



AT THE RECEIVING END

Actor Kangana Ranawat was heavily trolled on social media when she compared herself with Shah Rukh Khan

LEISURE P2



INDIA DECLINES UN HELP

India has declined UN's offer of assistance citing that it has a 'robust system' to deal with logistics required to fight Covid-19

INTERNATIONAL P10



DOUBLE-HEADER TODAY

KKR face an uphill task against DC while MI eye win against RR in the IPL

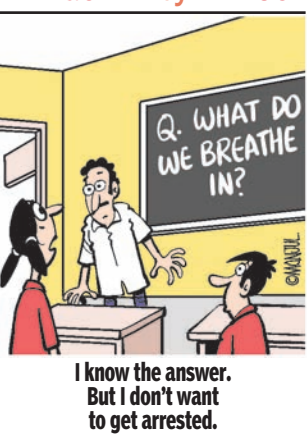
SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I know the answer. But I don't want to get arrested.

Govt vows quick vax rollout

MORE NUMBER OF VACCINATION CENTRES ON THE CARDS FOR INOCULATION OF 18-44 YEARS AGE GROUP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Health and Family department of the Odisha government said Wednesday, that the vaccine doses it had received till now cannot be used for persons in the age group for 18 to 44 years. This is because the quota is for healthcare and frontline workers and for the elderly (45-plus age group and above).

However, the government also assured the new batch that it would ramp up the vaccination process once it receives the vaccines directly from the manufacturers. However, till then the young eligible beneficiaries would have to wait.

Speaking about the third phase which is set to begin May 1, State Health and Family Welfare Director, Bijay Panigrahi said that it would not hamper the ongoing inoculation of people for healthcare and frontline workers. They would continue to get jobs free of cost.

Panigrahi also said that the government is in regular contact with Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech. "We can even start vaccination for the 18-44 years age group if we get stocks early," he asserted.

The official also said that once the



LONG VIGIL: Serpentine queues were noticed at the Capital Hospital in the City where people patiently waited for their vaccine jabs

third phase of vaccination starts, the process will be ramped up. "We will soon make a micro plan on vaccination of the new group. Our manpower, vaccination centres and other infrastructure will be ramped up to meet the demands," said Panigrahi. "We will soon come out with more information like the number of sessions, and the addition of extra sites," he added.

Jabs suspended

Owing to the massive shortage of Covishield vaccine doses, the Health department ordered Wednesday suspension of vaccination drive Thursday in 12 districts. They are Balasore, Bhadrak, Boudh, Cuttack, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Puri. However, Odisha on the day,

GLITCHES GALORE

NEW DELHI: As registration of all citizens above 18 years of age for vaccination started on the CoWIN portal at 4.00pm Wednesday, many people took to social media to complain about the technical problems they faced trying to register. Some of them complained the portal was not responding while others complained it had crashed. At 4.35 pm, a tweet from the verified Twitter handle of the Aarogya Setu mobile app said the CoWIN portal is working and that there was a minor glitch at 4.00pm, which was fixed. However, even then there were complaints that people were not being able to register. However, the Centre said late at night that the portal was working smoothly.

received 90,000 doses of Covishield. With the delivery of the fresh doses the total stock of Covishield in the state stood at 1,19,220.

"We suspended the vaccination drive in Jajpur and Keonjhar districts today. We will be forced to suspend vaccination in 10 more districts tomorrow (Thursday). We received Wednesday 90,000 doses of Covishield from the Centre. However, it will take time to send those to different districts," informed Panigrahi.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

Market Building shut for Covid violations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), sealed Wednesday, the Market Building locality at Unit-II here for a period of 48 hours due to violation of Covid-19 norms.

During inspections, the BMC Zonal Deputy Commissioner (ZDC) discovered that social distancing protocols were being flouted with impunity in one of the busiest market complexes in the city. The ZDC immediately ordered the sealing of the area in presence of the DCP till Monday. "Many people were roaming freely without masks



and there is no arrangement at shops to avoid crowding. Social distancing protocols are being blatantly violated here. We can never beat the virus if the safety protocols are flouted in such way. It's baffling that people are still not realising that we are in the midst of a pandemic," said BMC Additional Commissioner, Laxmikant Sethi.

SHORT TAKES

Series of quakes rocks Assam, WB

Guwahati: A series of earthquakes Wednesday jolted Assam and most of the northeast Wednesday, causing extensive damage to buildings and forcing people to scamper out of their homes. However, there was no report of any casualty although three people were injured in Tezpur. The first quake was followed in quick succession by lesser intensity tremors of 4.7, 4.00, and two 3.6 magnitudes at 8.03 am, 8.13 am, 8.25 am and 8.44 am, the IMD said.

Somanathan is new Finance Secy

New Delhi: Expenditure Secretary TV Somanathan has been designated as the Finance Secretary, a Personnel Ministry order issued Wednesday said. He is a 1987-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Somanathan's appointment the order said. Somanathan's batchmate Debashish Panda is now Secretary, Department of Financial Services

States have sufficient vaccine stock: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: Over one crore COVID-19 vaccine doses are available with states and Union Territories (UTs) and they will receive an additional 57,70,000 doses within the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said Wednesday. The Central government has so far provided 15,95,96,140 doses to states and UTs free of cost. Of this, the total consumption, including wastage, is 14,89,76,248 doses, it said. "Over 57 lakh (57,70,000) vaccine doses will be received in addition by the states/UTs within the next three days," the ministry informed in a statement.

The ministry said some media reports quoting Maharashtra government officials pointed out vaccines in the state have finished. In the process it adversely affected impacted vaccination in Maharashtra.

"It is clarified that the total Covid-19 vaccine doses received by Maharashtra as on April 28 (at 8.00 am) are 1,58,62,470. Of this, the total consumption, including wastage (0.22 per cent), was 1,53,56,151. The balance of 5,06,319 vaccine doses is still available with the state for administration to the eligible population groups," the ministry said. "Another 5,00,000 doses of vaccine are in the pipeline for delivery in the next three days to Maharashtra," it added.

Thane hospital fire kills 4

SECOND INFERNO ROCKS MAHARASHTRA WITHIN 5 DAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, April 28: Four patients died after a fire broke out at the Prime Criticare Hospital at Kausa-Mumbra locality in this city at 3.40 am Wednesday, a civic official informed. The patients died while being shifted to other hospitals after the blaze broke out and not due to burns. The deceased may have inhaled smoke after the fire, added the official. He also informed that the hospital was not treating any Covid-19 patients.

The incident comes five days after 15 coronavirus patients died in a blaze in the intensive care unit of a private hospital at Virar in adjoining Palghar district.

Three fire engines and five ambulances rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze. Twenty patients including six in the intensive care unit of the hospital were



A section of the Prime Criticare Hospital in Thane which was razed to ashes due to the flames Wednesday

evacuated, said the official. Maharashtra minister and local MLA Jitendra Awhad told reporters at the scene that the fire destroyed

the first floor of the hospital. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has been informed of the tragedy, he said. The family of each deceased will be given a compensation of ₹5,00,000 and those injured will get ₹1,00,000, he added.

Twenty four COVID-19 patients on ventilator or oxygen support suffocated to death when their supply stopped suddenly due to a malfunction in the main storage at a civic hospital in Nashik last week. Earlier this year, a fire broke out in Mumbai's 'Dreams Mall', which housed a Covid hospital killing nine people.

QUICK ACTION SAVES PATIENTS

AURANGABAD: A quick intervention by staff saved the lives of 14 patients on oxygen support in the Parbhani district hospital in Maharashtra as the pipeline supplying the life-saving gas developed a leak after a branch of a tree fell on it, officials said Wednesday. After noticing the leak late Tuesday night, the staff of the hospital shifted the patients on jumbo oxygen cylinders for breathing, Deputy Collector Sanjay Kundetkar informed. He informed, the oxygen supply was interrupted for merely 2-3 minutes and technicians repaired the pipeline within two hours. "No casualty was reported in this incident," he said.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION-LIKE SITUATION TWIN CITIES MAY SEE STEEP HIKE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: With the state capital and Cuttack seeing a steep hike in Covid-19 cases, director of the state Health department Bijay Panigrahi said Wednesday that the twin cities may be hit hard by community transmission. The state capital reported 1,044 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, while the figure for Cuttack stands at 496.

Panigrahi said the number of cases in the twin cities is increasing as many people are visiting the two places from different districts. One positive person is infecting multiple people. Hence community transmission-like is prevailing.

However, Panigrahi said, there is no shortage of beds at the hospitals. While occupancy of ICU beds is around 53 per cent, for ventilators and general beds it is approximately 33 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. "We are monitoring the situation daily and accordingly increasing the number of beds when and wherever it is required," he informed.

With Odisha registering a huge spike of more than 8,000 new Covid-



19 cases Wednesday, the highest this year, health experts said more restrictions need to be put in place to contain the virus.

"The present situation will continue, the number of daily cases is likely to go up to 30,000 per day by mid-May. Therefore, lockdown like steps should be enforced," said senior doctor and health expert Niroj Mishra.

Former director of AIIMS, Ashok Mohapatra too had a similar opinion to offer. "In Chhattisgarh, the entire population is less than that of Odisha. It has reported 12,000 to 15,000 new cases for the last few days. So it will be wrong to say that Odisha will only report 6,000 cases during the peak," Mohapatra said.

Factors like population density and public movement are responsible for the rise in cases in some pockets of Odisha, he pointed out.

3 COPS NABBED FOR 'STEALING' OVER ₹20L

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Commissionerate Police arrested Wednesday three cops for allegedly 'stealing' more than ₹20 lakh while conducting a raid at a hotel here. The three have been identified as havildar Dillip Mallick and constables Sandeep Prusty and Prafulla Bhuyan.

Sources said that Kamala Saha, a businessman of Karanjia in Mayurbhanj district, had lent ₹10 lakh to Maheshwar Sahu. However, the latter then hatched a plan to dupe Kamala of rupees one crore on the pretext of a lucrative scheme. Maheshwar convinced Kamala to invest in the scheme.

Accordingly Kamala arrived here with 40 packets of currencies (each containing ₹2.5 lakh). He was supposed to give the money to the accused in a hotel

at Airfield police station area.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided the hotel and nabbed all the five persons, including the victim. The cops also seized 31 packets containing the cash. However, during interrogation, police learnt that Kamala had 40 packets in his possession. They found that the three cops were allegedly involved in 'stealing' nine packets. So the three cops were also booked and arrested. The nine 'stolen' packets were found in possession of the three cops.

Sources said that the three accused cops had not expected the victim to blurt out the truth. They had tried to pass off Kamala as one of the associates of Maheshwar and involved in the fraud. However, Kamala pointed out that the stacks of notes were missing and it was at his insistence, the police interrogated their colleagues and the truth emerged.

Indian Covid-19 variant in 17 nations: WHO

THE B.1.617 TYPE HAS MORE TRANSMISSIBLE QUALITIES LEADING TO THE RAPID RISE IN CASES

AGENCIES

New York, April 28: The World Health Organisation (WHO) said Tuesday that a variant of Covid-19 feared to be contributing to a surge in coronavirus cases in India has been found in over a dozen countries. The UN health agency said Tuesday that the B.1.617 variant of Covid-19 was first found in India. It had been detected in over 1,200 sequences uploaded to the GISAID open-access database 'from at least 17 countries'.

"Most sequences were uploaded from India, the United Kingdom, USA and Singapore," the WHO said in its weekly epidemiological update on the pandemic. The WHO recently listed B.1.617 - which counts several sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics - as a 'variant of interest'. But so far it has stopped short of de-



IN DIRE NEED OF HELP: Unable to get a bed, a Covid-19 patient undergoes treatment in a tempo at Ahmedabad

claring it a 'variant of concern'. That label would indicate that it is more dangerous than the original version of the virus by for instance being more transmissible, deadly or able

to dodge vaccine protections. India is facing surging new cases and deaths in the pandemic, and fears are rising that the variant could be contributing to the unfolding catastrophe.

For the past 6-7 days, India has been witnessing an explosion in new infections with more than three lakh cases reported on a daily basis. It has taken the global tally of coronavirus patients to 147.7 million, the UN said.

The WHO acknowledged that its preliminary modelling based on sequences submitted to GISAID indicates "that B.1.617 has a higher growth rate than other circulating variants in India, suggesting potential increased transmissibility".

It stressed that other variants circulating at the same time were also showing increased transmissibility, and that the combination 'may be playing a role in the current resurgence in India'. "Indeed, studies have highlighted that the spread of the second wave has been much faster than the first," the WHO said.

It highlighted though that 'other drivers' could be contributing to the

COVISHIELD RATE SLASHED

NEW DELHI: Serum Institute of India's (SII) Covishield will cost states ₹300 instead of ₹400, CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted Wednesday. He called the reduction of prices a 'philanthropic gesture'. "As a philanthropic gesture on behalf of Serum Institute of India, I hereby reduce the price to the states from ₹400 to ₹300 per dose, effective immediately; this will save thousands of crores of state funds going forward. This will enable more vaccinations and save countless lives," Poonawalla wrote in his tweet.

surge, including lax adherence to public health measures as well as mass gatherings. "Further investigation is needed to understand the relative contribution of these factors," WHO said.

leisure



TIMOTHEE'S CHEEKY CAPTION AMUSES FANS AND FRIENDS

Actor Timothee Chalamet grabbed attention with the cheeky caption he wrote on his new social media post, drawing reactions from fans and friends. He shared a picture where a live-action figure is seen sitting in front of a big screen. He captioned it: "I've been playing with myself all day."

BRITNEY SPEARS TO OPEN UP ON CONSERVATORSHIP

Singer Britney Spears is all set to speak at the court hearing regarding the status of her conservatorship. Britney has been under a conservatorship imposed by her father since her breakdown 12 years ago.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are keenly interested in supernatural and occult phenomena, and today you will indulge in this hobby. You may buy a glossy hard-bound book on tantra or other paranormal things. However, Ganesh warns you to use the knowledge that you gain only for peaceful purposes.

TAURUS
There is a strong likelihood of some dispute or misunderstanding cropping up between you and your parents. This, Ganesh assures, could easily be resolved through a positive, meaningful dialogue. You will be clear, coherent and persuasive in your communications.

GEMINI
Today, you will decide to become a bit more conscious about your health. You may or may not join a gym or measure your calories, but you will definitely sit up and take notice of your lifestyle and unhealthy food habits, predicts Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, you will be extremely impulsive and spontaneous, feels Ganesh. You better get rid of your negative thoughts and beliefs and start taking charge of things at hand. Also, stop focussing so much on the pitfalls, and start working.

LEO
If one were to put an earnest spirit and a frank attitude together, the result would be a Leo: it's like your hallmark. And with qualities like these in your kitty, don't be surprised if you happen to reach a milestone or two today.

VIRGO
The booster rockets of your ambitions and spirit to work will kick in at the maximum today. Seek recreation after a hard day's work and look to relax at private parties, social-dos and even weddings, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Expect some annoyance from the 'man in the chair', or people in charge who may be looking towards throwing a wench in your way. But know that it is just a blip on the radar. Your fortune is too powerful for anyone to affect it negatively.

SCORPIO
The crown jewel of your character will be your supreme confidence today. Try to pick up tasks that require Herculean efforts, and you shall come close to achieving them, predicts Ganesh. Your nerves and buoyant nature will be ineffective and also leave people awestruck.

SAGITTARIUS
The day may pan out to be more challenging than you had anticipated. An independent free bird as you Archers are, you may find reality irritating to find your hands tied up in unpleasant money matters. But, then that's a part of life; put in your best to overcome any situation you come across.

CAPRICORN
You are armed with good communication skills, it helps you convince the most adamant of those around you. But, you'll need to hone this talent once again, says Ganesh. You'll look into heart of the matter and find the answers you have been searching for.

AQUARIUS
Sometimes it feels like you are stuck in a quicksand, and there is none out there to pull you out. But, the independent Aquarius is capable of dealing with adversities alone. And, that tendency shall hold you in a good stead even today.

PISCES
The mundane routine of daily life will finally catch up with you, and you will feel the urge to take a break and travel somewhere. And a break is well deserved considering the number of hours you have slaved over your current projects.

Ajay Devgn helps set up Covid ICU in Shivaji Park

Mumbai: Actor Ajay Devgn, along with a few colleagues of the film fraternity, have pitched in with help for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to set up an emergency medical unit at Shivaji Park in the city.

The municipal body has converted Bharat Scouts and Guides Hall in the Park into a 20-bed Covid-19 facility, with ventilators, oxygen support and para monitors. Ajay contributed funds for the effort through his social service wing NY Foundations.

Besides Ajay, filmmakers Luv Ranjan, Boney Kapoor, Anand Pandit, Rajneesh Khanuja, Leena Yadav and Ashim Bajaj, besides Sameer Nair, Deepak Dhar and Rishi Negi, entrepreneur Tarun Rathi and action director RP Yadav, have reportedly made a contribution of over Rs 1 crore to the Smiley Account, the business development cell of the BMC.

"It is great that Ajay Devgn supported BMC," said local Shiv Sena corporator Vishaka Raut. "It will be an extension of Hinduja Hospital," said COO Joy Chakraborty of the hospital, which will provide food, linen, medicine and man power to this emergency unit.

Mumbai: Actress Shradha Kapoor Wednesday uploaded an Instagram picture of her brother Siddhant donating plasma, and urged all to do the same.

"My bro @siddhantkapoor just donated plasma. Urge all those who are eligible to do same please," wrote Shradha with a picture of Siddhant donating plasma, flashing a victory sign and a grin for the camera.

Siddhant had tested Covid positive in December. After the required time gap, he decided to donate his plasma to help others fight the disease.

Siddhant too uploaded the same picture and requested people eligible for plasma donation not to hold back from doing so.

Chandigarh: Actor Jimmy Shergill and National award winning director Eeshwar Nivas were among 35 booked for flouting Covid-19 lockdown rules while shooting in Punjab's Ludhiana, police said Wednesday.

They were shooting for the web series *Your Honor*, a remake of an Israeli web show, in a private school without permission and following Covid appropriate behaviour.

