge for his loss to the Greek at this year's Australian Open quar-



FRUITFUL OUTING: Rafa Nadal is all smiles after winning his semifinal encounter against Pablo Carreno Busta at Barcelona

ter-finals, when Tsitsipas became only the second player to defeat Nadal from two sets down at a Grand Slam. "Tomorrow (Sunday) will be a very tough one (match). Stefanos is playing probably better than ever," said Nadal.

Djokovic stunned

However, if Nadal ruled on home soil it was not the case for World No.

1 Novak Djokovic at Belgrade. The Serbian lost to Russian third seed Aslan Karatsev 5-7, 6-4, 4-6 in a semifinal match that lasted 205 minutes.

Taking on the top seed at his namesake Novak Tennis Centre in Belgrade, Karatsev stayed calm in the decisive moments Saturday to save 23 of the 28 breakpoints he faced against Djokovic.

INDIAN WEIGHTLIFTER WORKING HARD TO WIN GOLD AT TOKYO OLYMPICS

Chanu wants to end Chinese dominance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Nothing less than a gold medal will do for India's champion weightlifter, Mirabai Chanu in the Tokyo Olympics. She is seeking to break China's dominance and aura of invincibility in the sport. "I don't want a silver in the Olympics; I want gold," Chanu who participates in the 49kg, said Sunday.

Chanu is determined to do better than traditional weightlifting powerhouse China and claim the top spot at the Tokyo Games. North Korea have withdrawn from the Olympics. So it is likely to be a two-way race between Chanu and the lifter representing China in the 49kg category.

"I have to go beyond the Chinese lifters. They think that no one can lift more than them but I want to break that. I can fight with them," Chanu asserted.

China currently have two lifters



who are ahead of Chanu in the Tokyo Games qualifying rankings. However, only one of them can participate as per the rules. Both have lifted more weight than the Indian's

personal best (205kg). Among them is Hou Zhihui who set a new world record in snatch and total weight with an effort of 213kg (96g+117kg) at the ongoing Asian

I know I can beat the Chinese and I want to do that at Tokyo Olympics. I don't want silver, my target is to win the gold medal

MIRABAI CHANU

Championships.

Chanu returned to international action after 16 months at the on-going Asian Championships. The 2017 World Champion lifted 86kg in snatch and a world record 119kg in clean and jerk for a total of 205kg to pocket the bronze medal.

"I had cleaned 118kg but missed out on the jerk. So, I gained confidence that I can lift more than them. I worked on it. In snatch, I feel a little uncomfortable because of my shoulder injury sometimes. My confidence is a bit low but in clean and jerk I was up for the challenge," Chanu said.

Her 119kg effort fetched her gold

in clean and jerk. Chanu faltered twice in snatch as she attempted 85kg. A third failed attempt would have ended her championship.

The 26-year-old knows she has to improve her snatch segment to compete with China. Zhihui's 96kg at the continental event was a new world record, while Chanu's personal best is 88kg.

"I have to improve snatch to be at par with the Chinese. The difference in snatch is more," Chanu admitted.

The diminutive Manipuri conceded that this past year, when the weightlifting schedule went haywire due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been a confusing period filled with anxiety.

"I lost out on some confidence because of this one-year break as we didn't compete anywhere. Doubts crept in, you keep thinking 'what will happen, how will I perform'. It was a confusing time," Chanu revealed.

Real Madrid slip in La Liga title race with draw

AGENCIES

Madrid, April 25: Real Madrid handed the initiative back Saturday to Atletico Madrid in La Liga by drawing at home to Real Betis.

Eden Hazard was thrown on for the last 15 minutes of the 0-0 draw at Vallebebas in what was only the Belgian's second appearance in three months but Real could not find a way through. Atletico are now two points clear at the top of La Liga and can extend that advantage to five by winning away Sunday at Athletic Bilbao. On the other hand, Barcelona could pull level on points with Real Madrid if they overcome Villarreal.

"It's two points dropped, that's obvious, we lacked a lot going forward, especially at the start of the game," said Zidane. "We weren't sharp but that can happen. We have to go again Tuesday," the Frenchman added referring to the Champion League game.