A case was registered against them Tuesday night. A crew of 150 members was shooting at a set at around 8 pm, two hours after the curfew to contain the virus came into effect, when the police raided the place.

Nivas, along with two others, was arrested but later granted bail. A case has been registered under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 of the Epidemic Diseases Act.

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut completed 15 years in the Hindi film industry Wednesday. However, she was trolled when she drew comparisons with superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

Kangana, who made her Bollywood debut in 2006 with Anurag Basu's *Gangster*, tagged herself and Shah Rukh as the "biggest success stories ever" on Twitter.

What drew flak from neizens was her assertion that while "SRK was from Delhi, convent educated and his parents were involved in films", she came from a "remote village" in Himachal Pradesh, "did not know a single word of English" and had "no education".

She tweeted: "15 years ago *Gangster* released today, Shahrukh Khan ji and mine are the biggest success stories ever but SRK was from Delhi, convent educated and his parents were involved in films, I did not know a single word of English, no education, came from a remote village of HP and 1/2."

"Every step was a battle starting with my own father and grandfather, who made my life miserable, and yet 15 years later after so much success still every day is a fight for survival but totally worth it, thank you everyone."

The trolling began soon after she posted the tweet. "You don't even deserve taking ur name in a same flow with shah rukh khan," wrote a user.

Another wrote: "Kuch bhi. Shahrukh touched the sky. Your success story goes from ground to ceiling fan and then full speed in the dustbin. Sanghi, you didn't study because you wanted fame at any cost. Like now. Jobless and hopeless, but the urge for fame is making you write crap on twitter."

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Shradha urges people to donate plasma



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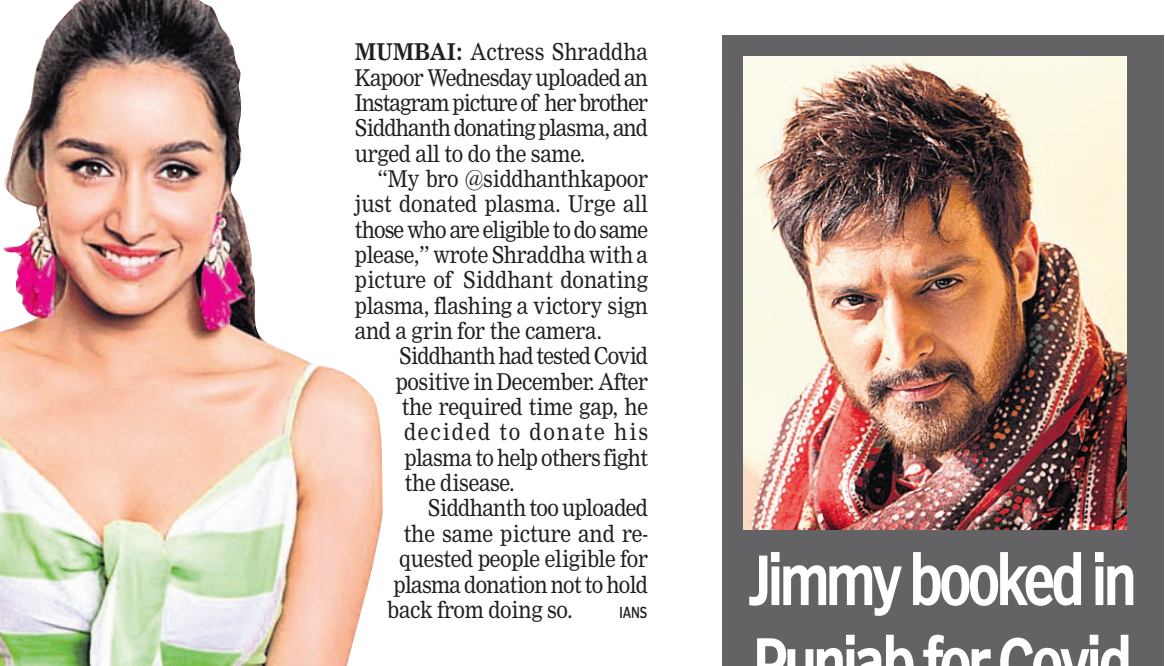
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Jimmy booked in Punjab for Covid rule violations

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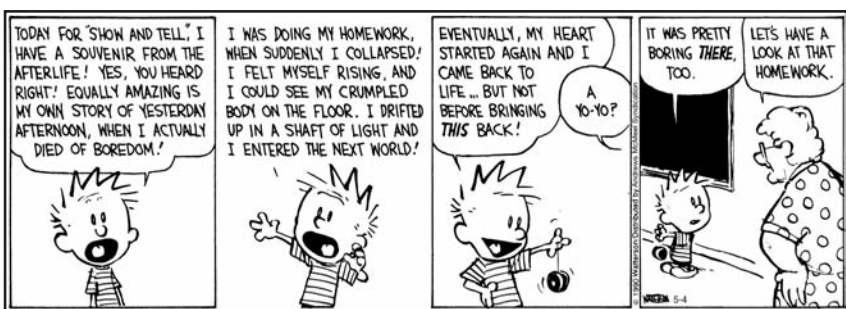
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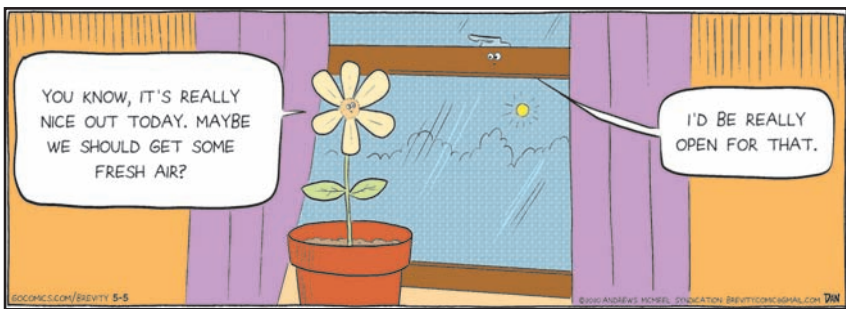
PEANUTS



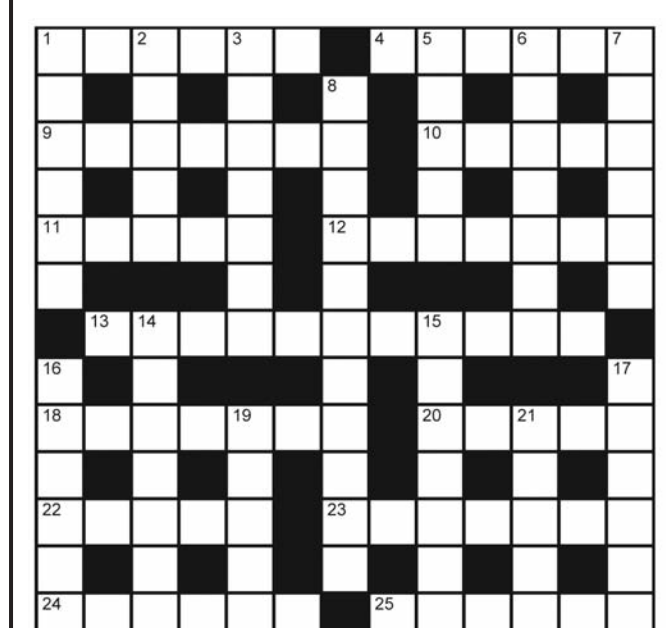
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



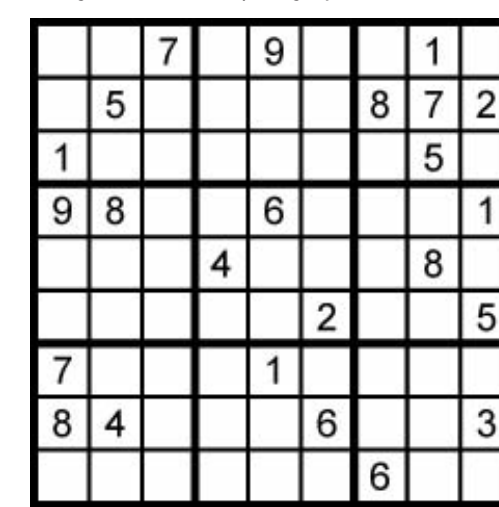
FUN post CROSSWORD



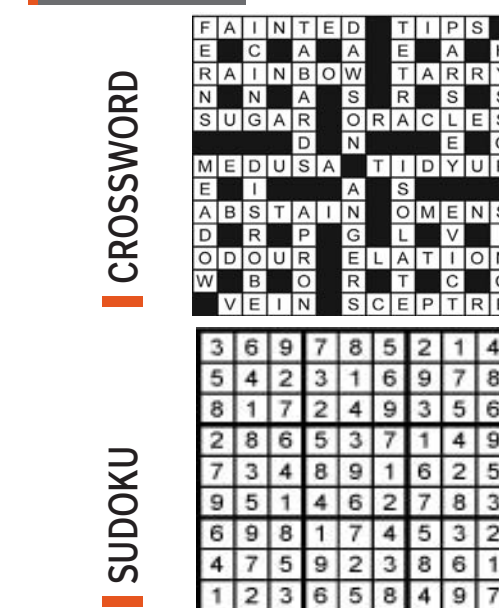
- Across**
- 1 Airport necessity
 - 4 Cask
 - 9 "Ode on a ___ Um" (Keats)
 - 10 Tells jokes
 - 11 Bounding main
 - 12 Cotacachi's place
 - 13 Chips, to the Brits (6,5)
 - 18 Goofball
 - 20 Words to remember
 - 22 Assists, in a crime
 - 23 On the way (2,5)
 - 24 Ski downhill
 - 25 Building material
 - Down**
 - 1 Area
 - 2 Family girl
 - 3 Town on the Rhone
 - 5 Pear variety
 - 6 What's left over
 - 7 Sheen
 - 8 Sneaky
 - 14 Web site command
 - 15 Guilt feelings
 - 16 Depth charge targets (1-5)
 - 17 Packing a wallop
 - 19 Sanctuary in the Gobi
 - 21 Hosiery shade

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

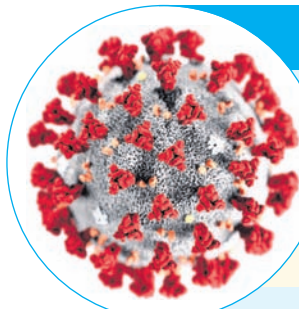
downtown

OCCUPANCY IN COVID HOSPITALS



Total Covid beds	10,227
Occupied	2,965
Total ICU, HDU, NICU beds	2,020
Occupied	1,085
Total ventilators	701
Total ventilators in use	233

COVID-19 TRACKER



	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	14,97,00,884	12,72,81,326	31,54,173
India	1,79,97,267	1,48,17,371	2,01,187
Odisha	4,28,515	3,75,721	2,017

WHOPPING 8,386 NEW CASES; TOLL UP BY 10



PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Odisha recorded a steep rise in Covid-19 cases Wednesday as 8,386 people tested positive, a Health and Family Welfare department official said.

The state also reported 10 more deaths, taking the toll to 2,017, he said. With the detection of the new cases, the state's tally surged to 4,28,515, he added. The new cases were detected from 42,401 samples tested Tuesday.

Of the new infections, 4,781 were reported from the quarantine centres, while 3,605 were local contact cases. After reporting 6,000-plus cases for the last six days, the state witnessed a sudden spike, breaching the 8,000-mark.

As many as 19 of the 30 districts have reported more than 100 fresh cases in the past 24 hours with Khurda registering the highest number of 1,840 cases followed by Sundargarh (933), Cuttack (496), Jharsuguda (433), Nabarangpur (388), Bolangir (358) and Angul (347). Puri and Rayagada reported three deaths each, while one patient each died in Boudh, Ganjam, Khurda and Sundargarh. There are 50,724 active cases in the state at present. So far, 3,75,721 patients have recovered from the disease.

Meanwhile, with the rapid rise in Covid cases, the state government has decided to introduce an online real-time bed management system to get an accurate picture of the availability of beds for Covid

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Puri and Rayagada reported three deaths each, while one patient each died in Boudh, Ganjam, Khurda and Sundargarh

patients in different hospitals across the coastal state.

Official sources said that steps are being taken to increase the number of beds, intensive care units at medical college and hospitals as well as at other Covid hospitals. All the new private hospitals are being converted into Covid hospitals.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday reviewed the Covid situation in the state and directed the district Collectors, and SPs to assess the ground zero situation and chalk out flawless schemes to combat the virus.

While appealing the people to behave responsibly and follow the Covid protocols strictly, Naveen welcomed the decision of several trade associations across the state to reduce the timings of the shops and markets in view of the rising infections.

Puri to get 150-bed Covid hospital soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, April 28: In view of rising Covid-19 infections, the Puri district administration has decided to set up a dedicated Covid-19 hospital with 150 beds here soon, district Collector Samarth Verma said Wednesday.

The proposed Covid care facility will be professionally managed by SUM Hospital of Bhubaneswar. It has been decided that the hospital will have provision for 40 intensive care units (ICUs) and four ventilators for better treatment of Covid-19 patients.

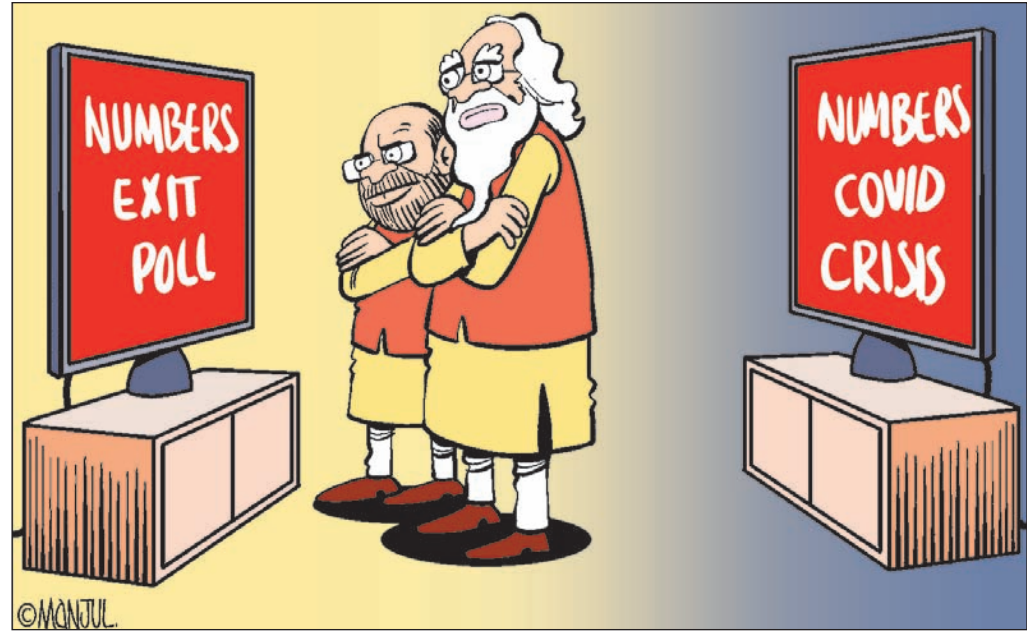
The hospital will have provision for 40 ICUs and 4 ventilators for better treatment of Covid-19 patients

Notably, five more servitors of Puri Srimandir who had attended Kumbh Mela tested positive for the highly infectious virus April 26.

With these five servitors, the number of temple servitors contracting the virus has increased to 47. Moreover, 34 others who are associated with the temple have also tested positive for the virus.

Kumbh Mela has posed a big challenge for Puri residents. A total of 127 people have returned from the festival held at Haridwar by April 26. Out of them, 36 are Srimandir servitors.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



2 MCL employees in CBI net for bribery

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 28: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested an assistant revenue inspector (ARI) and a manager of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), Talcher for demanding ₹1 lakh bribe.

According to the investigating agency, a case was registered on a complaint alleging that ARI Lokanath Naik and manager Rabindra Kumar Padhi demanded



bribe of ₹1 lakh from the complainant for releasing the sanctioned compensation amount of ₹5,78,000 against acquisition of land in the name of complainant's father by the MCL.

It was further alleged that the accused asked the complainant to pay

bribe of ₹70,000 as first instalment and the balance amount after the release of compensation. After negotiations, the accused reduced the bribe amount from ₹1 lakh to ₹70,000 and agreed to accept ₹20,000 as the first instalment.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused while accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 from the complainant. The CBI also said that it recovered incriminating documents and articles from the offices and residence of both the accused.

Medical oxygen supply brought under ESMA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: In an aim to ensure smooth supply of Covid-19 patients, the state government has brought oxygen supply under the Odisha Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1988. The Home department issued an order to this effect Wednesday. The order would remain in force for a period of six months.

"It is very much necessary to prohibit strikes in the services of manufacturing, filling and transportation/distribution of liquid medical oxygen by the manufacturers, transporters and fillers during the current Covid-19 pandemic situation. The government is committed to ensure smooth manufacturing, filling and transporta-



tion/distribution of liquid medical oxygen in the state and avoid any hindrance/dislocation in such services," read the order.

Therefore, exercising the powers conferred under the Odisha ESMA, the state government has prohibited strikes by the service providers of liquid medical oxygen.

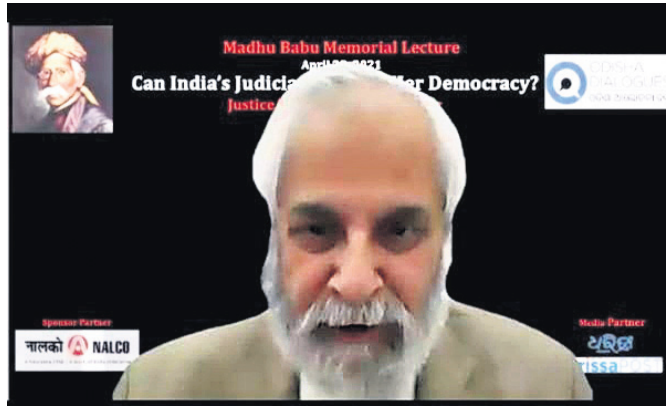
Democracy under assault: Justice Lokur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan Bhimarao Lokur, Wednesday, said that democracy in India is under assault in recent times.

His statement came at Madhu Babu Memorial Lecture titled 'Can India's Judiciary Rescue Her Democracy?' organised by 'Odisha Dialogues' on the occasion of eminent lawyer and social reformer Madhusudan Das's birth anniversary. Justice Lokur said, "As we all know there are four pillars of democracy in India - the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Press - democracy in the country is under assault in recent times and many questions were raised on the Election Commission's role in conducting free and fair elections."

He also expressed concern over the attacks on right to free speech and protest and cited many exam-



ples wherein citizens faced sedition charges and were dubbed 'anti-national' for expressing their thoughts. He also talked about the irregularities committed by national and regional parties.

According to him, out of eight national parties, only two had filed audit reports and that too after the

expiry of the last date.

The founder-director of Odisha Dialogues, Rajesh Mahapatra, said, "There couldn't be a day more befitting than the birth anniversary of Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, the 28th of April, to observe as our annual day."

In Madhu Babu's notions of

Odisha Dialogues organised Madhu Babu Memorial Lecture on the occasion of eminent lawyer and social reformer Madhusudan Das's birth anniversary

modernity, cosmopolitanism, the embrace of science, the critique of caste, women's empowerment and advocacy of the secular, Odisha Dialogues sees a 'living legacy' with which we can re-imagine Odisha for making a better world, Mahapatra added.

In this short period, Odisha Dialogues has organised nearly 30 high-quality webinars and seminars, hosted nearly 100 speakers of national and international recognition, produced half a dozen pol-

icy notes and conducted four research projects. "The speakers at our webinars included experts from diverse fields, from former World Bank Chief Economist Prof Kaushik Basu, former Chief Statistician of India Dr Pronab Sen and eminent political commentator Dr Ramachandra Guha to Odisha-based policy leaders such as the chairman of the Odisha Skill Development Authority Subroto Bagchi and former chief secretary Jugal Kishore Mohapatra.

It is soon going to be a year since the Forum for Odisha Dialogues hosted its first webinar, kicking off a series of discussions on how to rebuild Odisha post Corona, he said. In no time, the idea of such a forum seeking to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on Odisha's future caught everyone's imagination. On the occasion, a special video on Madhu Babu's legacy was also released.

Madhusudan Law College now a varsity

PNN/ AGENCIES

Cuttack, April 28: Madhusudan Law College, one of the oldest law institutes in Odisha and India, was upgraded to the status of a university Wednesday.

Named after Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, a great lawyer, statesman, industrialist, legislator, writer and social reformer of the 19th century, the institute at Cuttack will be known as Madhusudan Law University from this day, when the state observes his birth anniversary.

Professor Kamaljeet Singh, who was appointed its Vice-Chancellor, said that it is an opportunity for him to establish the institute as one of the best universities in the region.

"No institution can make any progress without the col-

The institute at Cuttack will be known as Madhusudan Law University from now onwards

lective responsibility of the society. I, therefore, appeal to all stakeholders, particularly to all former principals, teachers and students of this great institution to extend their support and cooperation for the new university," Singh said while addressing the media.

Higher Education Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo was present when the new VC took charge. The history of the institute can be traced back to 1889 when a diploma course in law was introduced in Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack.



NATIONAL EDUCATION SOCIETY FOR TRIBAL STUDENTS (NESTS)

(An autonomous organization Under Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India)
GF Gate No. 3 A Jeevan Tara building, Parliament street New Delhi, 110001

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS TEACHING STAFF SELECTION EXAM (ETSSE) – 2021

National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India is inviting online applications for the recruitment of the teaching staff viz. Principal, Vice-Principal, PGT and TGT for Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in Odisha vide its advertisement already published on 31st March 2021.

Details regarding the online application, educational qualifications, teaching experience (wherever applicable) and other eligibility criteria etc. for the ETSSE-2021 are available in the Information Bulletin, which is accessible at <https://recruitment.nta.nic.in>.

The interested and eligible domiciled candidates can apply online till (extended date) 31.05.2021 (up to 23:50 Hrs. on the above-mentioned website by submitting the prescribed application-cum-examination fees mentioned there on). The provisional post-wise vacant positions are as follows:

S. No.	Name of the Post with Subject	Vacant Positions	Category - Wise Vacant Positions					Reservation for Women (Out of total Vacancy Breakup in Column D)				
			UR	SC	ST	OBC/SBC	EWS	UR	SC	ST	OBC	EWS
A	B	C	D					E				
1	Principal	15	7	3	3	2	0	2	1	1	1	0
2	Vice Principal	11	6	2	2	1	0	2	1	1	0	0
3	Post Graduate Teacher											
	I ENGLISH	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	II PHYSICS	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	III CHEMISTRY	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	IV MATHS	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	V IT	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
4	Trained Graduate Teacher											
	I ENGLISH	40	20	9	11	0	0	5	3	4	0	0
	II Hindi	6	0	1	5	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
	III MATHS	45	26	10	9	0	0	9	3	3	0	0
	IV SCIENCE	6	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	V SOCIAL STUDIES	9	1	1	7	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
	Total	144	60	28	53	3	0	18	10	21	1	0

The candidates are advised to keep visiting the official website of National Testing Agency (<https://recruitment.nta.nic.in>) for the latest updates.

Sd-
Commissioner, NESTS

Govt draws action plan for crop diversification

A TARGET WAS SET TO ACHIEVE NON-PADDY CULTIVATION IN 60% OF THE MLIP AYACUT AREAS OF THE STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: With an objective to encourage farmers to cultivate cash crops, the state government has started an ambitious initiative of crop diversification in mega lift irrigation point (MLIP) ayacut areas of Odisha.

An action plan in this regard for the coming kharif season was discussed at a high-level meeting held on digital mode under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra Wednesday.

A target was set to achieve non-paddy cultivation in 60 per cent of the MLIP ayacut areas in the state during the coming cropping season.

District-wise target was set for cultivation of non-paddy crops as per the inputs received from different districts. Targets were set to achieve 100 per cent crop diversification in Ganjam district and more than 70 per cent diversification in the districts like Bargarh, Gajapati, Koraput, Malkanagiri and Nabarangpur.



Similarly, more than 50 per cent crop diversification target was set for Kalahandi, Rayagada and Sambalpur districts.

Crop-wise yield rate, cost of production and net profit for non-paddy products were also discussed in the meeting where it was decided to make the farmers aware of it through intensive campaigns.

Emphasising on the positive impact of crop diversification on agricultural sector, Mahapatra directed

the officials to enhance non-paddy cultivation in MLIP areas during the ensuing kharif season.

Agriculture Secretary Suresh Kumar Vashishth said, "The total ayacut area of the MLIPs are around 1,22,835 hectares. As per the present irrigation design, each outlet is programmed to irrigate 20 hectares. The actual crop area and cropping pattern of these ayacut areas have been assessed. Arrangements have been made through agencies like

Nafed and Markfed for procurement of the non-paddy produces." Agriculture department director Muthu Kumar said that the directorate of horticulture is preparing a web portal for market engagement and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) operations. The system for marketing through E-NAM is also being strengthened. Agriculture Production Commissioner Raj Kumar Sharma advised the officials to undertake intensive awareness campaign and

District-wise target was set for cultivation of non-paddy crops as per inputs received from different districts

Targets were set to achieve 100% crop diversification in Ganjam district and more than 70% diversification in Bargarh, Gajapati, Koraput, Malkanagiri and Nabarangpur

Similarly, more than 50% crop diversification target was set for Kalahandi, Rayagada and Sambalpur districts

engagements with farmers for bringing about real changes on the ground level.

Water Resources secretary Anu Garg apprised the meeting that the ayacuts would be redesigned and water supply would be regulated as per the requirements of non-paddy crops.

Further, the Chief Secretary directed the officials to assess the annual non-paddy requirement for utilisation in different programmes like PDS, MDM and ICDS supplementary nutrition programmes in residential school hostels.

The Agriculture department was also asked to explore the marketing facilities of non-paddy produces through e-NAM, Markfed and online marketing systems both in the government and private sectors.

Presently, non-paddy produces are being procured through agricultural primary cooperative societies. The proposal for involving women SHGs and FPOs in the procurement process was given in principle approval by the Chief Secretary.

2nd wave rises, falls sharply: RMRC dir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Director of Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC), Sanghamitra Pati Wednesday shed lights on the second wave of Covid-19 and asked people to abide by the safety protocol of the pandemic.

She attempted to allay the fears of the people about Covid-19 and answered several questions related to isolation and testing and management. The programme was organised by the state Health department virtually.

"Worldwide the second wave is considered more infectious than the first one. It is marked by sharp rise and sharp fall. More infections are attributed to the new variants of Covid-19. Moreover, people at large have also become lax when it comes to Covid-appropriate behaviour. The combined effect now is higher cases of the disease."

She also said that people need to go back to the first wave compliance of Covid safety protocol. To break the chain of transmis-



sions, the role of the citizens and government are important too, she said.

When asked about the ideal time to go for testing after coming in contact with a Covid positive person, she said, "When a person comes in contact with a Covid patient, he/she should get himself/herself tested when symptoms come up or the best is to test after five days of getting in touch with the infected person. If the person tests negative it is unlikely that the person is infected."

On the issue of vaccinated persons and their vulnerability, she said, "Those who have taken two doses of vaccines and came in contact with infected persons also need to take measures of isolation and testing."

Bed strength in City to be doubled: BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: With an exponential rise in Covid-19 cases being observed in Capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Wednesday, stated that it would double the capacity of beds here.

Informing about the present bed capacity, BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary stated that there are about 3,000 beds in the hospitals here. "Steps are being taken to increase the bed capacity in Covid hospitals by 3,000 in about 10 days. At present, there are around 3,000 beds in Covid hospitals of which 50 per cent are occupied," he said.

Meanwhile, informing about home isolation cases, Chaudhary said more than 90 per cent of Covid positive cases are in home isolation and BMC is providing essential drugs to them. Sources said that out of daily positive cases being identified, about 50-100 patients are being shifted to Covid hospitals.

The BMC Commissioner also urged people to come forward for testing. "It is being observed that many symptomatic people are doing self-treatment and are not getting tested to avoid social stigma. I request them to get themselves tested at the private and public testing centres so that they could be treated accordingly," he said.

Don't brag about vax drive sans stock: Cong

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: The state unit of Congress Wednesday came down heavily on the state government over the delayed vaccination for the new list of beneficiaries and asked the government to refrain from doing publicity on the issue when there was no stock of Covid-19 vaccines.

First bring your stock, register people and then talk about vaccination. Do not play with the lives of people. This is a matter of life and death

SURESH ROUTRAY | JATNI MLA

Tripura, Punjab, Haryana and Chhattisgarh have announced the move before Odisha did."

The Jatni legislator also added, "When you do not have stock of Covid-19 vaccines, why are you doing the publicity of providing free vaccines to all. First bring your stock, register people and then talk about vaccination. Do not play with the lives of people. This is a matter of life and death."

The Congress leader also said that the manufacturers have not committed any supply date to them but the state government is bragging about the vaccination drive.

Routray also supported measures like shutdown in the state to contain the sky-rocketing infections.

"Covid cases are rising in the state at an alarming rate. I support the move of imposing weekend shutdowns. Let there be lockdown for all the days in a week. In the latest sample testing, 2,313 more cases have been detected across the state as compared to yesterday," the MLA said.

UPHOLDING TRADITION



Artistes perform during Sahi Jata at Jagannath Ballav Mutt in Puri, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

SUPREME COURT IMPOSES ₹50K COST ON ODISHA

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 28: The Supreme Court, Wednesday, imposed a cost of ₹50,000 on Odisha for the delay in filing a special leave petition in the apex court to challenge the order of the Orissa High Court in a case.

A bench of Justices KM Joseph and UU Lalit asked the state of

Odisha to deposit ₹50,000 at the Supreme Court registry within four weeks. The bench said that the amount should be paid as cost to a respondent in the case.

The matter pertains to termination of Kamalini Khilar, a primary school teacher in Bhadrak district. Khilar was terminated from her post by the state government fol-

lowing an order of the Orissa Administrative Tribunal to appoint another candidate, who had qualified for the post but did not get appointment letter from the department. The state government dispensed the service of Khilar citing that she would not have given the appointment had the other candidate been served the appointment letter.

Khilar challenged her termination at the OAT, which directed the state government to reinstate her by creating a supernumerary post if necessary.

The state government challenged the order of the tribunal before the High Court. The HC quashed the OAT direction saying, "However, since the vacancy is available, the

petitioners will give appointment to Kamalini Khilar against one of such vacancies available in Bhadrak district within a period of four weeks," the HC ruled.

Significantly, the Supreme Court held that the termination of the service of Khilar was unavoidable in the light of the binding order of the tribunal. The apex court set

aside the order of the High Court which directed the state government to reinstate Khilar.

"We make it clear that if the cost of ₹50,000 ordered as condition to condone delay in filing the SLP is not paid then the judgement of the High Court will stand and this judgement of the apex court will stand recalled," the apex court said.

Utkal University pays tribute to Manoj Das

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Utkal University Wednesday paid homage to eminent writer Manoj Das, who passed away in Pondicherry Tuesday.

Floral tributes were paid to Das at the reading room of Parija Library on the university premises. The reading room had been named after the eminent writer last year.

In a message to Shri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, Utkal University Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya expressed her deepest condolences over the demise of Das.

Utkal University, the oldest university in Odisha, had honoured Das with D.Litt (Honoris Causa) during the varsity's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The renowned writer had delivered talks as part of a lecture series in February 2019, sources said.

Since then, the cherished memories of the legendary writer have been reverberating in the hearts of the students and teachers' community.

Das will continue to inspire the millions through his contribution to the field of literature, varsity sources said.

7 places record over 42 degrees C

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Seven places of the state recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius or above Wednesday.

Boudh recorded a maximum daytime temperature of 43.2 degrees Celsius to become the hottest place of the state Wednesday. Jharsuguda was the second hottest place with 42.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Bolangir (42.5 degrees), Sambalpur

(42.3 degrees) and Angul (42.1 degrees) whereas Hirakud and Titlagarh recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius.

Apart from the above seven places, another eight places have recorded a day temperature of 40 degrees or above. The places are: Sundargarh (41.5), Talcher (41.7), Bhawanipatna (41.5), Phulbani (40), Malkangiri (40.5), Sonepur (41), Nayagarh (41) and Paralakhemundi (40).

Min releases books on road safety

BHUBANESWAR: Commerce & Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera Wednesday released two books - 'Road Accidents in Odisha- 2019' and 'Integrated Road Safety Action Plan' - in the presence of Principal Secretary of the department Madhu Sudan Padhi and Transport Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda. The books have been compiled by the department's Deputy Director Tapan Mishra. Reasons of occurrence of accidents, list of black spots in the districts, time of occurrence of accidents and other relevant information have been incorporated in 'Road Accidents in Odisha-2019'. Likewise, 'Integrated Road Safety Action Plan' has been developed with a target to reduce fatalities by 20 per cent every year.

Unnati Bhawan gets Gold Rating from IGBC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: The Unnati Bhawan at Satya Nagar here has been certified with Gold Rating by Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) under the Green Existing Building Rating System. It is the first government building in the state to receive Gold Rating from the IGBC.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had inaugurated the Unnati Bhawan in February last year. The building with a built-up area of 93,250 square feet has been designated to house various organisations under the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department. The building has several special features including rainwater harvesting system, wastewater treatment system and solar power plant. Designed by Akshay K Beuria and Shailaja of Designers Forum, Bhubaneswar, the building has housed organisations like OWSSB,



File photo of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurating Unnati Bhawan

WATCO, JAGA Mission and OUHM. The building has been designed as a smart building with contemporary look and modern facilities. Besides, the building has several unique features in its design and operation to ensure sustainability. The building is highly energy efficient with Energy Performance Index (EPI) of 54 kWh, roof-top solar power plant with 110 kw in-

stalled capacity, Root Zone wastewater treatment system to reuse the treated water in landscaping, 100 per cent rainwater harvesting system through underground recharge pit, preservation of existing trees through sensitive site planning and solid waste management system through appropriate collection, storage and disposal facilities.

The IGBC, a part of the

The building has several special features including rainwater harvesting system, wastewater treatment system and solar power plant

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), was formed in 2001. The vision of the council is to enable a sustainable built environment for all and facilitate India to be one of the global leaders in this regard by 2025.

The IGBC green building rating system brings together a host of sustainable practices and solutions to reduce the environmental impacts. Green building design provides an integrated approach considering life cycle impacts of the resources used.

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Farmers shed tears over onion glut

LACK OF MARKETING AND STORAGE HAS HIT FARMERS IN KALAHANDI DISTRICT ON TOP OF A BUMPER CROP RESULTING FROM FARMING OF THE TUBER OVER FAR LARGER AREAS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koksara, April 28: Onion farmers in this block in Kalahandi district are a disappointed lot as they have failed to get right price for their crop due to lack of storage and marketing facilities.

There is an increase in onion cultivation in this block. Reports said farmers in Gotomunda, Sanapodaguda, Temra, Kashibahal, Pupgha, Mahima, Gambhariguda, Badapodaguda, Baradanga panchayats cultivate the cash crop for a long time.

According to private estimates, over 9,500 quintals of onion were harvested under this block this year. However, farmers are forced to sell their produce at a price of Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per quintal to local traders due to lack of marketing and conservation facilities.

Farmers alleged they carry on cultivation even though they do not get incentives and seeds from the state government at the right time. Farmers alleged this year they were forced to buy seeds and fertilisers from the open market at higher prices due to their unavailability in government-approved stores.



THE GOVERNMENT RECORD SAYS ONION CULTIVATION WAS TAKEN UP ON 14 HECTARES, BUT IN REALITY THE CULTIVATION WAS TAKEN UP OVER 50 HECTARES BEYOND THE GOVERNMENT ESTIMATE

FARMERS CLAIMED THIS SITUATION COULD BE AVOIDED IF THE GOVERNMENT TAKES CARE TO ESTABLISH A COLD STORAGE IN THE BLOCK. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COLD STORAGE WILL HELP IN SOLVING ONION SCARCITY IN THE STATE, THEY ADDED

Observers claimed farmers do not get right price for their harvest corresponding to their labour and money. According to data available from Koksara horticulture department, 51 farmers in the block

were given 105 kg of seeds in 2019-20 fiscal. Last year, the harvest was 130 to 150 quintals per hectare while the total production was over 2000 quintal.

The seed supply went down in

2020-21 fiscal as 53 farmers were supplied with 70 kg of seeds. However, that failed to stop the farmers in achieving their goal as 170 to 190 quintals of onion was harvested per hectare of land. A horticulture official said that 53 farmers have cultivated onions on 14 hectare of land but the harvest was over 2660 quintal this year.

The government record says onion cultivation was taken up on 14 hectares but in reality the cultivation was taken up over 50 hectares beyond the government estimate.

Farmers claimed this situation could be avoided if the government takes care to establish a cold storage in the block. The establishment of cold storage will help in solving onion scarcity in the state, they added.

When contacted, Tapan Kumar Patra, assistant horticulture officer in Koksara said onion seeds are being supplied to farmers at subsidised rates while some farmers are being given training in storing onions for a long period. Moreover, the state government has also a provision of subsidy for construction of small conservation chambers for onions for the benefit of farmers.

BSF jawan dies by suicide at Rayagada camp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, April 28: A BSF jawan Wednesday died by suicide at Kashipur camp in Rayagada district, police said. According to sources, the deceased was identified as Dillip Mai from 68th battalion of BSF. He killed himself with his service rifle.

A loud noise of a shot being fired was heard in the forenoon and it came from the direction where Dillip resided in the camp.

His colleagues immediately rushed to the spot and found him lying dead in a pool of blood, following which the head of the battalion informed local police.

The actual motive behind the jawan taking the extreme step is yet to be ascertained. However, a family feud is being suspected as one of the prime reasons.

Dillip had married nearly four months ago. However, sources said since his marriage, Dillip never went home. His colleagues found this development a bit surprising.

Police have recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. A detailed probe is underway and the police are looking into both professional and personal angles.

6 drug peddlers held

296 GM OF BROWN SUGAR SEIZED IN BHADRAK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 28: Despite repeated raids, drug smuggling continues to flourish in Bhadrak district. Police and excise officials conducted separate raids over last 24 hours and arrested six people involved in brown sugar trade. They seized 296 gm of brown sugar from them, a report said.

Addressing a presser at Bhadrak rural police station Wednesday, police revealed they have arrested four drug peddlers including two women near the railway over bridge on the Charampa-Dhamra road. Police seized 265 gm of brown sugar from their possession. The contraband is valued at Rs 26 lakh.

Among the arrested are two women hailing from Charampa area. The accused were identified as Bishal Sharma, Seikh Babul, Barsarani Mallick and Bachan Mallick.

Police seized a bike and cell phones from them. "Further investigation into drug peddling is on. Police are looking into who else are involved in the racket," said ASP Jatinder Panda.

Similarly, officials of the central intelligence wing of the excise department had seized 31 gm of brown sugar from people in

Locals alleged that repeated raids by police and excise officials have cut no ice with drug peddling in some parts of Bhadrak

Bhadrak bypass area Tuesday. The accused were identified as Lambodar Nayak and Sushant Kumar Roul of Tihidi. A case was registered against the duo.

Locals alleged that despite raids by police and excise officials, there is no let-up in drug peddling in some parts of Bhadrak. It is alleged that brown sugar is being supplied from West Bengal via Jaleswar in Balasore.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohan Lal Agrawal age about 59 years, S/o. Late Amial Agrawal, R/o- At/P.O.- Sohela, Dist.- Bargarh, declare that I had purchased a land of area Ac 3.28 through RSD No.-1042 dt. 26.05.2004 from Santosh Kumar Patra, S/o. Antaryami Patra of Mouza/P.S.- Sohela, Dist.-Bargarh & now I am recorded owner as Khata No.- 325/1139.

That, I had lost the previous linked document having Original RSD. No. 2650 dt. 03.12.1998, RSD. No. 1617 dt. 21.07.1997 & RSD. No. 2569 dt. 09.10.1995 somewhere at Sohela, P.S.-Sohela, Dist.- Bargarh since five year ago. Further I declared that I had never mortgaged the above land/R.S.D in any Bank/F.I. Now I am applying for a loan from Bank of Baroda Bargarh Branch, Bargarh by mortgaging the same. If anybody has any objection may kindly draw a notice before Bank of Baroda, Bargarh Branch within 30 days of publication of this notice. Later on no objection or claim will be acceptable in any circumstances.

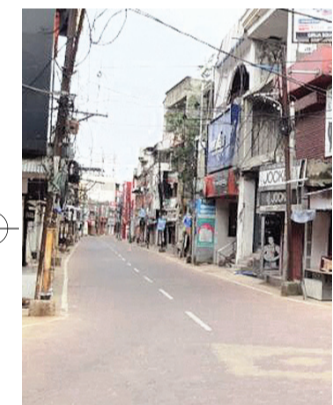
Mohan Lal Agrawal
Sohela, Bargarh

Shops to remain closed in Ganjam from 2 pm to 5 am for next 10 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 28: In view of the rising cases of Covid-19, different trade associations in Ganjam Wednesday decided to keep shops and marketplaces across urban areas in the district closed from 2 pm to 5 am for next 10 days, starting April 28.

The district administration has welcomed the preventive measure adopted by the traders' associations to keep the virus at bay. The administration at the same time urged all residents of Ganjam district to support the initiative.



Taking to his official Twitter handle, Ganjam Collector and District Magistrate Vijay Amruta Kulange wrote Wednesday, "We welcome the steps taken by the merchants' association, vendors' association in urban areas to keep closing of shops from 2 pm to 5 am for next 10 days. We request all people to support this initiative. Together we can win this battle against COVID @CMO_Odisha @HFWDodisha."

In another tweet, Kulange said, "We request to follow it from 28th April to 9th May 2021 in all urban areas of Ganjam."

Sambalpur: Solar fencing caves in

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 28: Even though crores of rupees have been spent on solar fencing in forested areas of Sambalpur over last five years, these efforts by the forest department have served no purpose due to sub-standard work, a report said.

According to the report, man-animal conflict is usually a perennial problem in forested pockets. People live in fear as elephants often stray out of forests into human habitations and cause loss of lives and properties.

In order to alleviate the conflict, the forest department executed solar fencing around forested areas, particularly where elephant movement was quite active in 2015.

As per the scheme, strong poles along with wires were to be installed along forest borders while

BIG MONEY GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

they are to be charged with solar power in the evenings. When animals come in contact with charged wires, they get mild electric shock and return to forests.

Several such solar-fencing projects have been implemented in the last five years while over Rs 10 crore has been spent for them. At some places, wires of the fencing projects have snapped while at others fencing has completely collapsed. Locals alleged that money spent on these projects had gone down the drain.

A case in point is the solar fencing near Barle village under Sambalpur range where the department raised solar fencing for about 5 km along forest borders by spending lakhs of rupees. People in



the locality, however, said that when the project was done a year ago, people expected that life and properties could be safeguarded by the solar fencing. But the fencing has caved in, making the villages vulnerable to elephant depredation again, they lamented. They alleged that the agencies picked up by the forest department had botched up the work inside the forest.

"Quality of the work has been compromised and commission has been shared. Such projects are awarded to agencies willing to pay commission," they alleged.

On the other hand, Sambalpur DFO Dr Sanjit Kumar said the department will repair the solar fencing wherever it was damaged. "The contractor concerned has been directed to repair the work. Contractual agency usually guarantees about its work. Stern action will be taken against him if he fails to repair the fencing. All ACFs and range officers have been told to submit status report about the fencing projects," the DFO added.

At many places, elephants have uprooted fencing poles while at other places, people have pulled down the fencing to facilitate entry into forests, the DFO explained.

Admin readies quarantine centres

Migrants have started returning to Rajnagar area from hotspot states

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, April 28: Amid the spike in Covid-19 positive cases, migrants have started returning from hotspot states to Rajnagar area in Kendrapara.

The administration is on its toes, ensuring arrangements at quarantine centres at Kurunti and Talachua panchayats, a report said.

According to the report, the number of Covid-19 positive cases has touched 92 in Rajnagar. Seven people were found positive Wednesday.

The administration has decided to keep the migrants returning from hotspot states like West Bengal, Maharashtra, Delhi and Chhatishgarh in two centres.

Kurunti quarantine centre is equipped with beds and facilities to accommodate 150 migrants while the



capacity of the Talachua centre is 200. Besides, there is provision of food and safety kits for the migrants.

Meanwhile, a temporary Covid Hospital was set up on the premises of Sri Sri Jagannath Mahavidyalay.

Block officials have taken stock of the arrangements at the quarantine centres and the Covid Hospital.

As Covid cases are on the rise, the officials of the block administration and the health department have been routinely reviewing the situation in Rajnagar.

Meanwhile, Covid management teams have been formed at village level with ASHAs, Anganwadi workers and village headmen as members.

They have been told to keep watch on the migrants returning to villages and inform the administration about the people developing Covid symptoms.

BDO Rabindra Kumar Pradhan said all possible steps have been taken to deal with the Covid situation in Rajnagar.

BODIES OF COVID PATIENTS FERRIED ON CARTS, BICYCLES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh/Bolangir, April 28: Amid rising numbers in fatalities owing to Covid-19 infections, several incidents of inhuman treatment of bodies were seen in various parts of the state Wednesday.

In the first such incident at Tileibani Suguda village in Deogarh district, the body of a Covid patient was carried on a bullock cart and was finally cremated after remaining unattended for around nine hours.

According to sources, a villager named Chandrasekhar Sahu from Tileibani had tested positive for Covid-19 a few days ago. He had been put in home quarantine on being advised by doctors.

After his health condition deteriorated Tuesday afternoon, the man's family members contacted a nearby Covid care hospital. However, the man succumbed to the virus



before staff from the hospital could reach and bring him for medical treatment.

On the other hand, relatives, friends and neighbours refused to lend shoulder to the de-

ceased out of fear of infection. The family then contacted the local civic body seeking their assistance. Personnel of the civic body reached late and carried the mortal remains of

Sahu for cremation on a hand-driven carriage.

On being contacted, Deogarh Assistant Collector Kaibalya Kar admitted that cremation was delayed. "Neighbours and relatives of the deceased had initially agreed to cremate the body, but later refused to do so, which led to delay in the cremation," Kar said.

In the second incident reported from Bolangir district, the body of a man, who had succumbed to Covid-19, was seen being carried by his son on a bicycle after his relatives did not turn up to lend their shoulders.

The incident took place at Bhaludunguri village under Khaprakhol block. A man named Ayodhya Sahu (55) had also succumbed to Covid-19 at Khaprakhol health centre. Other family members including relatives refused to assist his son for cremation.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, MALKANGIRI
Tel.: 06861-231617, E-mail-eerwss_mail@nic.in, eerwssmkg@gmail.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
Bid Identification No.: RWSS_MKG_ONLINE_01/2021-22 Dated: 28.04.2021

No.O-112- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites from bidders of eligible class registered with the State Government and bidders of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government/ MES/ Railways according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for the works detailed in the table below to be eventually drawn up in P-1 contract.

1. Name of the work	Execution of 02 Nos. of works.		
2. No. of work	02 Nos.		
3. Estimated cost	Rs. 8.14 Lakhs to Rs. 33.75 Lakhs		
4. Tender paper cost	Rs. 4,000/- to Rs. 6,000/-		
5. Class of contractor	Estimated cost up to Rs. 20.00 lakhs	Estimated cost more than Rs. 20.00 lakhs & within Rs. 40.00 lakhs	Estimated cost more than Rs. 40.00 lakhs & within Rs. 300.00 lakhs
	'D' & 'C'	'C' & 'B'	'B' & 'A'
6. Period of completion	02 (Two) calendar months to 04 (Four) calendar months		
7. Critical dates			

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date of seeking tender clarification	Date of opening of bid
		From	To		
Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri	RWSS_MKG_ONLINE_01/2021-22	04.05.2021 at 09.00 A.M.	13.05.2021 upto 05.00 P.M.	10.05.2021	17.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in the e-procurement portal <https://www.tendersosia.gov.in>. Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website. Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-25044/11/0002/2122 Sd./- Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri

PANCHAYAT SAMITI, KORUKONDA
At/P.O.- Korukonda, Dist.- Malkangiri, PIN- 764082 (ODISHA)
Tel./Fax No.: 06861-238211, E-mail: ori-korukonda@nic.in
No.1227/2021 Date: 28.04.2021

TENDER CALL NOTICE NO.-02/2021-22

The Block Development Officer, Korukonda invites sealed tenders on behalf of Governor of Odisha from registered and eligible contractors of the State P.W.D. (R&B) / Water Resources / Rural Works / M.I. / C.P.W.D. for the following works eventually to be drawn up in the P.W.D. F-2 forms in conformity with the Detailed Tender Call Notice.

Sl. No.	Name of the G.P.	Name of the work	Name of the scheme / year	Amount put to tender in Rupees	Cost of tender paper	E.M.D. in Rupees (1%)	Time for completion of the work in months	Class of contractors / supplier
1	Korukonda	Construction of Labour room at CHC, Korukonda	NHM PIP 2020-21	22,28,934/-	6,000/-	22,300/-	06 (Six) calendar months	'B' & 'C'

Selling of tender paper: Panchayat Samiti, Korukonda from 30.04.2021 to 13.05.2021 office hour from 07.00 A.M. to 1.00 P.M. (Except Sunday and public holidays).

Place and date of receipt of tender paper: Panchayat Samiti, Korukonda, 30.04.2021 to 17.05.2021 through Registered / Speed Post only.

Place and date of opening of tender paper: Panchayat Samiti, Korukonda on dt.18.05.2021 at 10.00 A.M.

Mode of receipt of tender paper: Registered / Speed Post only.

The tender documents along with term and conditions thereof shall be had from panchayat Samiti, Korukonda on payment of Demand Draft/Banker Cheque in favour of B.D.O., Korukonda payable at Malkangiri branch as per the cost noted above. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Block Development Officer
Korukonda

FOCUS NEW ENERGY

THUNBERG OR GATES?



While rapid technological progress is our best hope for mitigating climate change, today's living standards in rich countries threaten both catastrophic climate change and local environmental destruction. Responsible consumer choice matters as well

Research by the World Resources Institute shows that even fast-growing sugarcane on highly fertile tropical land converts only 0.5 per cent of solar radiation into usable food energy. By contrast, a field of solar panels can achieve 15 per cent efficiency, increasing over time with technological advance. And when we use a cow's stomach to convert plant protein into meat, we lose over 90 per cent of the stored energy.

As a result, food and fiber production is by far the main driver of tropical deforestation. Along with methane emissions from farm animals and nitrous oxide emissions from fertilizer, deforestation accounts for 20 per cent of all greenhouse-gas emissions and threatens to create feedback loops that accelerate global warming.

In the long run, new technologies will probably solve this problem, too. Synthetic meats produced using precision biology require 10-25 times less land than animal-based production, and if synthetic techniques become more efficient while cows do not, they will eventually be lower cost. By mid-century, Gates may be proved right and Thunberg too pessimistic even in relation to food and land use. All production ultimately depends on knowledge and energy, and there is no limit to human knowledge and no relevant limit to the energy the sun gives us for free.

But while rapid technological progress is our best long-term hope for mitigating climate change, Thunberg is partly right today. Living standards in rich countries threaten both catastrophic climate change and local environmental destruction, so responsible consumer choice matters as well. We should fly less, get on our bikes, and eat less red meat. And we must ensure as rapidly as possible the massive flows of finance – from governments, companies, and individuals – needed to halt deforestation before it is too late.

The writer is Chair of the Energy Transitions Commission. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Some people say that to avoid the threat of catastrophic harm to human welfare posed by global warming, we must radically change our behaviour – cease flying, use bicycles, and give up red meat. Others believe that new technologies can deliver carbon-free growth. So, who is right: Greta Thunberg, who advocates the former course, or Bill Gates, who just wrote a book advocating the latter?

In the long run, techno-optimism looks justified. As two new reports from the Energy Transitions Commission describe, zero-carbon electricity and hydrogen, which today account for only 20 per cent of energy use, could account for 75 per cent by mid-century, and clean energy will be cheaper by then than dirty energy is today. Solar electricity already costs less than coal power; battery costs have collapsed and will keep falling. The cost of producing hydrogen from electrolysis will plummet in the next ten years, too.

A massive increase in global electricity production will be required – from 27,000 terawatt-hours today to around 100,000 TWh by 2050. Total battery capacity will soar; and huge investments will be needed in expanded transmission and distribution networks.

But there are abundant natural resources available to support this 'green' electrification. Each day, the sun provides 8,000 times as much energy as the entire human population needs for a high standard of living. Even if all of the 100,000 TWh of electricity came from solar resources (and none from wind), we would only have to cover about 1 per cent of the world's land area in solar panels.

Nor is there any ultimate shortage of the key minerals required. Two billion electric cars each with a 60 kilowatt-hour battery would require a stock of 15 million tonnes of pure lithium, which, once in place, could be endlessly recycled. Today's known lithium resources are 80 million tonnes. Supplies of nickel, copper, and manganese are also plentiful, and concerns about cobalt supplies have unleashed technological progress

which makes possible zero-cobalt batteries.

In everything connected with converting photons to electrons and electrons into what physicists call 'work' (driving engines) or into heat (or cold), there are no long-run planetary boundaries to human living standards. By 2060, we will be able to enjoy guilt-free flying, guilt-free heating and cooling, and guilt-free economic growth.

But, for two reasons, we still face potential disaster, with a dwindling chance of limiting global warming to the 'well below 2' Celsius' promised by the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

First, we have left it desperately late to act. If rich countries had committed in 1990 to achieve zero-carbon economies by 2030, we would already be approaching that goal and global warming would be decelerating. But we didn't, and from where we are now, we should ideally cut carbon dioxide emissions by 50 per cent in the next 10 years.

Achieving a cut on that scale is much more difficult than getting to zero emissions by mid-century.

Even if all new cars sold in 2030 were electric, most cars on the road then would still have internal combustion engines spewing CO2 from their exhaust pipes. And even if all growth in electricity supply is now met from zero-carbon sources, closing already existing coal plants in India and China will take time.

The second threat lies in our food and land-use systems. The challenge is not how much energy we consume in food form, but how inefficient we are in producing it. If all of the world's nine billion people in 2050 had an adequate intake of 2,200 calories per day, that would require 7,400 TWh of energy, or only about 6 per cent of likely non-food energy use.

But while we can use clean electricity to meet most of what we require for heating, cooling, industry, and transport, we cannot substitute electrons for the carbohydrates and proteins in the food we eat. Instead, we derive food from photosynthesis of plants, which is far less efficient than converting photons into electrons



Adair Turner

ALL PRODUCTION ULTIMATELY DEPENDS ON KNOWLEDGE AND ENERGY, AND THERE IS NO LIMIT TO HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND NO RELEVANT LIMIT TO THE ENERGY THE SUN GIVES US FOR FREE



THE MOTHER

Whatever is the difficulty if we keep truly quiet the solution will come.

The cruelty-free way

I am hopeful that, in my lifetime, I am going to see a disruptive change in the eating and wearing of animal flesh. It is coming fast: the largest slaughter companies, and the largest investors in the world, have invested in laboratory-created real meat (called clean meat) and milk. These meats are already in the market in countries like Singapore. Perfect Day, which makes milk cells, is on the market with yoghurt (under the label Smitten) that is made of animal-free dairy. The Netherlands and Israel are far ahead in meat grown from in-vitro animals' cell culture, instead of from slaughtered animals. Indeed, if clean meat would replace intensive farming as an industry standard, the benefits for the environment would be immense. As consumers, we would also have 'cleaner' meat, meaning a product that doesn't have the antibiotic residues and bacterial contamination that come with slaughtered meat. We would also save the lives of over 56 billion animals yearly. Yes, that's the number of animals that are eaten every year by humans.

The meat industry keeps bringing out statistics that vegans and vegetarians are still less than 5 per cent of the market. That is simply not true. If it were, entire supermarket sections and fast food vendors would not be catering to them. Impossible Foods, which makes plant-based meat, is one of the fastest growing companies in the world. Its current valuation is \$4 billion. And the largest slaughterhouse companies in the world would not be investing in an alternative meat future.

Vegetarians and vegans finally have meat eaters on the run.

But the wearing of meat in the form of leather – has it gone down? Not yet. But it will. Apart from the millions of animals that it kills every year, especially young calves, the leather industry is extremely dangerous for the Earth's survival. The rivers are polluted with the toxic chemicals used in leather, leather polish alone kills millions of fish. A 2018 global impact study, by Quantis, stated that 700 million tonnes of CO2 are emitted by the leather footwear industry annually – a major reason for global warming.

The New Zealand shoe company, Allbirds, which is in partnership with the giant Adidas, has just announced that it is investing millions in plant-based leather. Allbirds has been going this way for a long time: shoes made of eucalyptus and cotton fibre for instance, insoles made of castor bean oil, recycled plastic laces. This new material, plant leather, is made from vegetable oil, natural rubber and other bio inputs. The company announced their investment in a material innovation firm called Natural Fiber Welding, Inc. and says it will be adding "the world's first 100 per cent natural plant-based leather" to its product lineup by December 2021. This material, which is called Mirum, is said to have 40 times less carbon impact than real leather; and produces 17 per cent less carbon than synthetic leather made from petroleum-based sources. Mirum will be constructed without any polyurethane, meaning that the material can biodegrade at the end of its life, without leaving traces of plastic in the soil, or it can be reground into new Mirum.

Joey Zwillinger, co-founder of Allbirds, said in a press release, "For too long, fashion companies have relied on dirty synthetics and unsustainable leather, prioritizing speed and cost over the environment. Natural Fiber Welding is creating scalable, sustainable alternatives to leather, and doing so with the potential for a game-changing 98 per cent reduction in carbon emissions. Our partnership with NFW, and planned introduction of Plant Leather based on their technology, is an exciting step on our journey to eradicate animals and petroleum from the fashion industry."

Vegan leather, an oxymoron, is the ethical and cruelty-free alternative to traditional leather. It is meant to look and feel like traditional leather, without the baggage of pollution and suffering. As more and more people grow aware of the leather industry's effects on the environment and on animals, the market for cruelty-free alternatives keeps growing. British materials company, Ananas Anam, set up in 2013, was among the first to come out with a plant-based leather alternative called Piñatex. The material uses fibre derived from pineapple leaves, sourced from the Philippines. The fibre is mixed with polylactic acid (PLA), a bioplastic derived from corn, to create a flexible and durable material. Piñatex is being used by Hugo Boss and Canadian brand Native Shoes.

Major luxury fashion houses including Stella McCartney, Adidas, and Gucci parent company Kering have invested in a leather substitute product called Mylo, a soft leather like material, created from mycelium, the branching filament structure that mushrooms and other fungi use to grow. The material consumes substantially less water than is needed to produce animal leather, while emitting fewer greenhouse gases. It takes just days to produce and is completely biodegradable and non-toxic.

Will's Vegan Store is an online store that makes luxurious vegan leather shoes from cereal crops. The company's vegan leather is made from a mix of polyurethane and bio-oil made from cereal crops. The company is trying to move away from using polyurethane, and has recently rolled out a new product using viscose made from eucalyptus bark.

In 2017, the high-end vegan shoe company Veerah rolled out leather made from 50 per cent apple peels leftover from the apple juice industry, and 50 per cent polyurethane. The peels are dried and ground into a fine powder, which is then mixed with non-toxic pigment, and polyurethane, to become a leather-like fabric.

Here are the Indian entrepreneurs that you should buy from, or invest in: Malai Biomaterials Design Pvt Ltd, a Kerala-based initiative, is the brainchild of Zuzana Gombosova and Susmith Suseelan. It produces a vegan alternative to leather, using sustainable bacterial cellulose sourced from waste coconut, banana stem, sisal fibre and hemp fibre. It is completely biodegradable, flexible, water-resistant, stretchy and has the same thickness as leather. The company collects coconuts from farmers in Kerala. The water is left undisturbed for bacterial culture to feed on. The end process results in jelly-like cellulose which is mixed with banana fibre, or gum, to create raw material in the form of sheets or 3-dimensional shapes. To make the sheets colourful and glossy, the company uses natural dyes such as indigo, madder or cutch. The company's major clients are prestigious companies like Crafting Plastics, TON, Ma-tt-er, Kazeto, and the products are bags, wallets, backpacks. I do not know whether they have started making shoes as yet. Aulive is an online Indian brand that has genuinely beautiful vegan, cruelty-free leather products. It labels itself as "Genuinely Not Leather" and uses Piñatex. They have come out strongly against the cruelty, and toxicity, of the animal leather trade. Look up the site when you want to buy suitcases, briefcases and bags. Kanpur Flower Cycling, owned by engineer Ankit Agarwal, has created Fleather, leather made of temple flowers. Even though it's not in the market yet, Fleather has already won a UN Sustainability Award and a PETA award for best innovation. The company has already been making Florafoam – a compostable alternative to styrofoam (non-biodegradable plastic) from moulding dried flowers with natural fungi. Brands, like Bajaj and Havells, are already using Florafoam packaging. Fashion houses, like Anita Dongre, have also shown interest in this breathable and tensile material called 'Fleather'.

These companies can only be successful if you change your buying pattern.

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org

WISDOM CORNER

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

LAO TZU

Sadness is but a wall between two gardens.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.

CONFUCIUS

SPECTRUM PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Case for free universal vaccination

"Vaccines do not save lives but vaccinations do." The above statement of Walter Orenstein, professor of medicine at Emory University, captures two important aspects of the economic world: production and distribution. We can add another dimension: only mandatory vaccination can help in subsiding pandemics like Covid-19.

Development, production, and distribution of vaccines can be examined through pricing. Pricing is the process of recovering cost and return on investment and it can also be used as a tool to manage the behaviour of consumers.

The invisible hand of market is expected to help in arriving at an optimal price. However, history is replete with cases of market failures. We cannot fully fall back on the market to address the issues relating to the production and distribution of vaccines which have very high positive externalities.

Governments promised to make vaccines available free. Such free distribution would have been possible with production fully under the government control. That is the not the case in India. Both vaccines are being manufactured by private entities. Production requires investment and investors require

return and returns are possible only if the producers can sell at a price higher than the cost.

Every investor looks for returns. Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech are not exceptions. But transparency is conspicuous by its absence in the pricing process. People of the country have no idea about the cost and consequently on the pricing process.

Instead of reducing the information asymmetry, the latest vaccine policy allows manufacturers to sell 50 per cent of their production in the open market at a price which is different and significantly higher than that was sold to the government in the first and second phase of vaccination. Why should the price shoot up if volumes are actually going up? Is the increase in price due to the increase in cost? Is it to allow the companies to earn higher returns? Will price discrimination work? Many such questions remain unanswered.

Price discrimination may lead to sub-optimal distribution of vaccines. Even those who can afford to pay will try to take the benefit of free vaccination at the government hospitals and in the process deprive those who cannot pay for the vaccine. The class which is deprived of vaccination is more vulnerable

to Covid and consists of domestic helps, drivers, delivery boys, street vendors and many others at the bottom of the pyramid who provide different support services. Society may lose more by not vaccinating this group of people. For some the perceived risk of the disease may be less than the benefits of vaccination because they ignore the impact of their decision on the larger world. So price discrimination may lead to a situation where the poor may not get the vaccine and those who can afford may not go for vaccination at market price.

There is a need to make vaccination universal and free without any discrimination. Voluntary vaccinations are unlikely to eradicate diseases like Covid and mandatory vaccination is not possible through market driven pricing. Mandatory universal free vaccination should be the priority. Even the Indian Medical Association has demanded that the vaccine be given free.

Vaccine is not a trade commodity so the ultimate user need not pay the price. Let the cost be shared by the central government, state governments, and corporate entities. No investment is unreasonable to control Covid which has affected lives and livelihoods of millions.

Assuming, the latest price, ₹300 per dose, quoted by SII for government is correct; the total cash required for vaccinating 90-95 crore people will be around ₹54,000-57,000 crore. The central government has already budgeted around ₹35,000 crore for vaccination in the Budget-2021. State governments and corporate entities may be asked to chip in for the balance money. If the top fifty profit-making companies contribute towards the cost one may not need to charge anything to the users. These companies have earned around ₹3 lakh crore as profit even during the pandemic.

Moreover, there is a possibility that with the announcement of free universal vaccination people from different walks of life may also come forward to contribute to the mission provided there is a transparent vaccine distribution policy. We are already witnessing such a response in Kerala. A small contribution from many may have a huge impact on mankind.

So the government should revisit the present policy of price discrimination and seriously start working on free universal vaccination.

The writer is a Professor in XIMB, Bhubaneswar.



DV Ramana

PRICE DISCRIMINATION MAY LEAD TO SUB-OPTIMAL DISTRIBUTION OF VACCINES

Help from US

Sir, This refers to the news item "CEOs of 40 US cos create Covid task force to help India", Orissa POST, April 28. After initial inertia to come to the aid of India in its grave hour of crisis, the United States has now swung into full action to support India in its fight against the Covid second wave. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with leaders of US business community and the US-India business council to mobilise support for India. In fact, the full spectrum of the American machinery has been mobilised. Around 40 top American companies have come together to create a first-of-its-kind global task force for India to provide it with medical supplies, vaccine, oxygen and other life-saving assistance. Meanwhile, raw materials are being shipped from America to the Serum Institute of India to ramp up vaccine production. All this indicates the strength and durability of the US-India relationship as strategic partners. Delhi should leverage all the help it can get from the US, hold it to its commitments, preserve the friendship, and use it to alleviate the distress of the people of India. Meanwhile, if the US focuses on fighting Covid within its borders alone while the disease rages unchecked in India and other parts of the developing world, sooner or later disease variants will make their way back to the US and the Western world.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Covid concern

Sir, With the increase in COVID-19 cases and fatalities, many states are considering lockdowns. While the nation battles the oxygen supply and demand gap, the lockdowns come as another blow to the common man and his livelihood. Though the lockdowns have been imposed in the best interests of citizens – to protect them from the virus, there is a dire need to ramp up medical facilities to meet the urgent needs of all patients. It is a matter of appreciation that several countries have promised to support India in such an hour of crisis. The world should otherwise be indebted to India as it took the lead in supplying vaccines to many countries in a bid to combat the pandemic. Mankind is in the midst of the greatest pandemic to have struck the world. The governments through advisories time and again are issuing protocols for the benefit of the people. It is time to follow the guidelines strictly instead of playing the blame game. It is time to lend a helping hand and support the government.

MR Jayanthi, MUMBAI

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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Situation in UP cities chaotic: HC Shift arrested scribe to Delhi hospital: SC to UP

135 teachers on poll duty die of Covid during panchayat elections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj, April 28: The Allahabad High Court has issued notices to Uttar Pradesh State Election Commission (UPSEC), seeking an explanation on why it failed to check non-compliance of Covid guidelines during multiple phases of panchayat elections.

Taking cognizance of reported deaths of 135 teachers, shiksha mitras and investigators assigned panchayat election duty, the Allahabad High Court, Tuesday, issued the notices.

The court further asked why action should not be taken against the state poll panel and its officials and why those responsible for Covid violations should not be prosecuted.

Hearing a PIL on Covid care, a division bench comprising Justice Siddhartha Varma and Justice Ajit Kumar further directed the State Election Commission to 'take immediate measures in remaining phases of panchayat elections to ensure Covid guidelines are complied with, else action would be taken against officials involved in the election process'.

While passing the directives, the court observed, "It is reported that during recent phases of panchayat elections, Covid guidelines were violated. It appears that neither police nor the State Election Commission did anything to save people on election duty from getting infected by the virus."

On deaths due to oxygen shortage, the court observed, "If after



Family members and relatives are seen around the funeral pyres of victims who lost their lives due to Covid-19 at Daraganj Ghat near Sangam, the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Wednesday. PFI PHOTO

seven decades of attaining freedom with so many heavy industries in place, we are unable to provide oxygen to our citizens, it is a matter of shame."

While observing that the public health system is unable to cater to needs of the people, the court directed government hospitals in Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Agra, Kanpur, Gorakhpur and Jhansi to display health bulletins twice a day, apprising people on oxygen saturation levels of pa-

tients to avoid attendants visiting the hospitals. "The situation in major cities of Uttar Pradesh is chaotic. As history of past pandemics tell us, those who are resourceful will survive and the others may die for want of proper healthcare," the court observed.

The court directed the government to take urgent remedial measures and observed, "We make it clear that we will not tolerate paperwork or public announcements to show the account of steps taken

and its sufficiency."

"It's an open secret that the government had gone complacent due to weakening of the virus by 2020-end and got involved in other activities, including panchayat elections. Had it been vigilant, it would have prepared itself to face the onslaught of the second wave. Posterity would never forgive us, if we remain oblivious to the real public health issues and let people die for want of adequate healthcare."

KERALA-BASED SIDDIQUE KAPPAN WAS ARRESTED LAST YEAR ON WAY TO HATHRAS WHERE A YOUNG DALIT WOMAN HAD DIED AFTER BEING GANGRAPE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to shift journalist Siddique Kappan, suffering from various ailments and arrested last year on way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being gangraped, to a hospital in Delhi for better medical treatment.

Keeping in mind the basic human rights of an accused, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana headed bench granted the relief and directed the state to provide medical treatment to the Kerala-based scribe.

The bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and AS Bopanna said that Kappan will be transferred back to Mathura jail after his recovery. The top court, however, granted him liberty to approach an appropriate forum challenging his arrest or for any other relief and disposed of the plea filed by Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) and his wife, seeking his release from alleged illegal detention.

"Taking into consideration facts of the case, we dispose of the writ petition. Even though Solicitor General Tushar Mehta very seriously opposed the contention, we are directing the state to shift the accused to RML or AIIMS hospital here or wherever treatment can be



done," said the bench.

"Since last year, I have been asking this man to approach a competent court for bail but he is adamant and not approaching it. In this petition before the court, there is not even prayer for bail or shifting for better treatment," Mehta said. Advocate Wills Mathews, appearing for KUWJ and Kappan's wife, said that he be granted interim bail in the case besides being provided with proper medicines and treatment.

At the outset, the bench said it was confined to the limited issue of granting better health facilities to Kappan and asked whether he could be allowed medical treatment in Delhi. "We are confined to health issues. He has health problems like BP, diabetes and other ailments. He has precarious health conditions. You

have to consider this. He is in custody of the state. You have to protect him. It is in the interest of the state also that the accused gets better treatment," the bench observed.

Justice Bopanna said that notwithstanding the petition filed by the KUWJ, there is also a petition filed by Kappan's wife, which seeks his release.

"Can't this court direct for better treatment. You forget about the petitions. Life of a citizen is important. Tomorrow, no one should be able to blame us, that he was not given better treatment," the CJI said.

Kappan was arrested on way to Hathras, which has been in the news following the death of a 19-year-old Dalit woman who was allegedly gangraped September 14, 2020, in a village in the district.

Amethi man booked over SOS tweet for O2 cylinder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amethi (UP), April 28: The police have booked a man here under the Epidemic Act, accusing him of creating fear among the people after he went on Twitter asking for an oxygen cylinder for his 88-year-old relative.

"Need oxygen cylinder, ASAP," Shashank Yadav had tweeted Monday, and tagged actor Sonu Sood. Tuesday, Union minister and Amethi MP Smriti Irani tweeted in response, "Called Shashank thrice...No response on the number shared by you in your tweet."

She also said she had alerted the District Magistrate and Amethi Police to find the person and help him. When asked about the matter, Superintendent of Police Dinesh Singh said Wednesday Yadav had tweeted for a distant relative.

"When he was called, he did not pick up. We thought he might be in some problem and therefore he was



not picking up the phone. So we used surveillance and tracked his location and reached his house, where he was found sleeping," Singh said.

"Shashank's motive was to create sensation and fear," he added. The Amethi Police tweeted

Tuesday, "Neither the patient had Covid-19 infection nor did he require oxygen. He died due to cardiac arrest at 8 pm Monday. Making such tweets are not only condemnable but also an offence."

In his tweet, Yadav also had not said that his relative was Covid-19 positive.

An FIR was lodged against Yadav under relevant sections of the Epidemic Act, and he was served a notice under section 41 of the CrPC (requiring appearance before police to prevent the person from committing any further offence), the SP said.

Yadav was taken to a police station for questioning, but was later let off, he said.

Chief Medical Officer, Ashutosh Dubey said Yadav's relative was not COVID-19 positive and was receiving treatment under a private doctor. The patient was also not taken to nearby community health centre and did not die due to lack of oxygen, he added.

Unexpected tsunami in Haryana: Khattar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 28: Calling the huge surge in COVID-19 cases an "unexpected tsunami", Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Wednesday said the state government is putting all its might to tackle the crisis.

"One expects that floods can come during rainy season, but no one expects a tsunami," he said on the rising cases of the novel coronavirus infection.

He said his government was working at various levels, including ensuring availability of beds and medical oxygen supplies, besides ensuring necessary medicines.

Speaking at a news conference, Khattar noted that restrictions like prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC, daily night curfew, curtailed timings for closure of shops, curb on the number of people allowed for indoor and outdoor gatherings, are among the measures taken to contain the infection spread.

While extra beds are being added in hospitals, MBBS and PG students are being deployed to take care of COVID-19 patients, he said.

The Haryana government is also



One expects that floods can come during rainy season, but no one expects a tsunami... We are putting all our might and in this we are getting everyone's cooperation and support, that is, from common people, private sector to various other institutions

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

planning to avail the services of IAS, IPS, IFS and HCS officers, who were doctors or held MBBS or MD degrees prior to their joining the government service.

"We are putting all our might and in this we are getting everyone's cooperation and support, that is, from common people, private sector to various other institutions," the chief minister underlined.

Notably, Haryana has seen a big surge in coronavirus cases as well as fatalities in April.

Khattar said that no one had expected that there would be such a huge surge in cases, but now things were

being put in place to deal with the situation. He noted that last year the highest peak in infections during a 24-hour period was 3,100 cases, which until April 27, 2021 had shot to nearly four-fold. He said the good thing was that the COVID fatality rate at present was 0.88 per cent as against 1.1 per cent seen last year.

Meanwhile, the CM ruled out the imposition of lockdown as a measure to check the virus spread, saying "it has been seen the economic disruption it (lockdown) causes and with great difficulty we have come out of it".

"If cases come down in Delhi, it

will have some affect in our districts like Gurgaon and Faridabad," he said. In response to a query, the BJP leader said there was a rush of patients from Delhi in cities like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonapat, and now Ambala.

He also advised patients with mild or moderate symptoms not to rush to hospitals unless doctors treating them "strongly advise so".

The government of India has increased the supply of medical oxygen of Haryana to overcome its shortage, an official said Wednesday.

Gurugram admin uses Google Forms to manage liquid oxygen supply

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



Gurugram, April 28: In order to meet the demand for liquid medical oxygen in private hospitals, the Gurugram district administration has asked all hospitals and nursing homes to fill up a Google form which appears on clicking the website covidharyana.in.

The district administration has clarified that efforts will be made to provide oxygen only to those hospitals and nursing homes registered with it. An order in this regard was issued by Additional Chief Secretary TC Gupta.

The District Magistrate has appointed nodal officials at each hospital to monitor the Covid situation and from wherever there is a demand for oxygen it will be supplied as soon as possible.

At present, nearly 40 tonnes of liquid oxygen has been made available in the district while earlier it was only 20 to 22 metric tonnes. Small nursing homes and clinics have been advised not to admit serious Covid-19 patients. Only patients with isolation or care can be placed

in such health facilities.

Gupta has formed a team of five officials which will assess demand for medical oxygen, its transportation and distribution. For this the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram Commissioner, Vinay Pratap Singh, has been appointed as the team leader accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Prashant Pawar, Deputy Civil Surgeon Anuj Garg and Regional Traffic Authority Secretary, Dhaarna Yadav. Drug Control Officer Amandeep Chauhan will be the co-ordinator.

A buffer stock of 10 tonnes of oxygen will be kept in the district. A Magistrate has been posted at three centres for oxygen distribution - Max Air, Star Gas and GK Papreja Oxygen. "The hospital and nursing homes will update the number of beds for Covid-19 patients and fill up their data on covidharyana.in by 5 p.m. daily and if we find any negligence by the hospitals, its medical oxygen supply can be stopped or a limit can be fixed. This order will remain in force till May 31," said Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg.

Nurse slaps doc, officials say they are 'overworked'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Rampur (UP), April 28: In a shocking incident, a nurse in the district hospital in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, slapped a doctor in full public view, following a heated argument over issuing a death certificate.

Hospital authorities said the clash was a result of tremendous pressure under which doctors and other healthcare staff are working

According to reports, the nurse came to the doctor's chamber that was already crowded with patients and asked him to issue a death certificate for a patient who had died. The two had a heated argument and suddenly the nurse slapped the doctor and he hit her back.

The brawl was caught on camera and the purported video went viral. The incident took place Monday but the Rampur police said no formal complaint has been received yet. District magistrate Ravindra Kumar said he had ordered a probe into the incident.

The hospital authorities said the clash was a result of the tremendous pressure under which doctors and other healthcare staff are working.

HEALTHCARE COLLAPSE



A COVID-19 patient (R) receives free oxygen provided by a Gurdwara amid the rise in Covid-19 cases in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh Wednesday. PFI PHOTO



No protective, precautionary measures were taken by Central and Tamil Nadu governments during the intervening six month period between the first & second waves of COVID and we are seeing its result now in front of our eyes

GOA GOES UNDER LOCKDOWN

Amid a rising Covid surge, Goa will undergo a lockdown from Thursday night to Monday morning, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said Wednesday. Essential services and industries will be open, Sawant added



of the day quote

1 lakh portable oxygen concentrators will be procured, 500 more PSA oxygen plants sanctioned from PM-CARES. This will improve access to oxygen, especially in district HQs and Tier-2 cities



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Everyone is aware that you (Amarinder Singh) are hand in glove with the Badals. In the 2017 elections, the Badals helped you under a conspiracy and now the debt of which you are paying by not taking action in the Behal Kalan firing case



J J SINGH | FORMER ARMY CHIEF

We are working to bring down the mortality rate, but it is not the responsibility of the doctors alone. Please reach out to villagers who have symptoms to get themselves tested and hospitalised if they test positive



SHORT TAKES

Former Maha min succumbs to nCoV

Mumbai: Senior Congress leader, and former Maharashtra minister and MP Ekmath Gaikwad succumbed to Covid here Wednesday, party sources said. He was 81. A two-time Lok Sabha MP from Mumbai, Gaikwad was the father of Maharashtra School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad. Hailing from Dharavi, Gaikwad served as a Cabinet Minister in Maharashtra for several years and also functioned in various positions, including President of Mumbai Congress, especially during its most difficult political times.

Left protests in Kerala for free vax

Thiruvananthapuram: Activists and supporters of the CPI-M led Left Democratic Front Wednesday staged sit-in protests in front of their homes and party offices across Kerala, demanding the Centre ensure free vaccines are provided to all. The Left, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has been demanding free vaccine supply from the Centre, noting that has been the practice in the country. So far, the Centre has provided 60 lakh vaccine doses to Kerala and the state is now left with just around three lakh doses.

Four gutted

Patna: Three sisters and their brother were killed after their house caught fire in Bihar's Patna district Wednesday, police said. The incident happened around 9 am in Alauddin Chak village in the Punpun police station area when the siblings were cooking while their parents were away.

Assembly polls: EC puts new guidelines in place for counting

The results of the Assembly elections held in five states/UT -- West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry -- will be announced May 2



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 28: Candidates or their agents will not be allowed inside counting halls without a negative coronavirus report or without having both Covid-19 vaccine doses, the Election Commission said Wednesday in its latest guidelines for counting of votes May 2. Issued amid spiralling coronavirus cases, the guidelines bar public gatherings outside venues during the counting process, but allow candidates to name a fresh agent if the first one tests positive for Covid-19.

Counting of votes for assembly polls in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, besides various other assemblies and Lok Sabha bypolls begins at 8 am May 2.

"No candidates or agents will be allowed inside the counting hall without undergoing RT-PCR/RAT test or without having two doses of vaccination against Covid-19 and will have to produce negative RT-PCR report or RAT report or vaccination reports within 48 hours of start of counting," the guidelines read. The district election officers will organise Covid tests for candidates and their counting agents, it said. The Madras High Court had earlier this week made harsh observations against the EC for failing to ensure Covid-appropriate behaviour during campaigning. The poll panel has to apprise the

high court April 30 about steps it has taken to ensure a Covid-safe counting process.

The fresh EC guidelines go beyond the ones issued by poll panel for the Bihar assembly elections last year which were being used as a template for elections being held during the coronavirus pandemic.

On Tuesday, the poll panel had barred victory processions after counting to check large gatherings amid rising coronavirus cases.

It had also restricted the number of people who could accompany the candidate to collect his or her election certificate from the returning officer.

As per the latest guidelines, there should be sufficient number of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits for counting agents and candidates.

"The counting agents' sitting arrangement shall be made in such a way that between 2 counting agents 1 agent shall be in PPE," the guideline read.

The counting hall, according to the EC, should be sufficiently big to maintain social distancing, and should have proper ventilation, windows, exhaust fan as per available protocol of the State Disaster Management Authority.

The counting centres should be disinfected before, during and after the counting, while sealed outer boxes of electronic voting machines and paper trail machines should also be disinfected.

Govt in Delhi means LG now

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: The new act notified by the Centre has left Delhi's elected government virtually toothless by giving sweeping powers to the lieutenant governor who now controls nearly 80 departments and can even stall a bill enacted by the assembly, officials said.

After the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, was notified Tuesday night, the LG, in layperson terms, would be the one running the national capital henceforth, officials explained while assessing the import of the Act coming into effect.

The Act, passed by Parliament last month, came into force April 27, Tuesday, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in an order.

Under the new law, 'government' now means the LG, officials said. The Delhi government will have to take permission from the LG before taking any action on subjects that had so far been under its control. These include anti-corruption, education, health, social welfare, tourism, central jail, excise, some colleges as well as hospitals and transport. The LG can also pass directions to



officials directly without consulting the city government while elected representatives will have to take the LG's consent for the implementation of any of its orders as well as transfers, the officials explained. According to officials, Delhi is a union territory with a legislature like Jammu and Kashmir and Pondicherry but does not have powers similar to them. Three key subjects - public order, police and land - are with the Central government while other sectors are with the city government. However, after the new Act, the Delhi government

will have to get the LG's nod for making any minor or major changes.

"It has become necessary to make it clear that Delhi is a UT with limited powers. It is not a full state and those in the powers of the Delhi government must understand this fact," one official told PTI while explaining the reasons behind bringing in the new law.

The Delhi assembly can make laws on all subjects in the state list and concurrent list but it shall not come into force until the LG gives his assent. "Any of the rules made

in contravention of this proviso, before the commencement of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, shall be void," states the new act.

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir and Pondicherry land is with the local government and public order and police with the Central government. Other UTs — Chandigarh, Ladakh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu — don't have legislative assemblies and are under direct control of the Central government. Officials said the executive powers of the LG of Delhi are different from the powers of state governors and the amendment in the Government of NCT of Delhi Act will remove ambiguities in the existing law. The Centre has been maintaining the bill in line with the Supreme Court's July 2018 ruling on the ambit of powers of the lieutenant governor and the Delhi government after a series of run-ins between the two. Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy had said in Parliament that Delhi is not a full-fledged state and does not have full power.

VOCAL FOR LOCAL



People buying bamboo made items in Jabalpur

UNI PHOTO

3K Covid infected patients go missing in B'lore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 28: Amid surging COVID-19 cases in the State, Karnataka Revenue Minister R Ashoka claimed Wednesday most infected people have switched off their phones and about 3,000 of them who have gone 'missing' from Bangalore are spreading the disease.

Police have been asked to trace them, the minister told reporters. We are giving free medicines to the people, which can control 90 per cent of cases, but they have (COVID infected people) switched off their mobile phones. They reach the hospital in a critical stage to desperately look for the ICU beds. This is what is happening now, Ashoka said. He said most of those infected with COVID have switched off their phones and are not letting people know about their whereabouts, which is making things difficult. I feel that at least 2,000 to 3,000 people in Bangalore have switched off their phones and left their houses. We don't know where they have gone, the minister added.

Appealing to the infected people to keep their phones switched on, Ashoka said police has been asked to track them. I pray to them with folded hands that COVID cases will only increase due to this (behaviour). It is wrong when you reach for ICU beds at the last moment, the minister said.



GIRL GANG RAPED ON PRETEXT OF COVID VAX

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, April 28: Two men in Patna allegedly gangraped a girl on the pretext of providing her coronavirus vaccine, an official said.

The accused were identified as Rocky and Mantu. They have been arrested and booked under 376D in the Malsalami police station. The police said that Rocky and Montu convinced the victim about the Corona vaccine at a health center Tuesday evening.

"Accordingly, they took her to a deserted house in Jamunapur area and started misbehaving with her. When the victim showed resistance and attempted to flee, they thrashed her and managed to tie her legs and hand. They also stuffed a handkerchief in mouth and raped her one by one," said an investigating officer on condition of anonymity. Following the incident, the accused fled from the spot. "The victim managed to free herself and reached home. She narrated her ordeal before her family members who approached local police," the IO said.

PM thanks Russia for prompt support

THE MODI GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED EMERGENCY USE OF SPUTNIK-V IN INDIA. THE RUSSIAN VAX WILL BE MANUFACTURED IN INDIA FOR USE IN INDIA, RUSSIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin over phone for the prompt support to India amid the Covid crisis, symbolising 'enduring partnership' between the two countries.



was a symbol of the countries' enduring partnership.

The two leaders noted the ongoing cooperation between the two countries to fight the global pandemic. Putin also appreciated Modi government's approval for

emergency use of Sputnik-V vaccine in India. Both the leaders attached importance to further deepening bilateral cooperation in various sectors in the spirit of their special and privileged partnership.

Modi conveyed appreciation for the support received from Russia for India's Gaganyaan programme and the completion of the Russian phase of training of the four Gaganyaan astronauts. The leaders noted the scope for increasing cooperation in the area of renewable energy including the Hydrogen economy. They also decided to establish a new 2+2 dialogue at the ministerial level comprising foreign and defence ministers from both the countries. The last meeting between the two leaders was held in Vladivostok in September 2019.

Maha may face 3rd Covid wave if vaccination slows: Experts

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 28: A slowdown in the ongoing vaccination drive in Maharashtra, battling a savage surge in COVID-19 cases, will potentially pave the way for a third wave of the infection in the state, health experts warned Wednesday.

The warning came on a day when the Maharashtra government said it is not going to start the vaccination drive from May 1 for the 18-44 age group because of unavailability of sufficient doses.

Health Minister Rajesh Tope has already expressed concern over the inadequate supply of vaccines for Maharashtra, the state worst-hit

by the pandemic, amid reports of a shortage of doses for the existing beneficiaries (45-plus people), putting the inoculation drive on a slow track. The true curbing of COVID-19 can happen only if two thirds of the population eligible for vaccination is covered under the inoculation drive.

"Out of 9 crore people eligible for vaccination in Maharashtra, we have just covered over 1.50 crore so far, which is negligible," said a senior official from state health department.

He pitched for fast-tracking the inoculation drive which began January 16 with healthcare professionals and was later extended



to cover frontline workers and people in the 45-plus age group. "If we do not accelerate the pace of vaccination, sooner or later people will venture out for jobs and other work

and this could invite the third wave of COVID-19," he warned.

Relaxation of measures in December made people careless and this triggered the second wave

Lockdown extended; vaccination delayed

The COVID-19 vaccination drive beginning May 1 cannot be launched in Maharashtra because of the unavailability of sufficient doses of vaccines even as the state Wednesday extended the current lockdown-like restrictions till May 15 given the rise in the COVID-19 cases. State Health Minister Rajesh Tope also said the people in the age group of 18 to 44 years will receive free vaccines at state-run centres but citizens will have to pay for the jobs at private facilities. The free vaccination decision was taken at the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. The move will put a burden of Rs 6,500 crore on the state's coffers, Tope said.

of COVID-19 from February. We are still suffering from it.

"If we do not vaccinate a major chunk of the population quickly, we will be rolling out the red carpet for the third wave," the health department official said.

In April so far, the state has added 15,53,922 fresh COVID-19 cases and 11,281 deaths, Tope Wednesday said. The Maharashtra government is unlikely to get vaccines from Bharat Biotech or Serum Institute of India before May 20.

national

of the day quote

Are all the doctors lying? Are all the family members making false statements? Are all the visuals and photographs fake? People must revolt against a government that is assuming all the people of India are fools

P CHIDAMBARAM | SENIOR CONG LEADER

India has gone back by at least 20 years due to the pandemic. I don't know how much forward it marched in the past 5-10 years, but the country's economy and social and political systems have collapsed. Now only the struggle for existence is on

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

The 2 weeks strict rules to break the chain of Covid virus have begun. My appeal to everyone: follow the guidelines, cooperate with the govt, stay indoors, and step out only if it's an emergency. Together, we all can defeat the Covid-19 pandemic

B S YEDIYURAPPA | CM, KARNATAKA

SHORT TAKES

Allahabad HC judge succumbs to Covid

Lucknow: Justice Virendra Kumar Srivastava, a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court, passed away Wednesday after being afflicted by Covid. Justice Srivastava was at the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court. He obtained his law degree in 1986 and completed his post-graduate studies in 1988. He was, thereafter, appointed in the Higher Judicial Service in 2005, and promoted as District and Sessions Judge in 2016.

Avalanche death toll rises to 16

Gopeshwar (U'khand): The death toll in a recent avalanche in Sumna, near the Indo-China border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, rose to 16 Wednesday with the recovery of one more body. The unidentified body was recovered from the avalanche site, District Disaster Management Officer NK Joshi said. Fifteen bodies were recovered from the site till Sunday. All the victims were Border Roads Organisation (BRO) workers from Jharkhand, who went missing after the avalanche struck Friday.

2 Naxals killed in encounter

Nagpur: At least two Naxals were killed Wednesday in an encounter with the police in a forest in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, a senior official said. The exchange of fire took place when C-60 commandos of the Gadchiroli Police were conducting an anti-Naxal operation in the Jambia gatta forest around 6.30 am, he said. "Two ultras have been killed and a search operation is underway in the forest area," the official added.

Two killed in factory blast

Kathua/Jammu: Two labourers were killed and another injured Wednesday in an explosion at a zinc and copper factory in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir, a senior police officer said. The cause of the explosion that occurred at around 12.45 pm is being investigated, Senior Superintendent of Police, Kathua, R C Kotwal said. Charred bodies of two persons were recovered from the debris of the factory which went up in flames following the blast, he said. He said one more labourer was evacuated to hospital in an injured condition and admitted in Government Medical College (GMC) hospital, Kathua.



Central Vista is not essential, Central Govt with a vision is essential. The Modi government must realise that the battle is against Covid, it is not against the Congress or other political opponents

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

UP FIRST STATE TO DO 4 CRORE COVID TESTS

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has now become the first state in the country to conduct more than 4 crore Covid tests. In the past 24 hours, around 1,84,000 tests have been done in the state



India's death toll crosses 2L

The last 24 hours brought 360,960 new cases for the world's largest single-day tally of infections to nearly 18 million. It was also the deadliest day so far, with 3,293 fatalities

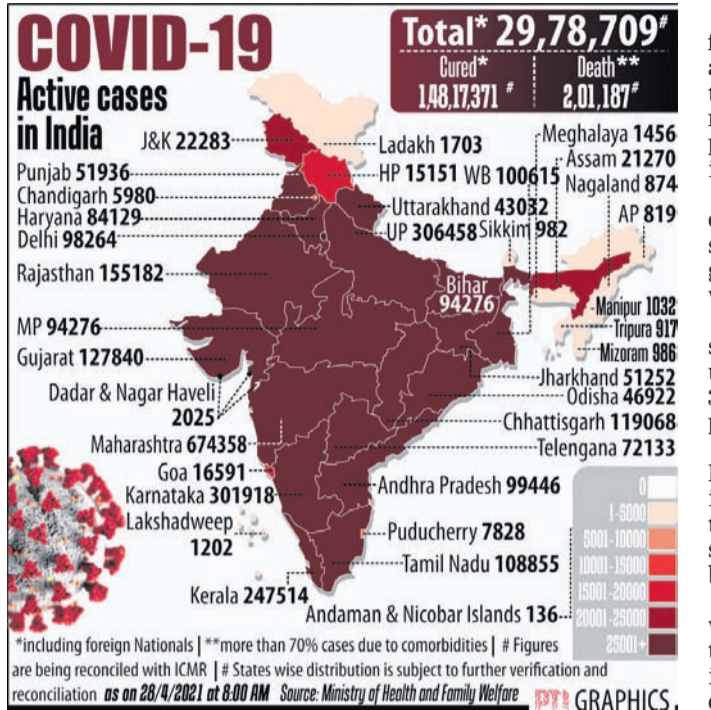
AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 28: Indians struggled to register online for a mass vaccination drive set to begin at the weekend as the country-wide death toll from the coronavirus surged past 200,000 Wednesday, worsened by shortages of hospital beds and medical oxygen.

The second wave of infections has seen at least 300,000 people test positive each day for the past week, overwhelming health facilities and crematoriums and prompting an increasingly urgent response from allies overseas sending equipment.

The last 24 hours brought 360,960 new cases for the world's largest single-day tally, taking India's tally of infections to nearly 18 million. It was also the deadliest day so far, with 3,293 fatalities carrying the toll to 201,187.

Experts believe the official tally vastly underestimates the actual toll in a nation of 1.35 billion, however.



Delhi state is reporting one death from COVID-19 every four minutes and ambulances have been taking the bodies of COVID-19 victims to makeshift crematorium facilities in parks and parking lots, where bodies burned on rows of funeral pyres.

Outside hospitals, people lined up on trolleys, and in cars and cycle rickshaws, with loved ones holding oxygen cylinders for them as they waited for a bed inside.

The World Health Organization said in its weekly epidemiological update that India accounted for 38% of the 5.7 million cases reported worldwide to last week.

Early modelling showed that the B.1.617 variant of the virus detected in India had a higher growth rate than other variants in the country, suggesting increased transmissibility, it said.

Experts said India's best hope was to vaccinate its vast population and Wednesday it opened registrations for everyone above the age of 18 to be given jabs from Saturday.

Centre in process of banning PFI, SC told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: The Centre is in the process of banning Popular Front of India (PFI), an Islamic organisation which has been banned in several states, the Supreme Court was told Wednesday.

A bench of Chief Justice N V Ramana and Justices Surya Kant and A S Bopanna was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Uttar Pradesh government, that Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan has association with PFI, whose office bearers were found to be associated with banned Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

The bench asked Mehta whether PFI has been banned. Mehta replied, "In several states PFI has been banned. As per my information Centre is also in the process of banning it."

The bench then said, "So, as of now it is not banned".

Mehta, while reading from an affidavit filed in December last year, said, "No. Many office bear-

ers of PFI were found to be associated with SIMI".

The top court later directed the UP government to shift Kappan, suffering from various ailments and arrested last year on way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being gang raped, to a hospital in Delhi for better medical treatment.

Keeping in mind the basic human rights of an accused, the bench granted the relief and directed the state to provide medical treatment to the scribe. It said that Kappan will be transferred back to Mathura jail after his recovery.

The top court, however, granted him liberty to approach an appropriate forum challenging his arrest or for any other relief and disposed of the plea filed by Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) and his wife, seeking his release from alleged illegal detention.

The FIR has been filed under various provisions of the IPC and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against four people having alleged links with the PFI.

SII CEO Poonawalla gets 'Y' security cover

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: Serum Institute of India's CEO Adar Poonawalla has been accorded 'Y' category security across India by the CRPF in view of "potential threats" to the businessman, involved in the production of one of the COVID-19 vaccines in India, the Union government officials said Wednesday.

The Central government decision came after Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), Prakash Kumar Singh had written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah April 16 requesting security for Poonawalla.

According to officials, the protection has been given in view of "potential threats" to Poonawalla.

Powerful earthquake jolts Assam

The impact was felt in almost the entire Northeastern region, parts of West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 28: A series of earthquakes jolted Assam and most of the Northeastern states Wednesday, causing extensive damage to buildings and forcing people to scamper out of their homes.

There were no immediate reports of deaths directly due to the tremors, but two persons - one each in Kamrup Metropolitan and Nagaon districts - died due to shock and heart attack around the time of the earthquake, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said.

According to initial reports, 10 people suffered injuries in four districts as the first quake of 6.4 magnitude struck Tezpur, the headquarters of Sonitpur district, at



A man stands near a severely damaged wall due to a high-intensity earthquake, in Guwahati

Tezpur at 10.39 am, he added.

At 12.32 pm, the eighth quake of 2.9 magnitude hit Morigaon. It was followed by three more earthquakes, hitting Sonitpur district again, Shaw said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal twice to inquire about the destruction caused by the earthquake and assured him all help from the Centre.

Sonowal later visited Dhekiajuli near the epicentre and its adjacent areas in Sonitpur district.

There were reports of extensive damage to buildings and other structures from across Assam, mostly in the central and western towns of Tezpur, Nagaon, Guwahati, Mangaldoi, Dhekiajuli and Morigaon.

Pregnant tigress killed, mutilated



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Yavatmal (Maha), April 28: Activists and conservationists are agitated at the shocking news of a pregnant tigress with four foetuses in the womb being found brutally killed in the forests near Pandharkawada in Maharashtra's Yavatmal.

The incident, which happened last Sunday, came to light a day later when the mutilated carcass was found in a pool of blood with the poachers having chopped off its front paws to extract the claws.

The wildlife community and officials have reacted strongly to the incident which occurred within the Mukutban ranges of the thick forests, known to be frequented by tigers in the Vidarbha region.

Member of State Board for Wildlife and Satpuda Foundation founder Kishore Rithe exposed the matter in public and demanded stringent action against the culprit-poachers responsible for the murder.

He termed it as one of the most horrible instances of a tigress' death which has never been heard or witnessed in recent years.

As per preliminary investigations by forest officials, the tigress in advanced stage of pregnancy was using an underground den with a small opening for rest and safety.

Apparently, the stalking poachers may have espied her entering the den and they blocked its small opening with sticks and stones before setting it afire to suffocate and immobilise the tigress.

LCA Tejas cleared to carry Python-5 air-to-air missile

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: Indigenously-developed light combat aircraft Tejas has been cleared to carry fifth generation Python-5 air-to-air missile as part of its weapons package that would significantly enhance the combat prowess of the jet, officials said Wednesday.

The decision to allow Tejas to carry the missile came Tuesday following a series of trials to validate the performance of the aircraft, they said.

Tejas added the 5th generation Python-5 air-to-air missile in its air-to-air weapons capability Tuesday. Trials were also aimed to validate enhanced capability of already integrated Derby beyond visual range AAM on Tejas, said an official.

He said the test firing at Goa completed a series of missile trials to validate performance of the aircraft under extremely challenging scenarios.

Derby missile achieved direct hit on a high speed maneuvering aerial target and the Python missiles also achieved 100 per cent hits, thereby validating their complete capability. The trials met all their planned objectives, the official said.

Prior to these trials, extensive missile carriage flight tests were conducted at Bengaluru to assess integration of the missile with the aircraft systems on board the Tejas.

Python-5 missile live firing was conducted to validate target engagement from all aspects as well as beyond visual ranges. In all the live firings, missiles hit the aerial target, the official said.

Tejas, manufactured by state-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, is a single engine and highly agile multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments.

GENEROUS GESTURE



A man feeding langours during the lockdown, in Pushkar, Wednesday

'1 in 4 people experience mild side effects from Covishield'

THE LANCET STUDY ALSO FOUND THAT SIDE EFFECTS WERE MORE COMMON AMONG PEOPLE UNDER 55 YEARS OF AGE AND AMONG WOMEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 28: One in four people experience mild, short lived systemic side effects after receiving either the COVID-19 preventive by Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine, known as Covishield in India, with headache, fatigue and tenderness the most common symptoms, according to a study published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal.

The researchers from King's College London in the UK also found that most systemic side effects - meaning side effects excluding where the injection took place - peaked within the first 24 hours following vaccination and usually lasted 1-2 days.

The analysis of data from the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app



found much fewer side effects in the general population with both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines than reported in trials.

The study also reports a significant decrease of infection rates from 12 to 21 days after the first dose of the Pfizer (58 per cent re-

duction) and AstraZeneca (39 per cent reduction) vaccines compared to a control group.

The drop in infection at least 21 days after the first dose for Pfizer is 69 per cent and for AstraZeneca 60 per cent, according to the study.

Systemic effects included headache, fatigue, chills and shiver, diarrhoea, fever, arthralgia, myalgia, and nausea.

Local side effects - meaning side effects where the injection took place in the arm - included pain at the site of injection, swelling, tenderness, redness, itch, warmth and swollen armpit glands.

"The data should reassure many people that in the real world, after effects of the vaccine are usually mild and short-lived, especially in the over 50's who are most at risk

of the infection," said Professor Tim Spector, lead scientist on the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app and Professor at King's College London.

The study also found that side effects were more common among people under 55 years of age and among women.

Participants who had a confirmed case of prior COVID-19 were three times more likely to have side effects that affect the whole body after receiving doses of the Pfizer vaccine than those without known infection. Those with a confirmed case of prior COVID-19 number were almost twice more likely to have side effects that affect the whole body after the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

People with prior known COVID-

19 infection were also more likely to experience local side effects, the researchers said.

The researchers noted that in Phase III clinical trials of the Pfizer vaccine, the most common side effects were pain at the injection site (71-83 per cent), fatigue (34-47 per cent) and headache (25-42 per cent).

However, the real-world analysis found less than 30 per cent of users complained of injection site pain and less than 10 per cent of fatigue and headache after the first dose, they said.

Similarly, in Phase III trials for the AstraZeneca vaccine, systemic side effects were found in 88 per cent of younger participants (18-55 years) after the first dose but the study found a significantly lower rate of 46.2 per cent after the first dose.

international



Like many others, I have a great love for India and have enjoyed many wonderful visits to the country. Indian aid and ingenuity has been a support to other countries throughout this immensely difficult time. As India has helped others, so now we must help India
PRINCE CHARLES | PRINCE OF WALES, UK

EUROPE WILL REACH HERD IMMUNITY BY AUGUST

Europe can achieve herd immunity against the coronavirus within the next four months, the head of German pharmaceutical company BioNTech, which developed the first widely approved COVID-19 vaccine with US Partner Pfizer, said Wednesday



of the day quote

We will never permit, without the existence of due proof required, millions of Brazilians to be exposed to products without the due proof of their quality, safety and efficacy
ANTÔNIO BARRA TORRES | ANVISA'S PRESIDENT, BRAZIL

A new study shows one dose of the vaccine can cut the risk of household transmission by up to 50 per cent. This is further evidence that the vaccine protects you and those around you. When you get the call, get the jab
MATT HANCOCK | HEALTH SECRETARY, UK

I am very sorry how a secret, theoretical discussion about the necessity of increasing cooperation between diplomacy and the field (the Guard) — in order for the next officials to use the valuable experiences of the last eight years — became an internal conflict
MOHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF | FM, IRAN

India declines UN's assistance on Covid



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 28: India has declined assistance offered by the United Nations of its integrated supply chain for COVID-19 related material, saying the country has a "robust system" to deal with the required logistics, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

As India battles a crippling surge in COVID-19 infections and deaths, the United Nations has been in touch at various levels with authorities in India. Haq added that the UN is also making sure that its own staff, whether international or national, in India are taken care of so that they don't place a burden on the healthcare system of India. "And luckily, we've maintained a very low level of cases. So, we've, I think, been succeeding at trying to do that and making sure that we're not pressuring a healthcare system that is already facing extreme challenges."

We've been told at this point that it's not needed because India has a reasonably robust system to deal with this. But our offer stands, and we're willing to help in whatever way we can
FARHAN HAQ | DEPUTY SPOKESMAN, UN

"One of the things we did is we offered the assistance of our integrated supply chain if it was required. We've been told at this point that it's not needed because India has a reasonably robust system to deal with this. But our offer stands, and we're willing to help in whatever way we can," said Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the UN.

No revision of 2015 peace deal: Russia dismisses Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, April 28: Russia's foreign minister sternly warned Ukrainian officials Wednesday that Moscow would not accept their push to revise a peace deal for eastern Ukraine. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's comments followed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy calling Tuesday for a modification of the 2015 agreement and inviting other nations to help mediate the stalled peace talks between Ukraine and Russia.

Fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists erupted in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, called Donbas, shortly after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. More than 14,000 people have been killed during the seven-year conflict. In recent weeks, increasing violations of a shaky cease-fire in eastern Ukraine a Russian troop buildup across the border drew Ukrainian and Western concerns about the potential for large-scale hostilities.

The 2015 deal, which was brokered by France and Germany, marked a diplomatic coup for Russia, obliging Ukraine to offer broad autonomy to the rebel regions and amnesty for the rebels.

UK PM faces formal probe over apartment renovation funding



AGENCIES

London, April 28: Britain's electoral commission opened a formal investigation into the financing of the refurbishment of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street apartment, saying there were grounds to suspect an offence may have been committed.

Eight days before local elections across England, as well as the election of the Welsh and Scottish regional assemblies, Johnson is facing a stream of allegations about everything from his muddled initial handling of the COVID-19 crisis to questions about who leaked what from his office.

"We are now satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence or offences may have occurred," the electoral commission said. "We will therefore continue this work as a formal investigation to establish whether

this is the case." The commission said it had been in contact with the Conservative party since late March.

The investigation will determine whether any transactions relating to the works at 11 Downing Street fall within the regime regulated by the Commission and whether such funding was reported as required. Asked last month about the refurbishment, Johnson's spokeswoman said all donations, gifts and benefits were properly declared, and that no Conservative Party funds were being used to pay for the refurbishment.

Johnson has a taxpayer-funded 30,000 pound (\$42,000) allowance each year for maintaining and furnishing his official residence, but anything above that must be met by the prime minister.

Ministers have said Johnson has paid for the work himself, but it is unclear when he paid, and whether the refurbishment, reported to have cost 200,000 pounds (\$280,000) was initially financed by a loan of some kind. Under political financing rules, Johnson would have been required to declare this.

The opposition Labour Party has demanded an explanation.

US Navy fires warning shots in new tense encounter with Iran

The Navy said the USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack guard vessels came within 62 meters of it and the US Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 28: An American warship fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf, the US Navy said Wednesday.

The Navy released black-and-white footage of the encounter in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf. In it, lights can be seen in the distance and what appears to be a single gunshot can be heard, with a tracer round racing across the top of the water. Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

The Navy said the USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack Guard vessels came within 68 yards (62 meters) of it and the U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff. "The US crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the (Guard) ves-



sels continued their close range maneuvers," said Cmdr Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the Mideast-based 5th Fleet.

"The crew of Firebolt then fired warning shots, and the (Guard) vessels moved away to a safe distance from the U.S. Vessels." She called on the Guard to "operate with due regard for the safety of all vessels as required by international law." "US naval forces continue to remain vigilant and are trained to act in a professional manner, while our commanding officers retain the inherent right to act in self-defence," she said.

The interaction marked the first "unsafe and unprofessional" inci-

dent involving the Iranians since April 15, 2020, Rebarich said. However, Iran had largely stopped such incidents in 2018 and nearly in the entirety of 2019, she said.

The incidents at sea almost always involve the Revolutionary Guard, which reports only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Typically, they involve Iranian speedboats armed with deck-mounted machine guns and rocket launchers test-firing weapons or shadowing American aircraft carriers passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20 per cent of all oil passes.

Some analysts believe the incidents are meant in part to squeeze President Hassan Rouhani's administration after the 2015 nuclear deal. They include a 2016 incident in which Iranian forces captured and held overnight 10 US sailors who strayed into the Islamic Republic's territorial waters.

SHORT TAKES

Miscreants blaze 9 buses, 5 shops

Dhaka: The miscreants Wednesday blazed nine buses parked at the Bandura Bazar bus counter in Dhaka's Nawabganj and set afire five shops. However, no casualties were reported immediately. The incident took place around 11 am. The fire has been extinguished and the situation is under control by the four units of fire service and civil defence team, confirmed Md Raihan, Director of the media team of Fire Service.

Russia expels 7 diplomats

Moscow: Russia's foreign ministry Wednesday ordered the expulsion of seven diplomats from Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, in retaliation for the expulsion of Russian envoys. Russia accused the four countries of showing "pseudo-solidarity" with the Czech Republic, which ordered most Russian diplomatic staff in Prague to leave last week after accusing Russian spies of being behind a 2014 blast at an ammunition depot. Russia has dismissed the accusations as absurd.

Suicide bombing in Somalia capital

Mogadishu: At least seven people were killed and more than 11 others wounded when a vehicle exploded outside a police headquarters in Somalia's capital, police and health officials said Wednesday. The al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility. A police spokesman, Col. Abdiqani Mohamed Qalaf, said the suicide bomber tried to drive into the headquarters near the ex-control Afgoye road but was thwarted.

Indonesia seizes 2.5 tons of meth

Jakarta: Indonesian police said they shot dead one and arrested 17 other people as they broke up a major drug ring attempting to smuggle more than 2.5 tons (5,000 pounds) of methamphetamine originating from Afghanistan. Police found the first load of more than 1,278 tons board a ship that docked in Aceh Besar district April 10. Five days later, police seized another 1,267 tons from Aceh Barat district, said the chief of Indonesia's National Police, Listyo Sigit Prabowo.

MAGICAL MOON



The supermoon is seen behind the sculptures on the roof of the cathedral in Dresden, Germany

'Covaxin found to neutralise 617 variant of COVID'

Covaxin works by teaching the immune system to make antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, says Dr Anthony Fauci



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 28: Covaxin, India's home grown COVID-19 vaccine, has been found to neutralise the 617 variant of the deadly virus, said White House chief medical adviser and America's top pandemic expert Dr Anthony Fauci.

"This is something where we're still gaining data on a daily basis. But the most recent data, was looking at convalescent Sera of COVID-19 cases and people who received the vaccine used in India, the Covaxin. It was found to neutralise the 617 variants," he said.

"So, despite the real difficulty that we're seeing in India, vaccination could be a very, very important antidote against this," Fauci added. "Covaxin works

by teaching the immune system to make antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. The antibodies attach to viral proteins, such as the so-called spike proteins that stud its surface," Fauci said in an interview.

Developed by Bharat Biotech in partnership with National Institute of Virology and the Indian Council of Medical Research,

Covaxin was approved for emergency use January 3. Trial results later showed the vaccine has an efficacy of 78 per cent.

Responding to a question, Dr Andy Slavitt, White House COVID-19 Response Senior Advisor, said that a strike team

from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is headed over to India to help coordinate this response.

"We are making sure that we are locating some of the raw materials necessary to create more vaccines in India, which I think is going to be an important help there," he said.

Given the strong portfolio of approved, highly effective and safe vaccines here in the United States, the administration is looking at options to share AstraZeneca vaccines with other countries as they become available. This should amount to around 60 million doses or so over the next two months, he added.

NASA astronaut successfully harvests 2 plants in space

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, April 28: NASA's Expedition 64 crew member, Michael Hopkins has harvested two crops in space — 'Amara' mustard, and a previously grown crop, 'Extra Dwarf' pak choi. They were grown for 64 days, the longest leafy greens have grown on station, the US space agency said.

The pak choi grew for so long that it began to flower as part of its reproduction cycle. Hopkin's efforts in eclipsing the mark included using a small paintbrush to pollinate plant flowers.

"I wasn't at all surprised that he chose this route to make sure the plants were fully pollinated because he has always wanted to be very involved," Matt Romeyn, a space crop production project scientist and science lead on the four-plant experiments, said in a statement Tuesday.

"After he used the paintbrush, we saw a high seed production rate," he added.

Hopkins ate the pak choi as a side dish, with leaves marinated in an empty tortilla package. He added soy sauce and garlic, and put it in a small food warmer for 20 to



30 minutes, NASA shared in a post.

Astronauts have been enjoying the Amara mustard "like a lettuce wrap," Hopkins explained, adding ingredients such as chicken, soy sauce, and balsamic vinegar.

"Delicious, plus the texture or crunch," he wrote in the experiment notes after sampling Amara mustard grown in space.

While the astronauts' pre-packaged food offers variety and nutrition, fresh crops deliver an appealing addition. Hopkins said the plants were a much-appreciated "connection to Earth" and that connection is one reason he uses his per-

sonal time to be a space gardener.

The experiment is important because fruit crops require pollination, and crews need to understand how the process works in microgravity and, eventually, in reduced gravity.

As part of the Plant Habitat-04 experiment, the Kennedy Space Center will send pepper seeds to the space station later this year. The pepper seeds will fly on SpaceX's 22nd Commercial Resupply Services mission and will grow in the Advanced Plant Habitat. A VEG-05 experiment with dwarf tomatoes is also planned for veggie next year, NASA said.

business



We are supporting efforts to increase vaccination among IBMers. For those who volunteer, we are creating a decentralised distribution model where IBMers and their covered family members can get the vaccine in any approved center/facility
ARVIND KRISHNA | CEO, IBM

PROVIDE INCENTIVES ON EV PURCHASE: NITI

Government think-tank Niti Aayog has said the government should provide incentives on electric vehicle (EV) purchase over and above the existing subsidy under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and EV (FAME-II) scheme



of the day quote

With the fresh uncertainties wrought by the second wave, and the likelihood of additional support measures being limited, the credit ratio is now likely to stall. The pace of recovery would undoubtedly be arrested by the recent surge in Covid-19 infections and associated localised restrictions



RAMNATH KRISHNAN | PRESIDENT, ICRA

We focus on the best business practices and processes for environment, social and economic sustainability. This proposed project aligns well with our ongoing farmer engagement and environment programmes along with its sustainability initiatives



VK ARORA | CHAIRMAN, LT FOODS

With an aim to further expand hiring for multiple roles across the technology landscape, we are targeting to reach more than 1,000 employees by the end of this year



RAVI TANGIRALA | HEAD OF GCC, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

We want foreign partners: ONGC

New Delhi: India's flagship oil and gas producer ONGC Wednesday said it is seeking foreign partners for yet-to-be-developed fields in lesser prospective areas but is shackled by uneconomic gas prices and tax structure. Reacting to a report on the Petroleum Ministry asking ONGC to sell stake in producing oil fields to private firms, get foreign partners in KG basin gas fields, monetise existing infrastructure and give off drilling.

SpiceXpress airlifts O₂ concentrators

Mumbai: Budget carrier SpiceJet's dedicated freighter arm SpiceXpress Wednesday said it has airlifted 1,000 oxygen concentrators from Hong Kong to Delhi amid a shortage of medical oxygen in the country. Ordered by SpiceHealth for emergency use and distribution across India, the oxygen concentrators will reach Delhi via Kolkata, SpiceJet said.

'Amazon most desirable to work at'

San Francisco: Based on company's ability to attract, develop and retain talent, Microsoft-owned professional networking platform LinkedIn Wednesday named Amazon as the most desirable workplace in the US for 2021. In the 2021 LinkedIn Top Companies List, Amazon was followed by Alphabet, JP Morgan Chase, AT&T and Bank of America as the top five. Amazon is up from number 3 in 2019. This annual list uses data from LinkedIn's 740mn members across the globe to rank the most sought-after places to work for professionals in the US.

Post-Brexit trade treaty gets nod

Brussels: European Union (EU) leaders, their British counterparts and European businesses expressed hope Wednesday that the final ratification of the post-Brexit trade deal will open a new, positive era of cooperation despite the many divisive topics remaining between the former partners. After European lawmakers overwhelmingly ratified the agreement ensuring that free trade continues between the two sides without tariffs and quotas, UK PM Boris Johnson said the vote provided stability to a new relationship with the EU as vital trading partners.

From Amazon to Tata, industry steps up to combat crisis

REUTERS

Bangalore, April 28: Global and Indian firms are flexing their industrial muscle to help the world's second biggest population battle coronavirus, coming to the rescue of a public health system buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths.

Amazon, Intel and Google, as well as Indian firms Tata Sons, Reliance Industries and JSW Steel have pitched in with everything from airlifts of medical equipment and funding pledges to making medical oxygen.

"What we need is better planning with the recognition that government's capacity is limited and therefore requires private participation," said economist Madhura

COVID IN INDIA



Swaminathan of the Indian Statistical Institute in Bangalore. Hospitals struggling with a massive second wave of infections are turning away patients as beds and oxygen supplies run out, and social media brim with desperate calls

for help in finding supplies of oxygen and drugs such as remdesivir. A record increase in deaths over the prior 24 hours carried India's toll past 200,000 on

Wednesday, a situation that experts blame on lack of oxygen supplies and infrastructure challenges.

Amazon, Tuesday said it would ship 100 ICU ventilator units to India from the United States. It had earlier worked with partners to airlift more than 8,000 oxygen concentrators and 500 ventilators from Singapore, relying on its massive global logistics network to hasten procurement, a spokeswoman said.

Google promised \$18 million in new funding for India, including advertising support for public health campaigns.

India's largest steel maker by

market value, JSW, has stopped making some of the construction raw material as it diverts resources to turning out liquid oxygen instead.

From April 21 to 23, JSW supplied 898 tonnes of oxygen each day from its plants, equivalent to about 13% of the combined daily demand for 6,785 tonnes of the life-saving gas in India's 20 worst-hit states.

JSW said it was building large Covid patient centres around its plants, so that they can be serviced via a pipeline. Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries tweaked manufacturing at its oil refineries to produce hundreds of tonnes of oxygen for hard-hit areas such as Maharashtra, India's richest and worst-hit state.

What we need is better planning with the recognition that government's capacity is limited and therefore requires private participation
MADHURA SWAMINATHAN | ECONOMIST, INDIAN STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

Country's GDP to grow at 11% this fiscal: ADB



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 28: ADB Wednesday said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11% in the current financial year on the back of the strong vaccination programme, but cautioned that second wave of Covid is worrying. "India's economy is expected to grow 11% in fiscal year (FY) 2021, which ends on March 31, 2022, amid a strong vaccine drive. However, the recent surge in Covid-19 cases may put this recovery at risk," said the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2021.

Continued economic recovery boosted by increased public in-

vestment, vaccine rollout and a surge in domestic demand will trigger this strong rebound, ADB said.

The predictions are based on assumption that there is extensive

vestment, vaccine rollout and a surge in domestic demand will trigger this strong rebound, ADB said. The predictions are based on assumption that there is extensive

vaccine deployment across the country and the second wave of coronavirus is contained.

According to ADB's flagship publication Asian Development Outlook, "the second wave of Covid-19 cases is worrying, especially if vaccine rollout falters or fails to contain it."

Another risk is the further tightening of global financial conditions, which would apply pressure on India's market interest rates and therefore affect economic normalisation, the report added.

Going further, ADB forecasts India's economic growth to moderate to 7% in FY2022, on account of disappearance of base effect. The economy is expected to have contracted by 8% in FY2020, in line with the government's second advance estimate, it said.

ADB Country Director for India Takeo Konishi said India's economy faced its worst contraction in FY2020 due to the Covid-19 shock.

"With large government stimulus and the ongoing vaccination drive, we expect economic activity will continue its recovery that started from the third quarter of FY2020 and rebound strongly in the current fiscal year with an uptick in domestic demand, especially in urban services," said Konishi.

Nine projects worth ₹2,570cr gets state nod

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 28: The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) Wednesday approved nine industrial projects worth ₹2,570.54 crore. The projects approved by SLSWCA, chaired by Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, are in metal and metal downstream, manufacturing, plastic, cement, chemical and food processing sectors.

The projects include a 15 MTPA beneficiation plant in two phases by M/s Amalgam Resources Private Limited with an investment of ₹882 crore to be set up in Joda, in Keonjhar district and a 3 MTPA Iron Ore Satellite Grinding Unit and 3 MTPA Slurry Pipeline along with return water pipeline by M/s Ardent Steel Limited with an investment of ₹80.5 crore to be set up in Banspal, in Keonjhar.

The SLSWCA approved a proposal of the M/s Safe Lancet Engineering Private to set up units for Manufacturing razor shaving blades of 45 crore units annual capacity and disposable razors of 3 crore units with an investment of ₹100 crore at Khordha.

An 8,75,000 MTPA capacity Integrated Carbon Complex in two phases by M/s. Epsilon Carbon



Ashoka Pvt. Ltd. At an estimated investment of ₹900 crore to be set up in Rengali, in Sambalpur district was also cleared.

The proposal of M/S Orient paper and Industries Limited to set up a 120 TPD Chloro-Alkali Complex in Brajrajnagar in Jharsuguda district was also cleared at an investment of ₹162 crore.

The other project approved was a Grain-based distillery unit of capacity 200 KLPD for manufacturing of Ethanol and an IMFL bottling unit with capacity of 1.50 lakh cases per annum along with 5 MW co-generation power plant to be implemented in two phases by M/s Coastal Biotech Private Limited with an investment of ₹200 crore to be set up in Gajapati district. The M/s Ramky Enviro Engineers Ltd proposal to set up an integrated common hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal facility at an investment of ₹128.80 crore in Burujuguda in Rayagada was also cleared at the meeting.

BOOST TO INDUSTRY

BIZ BUZZ

Samsung launches Galaxy M42 5G

Bhubaneswar: Samsung, India's smartphone brand, announced the launch of Galaxy M425G, its first mid-segment 5G device. Powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G processor, the Galaxy M42 5G is the fastest smartphone. Galaxy M42 5G also comes with Samsung Knox, Samsung's defense-grade mobile security platform. The model is available at ₹21,999 (6GB + 128 GB) and ₹23,999 (8GB + 128 GB) with having Prism Dot Black and Prism Dot Gray colours. As part of a special introductory offer, consumers can purchase Galaxy M42 5G at a special price of ₹19,999 for the 6GB variant and ₹21,999 for the 8GB variant on Samsung.com and during Amazon's online sale in May.



Telecom industry alerts against frauds

Bhubaneswar: The telecom industry represented by COAI and TAIPA the apex representative bodies of telecom service providers and telecom infrastructure providers respectively, have cautioned the public against fraud related to the installation of mobile towers on their properties. The public is cautioned against certain companies, agencies, or individuals who are fraudulently approaching people and asking them to deposit money in their personal or company accounts in the name of government tax for leasing their premises for installation of mobile towers. The same individuals are also offering fake "No Objection Certificates" from the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology for the installation of towers.

'Concerted efforts of CIL employees ensures nation's power sufficiency'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: Concerted efforts by employees of Coal India Limited (CIL) for continuous supply of dry fuel to the power plants can ensure energy sufficiency in the country to fight Covid-19 pandemic, said PK Sinha, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL).

Addressing a webinar on 'Anticipate, prepare and respond to crisis: Invest now in resilient Occupational Safety & Health (OHS)' organised by MCL, Sinha said, "In this hour of crisis, when the entire country is facing the Covid-19 challenge, we have to strategise our OHS plan in view the Covid-19 challenge to ensure continuous and uninterrupted coal supply to power



plants, as electricity is the key to run the healthcare system and its supporting industry."

The webinar was organised on the occasion of ILO's World Day for Safety and Health at Work-2021.

Taking a cue from the oxygen shortage in the country, Sinha said, "We have to be very cautious about the occupational health of our teams to ensure that supply of coal remains uninterrupted to the power plants across the country without

facing any electricity shortage in want of coal."

While there is sufficient stock of over 20 MT coal available in MCL alone, the CMD pointed out that the team members engaged in coal dispatch operations contracting Covid-19 infection, or other health-related issues, could be the bottleneck.

Sinha, who is also the CMD of sister subsidiary Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), stressed on employees and contractors' workers to ensure Covid-19's appropriate behaviour at all walks of life.

"We also have spread awareness about Covid-19's appropriate behaviour among the peripheral population so that a healthy environment remains in place to ensure optimum productivity," he added.

'Consumers prioritise health, safety over discretionary spends'

THE SURVEY SAID THAT WITH RESPECT TO INDIA, WHICH IS SEEING A RAPID RISE IN COVID CASES, THE CONSUMER IS SEEN TO BE CAUTIOUSLY APPROACHING THE FUTURE BY PRIORITISING HEALTH SAFETY AND PREFERRING ONLINE CHANNELS FOR PURCHASES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 28: Health and safety are at the core of all important consumption led decisions with the Covid-19 pandemic extending its grip across the globe, according to the latest wave of 30-day analysis-based consumer survey by Deloitte.

The survey said that with respect to India, which is seeing a significant increase in Covid cases, the consumer is seen to be cautiously approaching the future by prioritising health safety, preferring online channels for purchases, and choosing to delay large purchases.

"Our survey insights are a reflection of the heightened consumer

apprehensions, which are at the core of their decision-making. As the health crisis again takes centerstage in the country, the average Indian consumer prefers to use digital and online channels wherever applicable," said Porus Doctor, partner and consumer industry leader, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP.

Throughout the pandemic, online medium has emerged as the preferred channel for purchase and continues to grow. The survey brought out that 22% of the consumers were buying online medicine, followed by electronics (34%), clothing (33%), online food from restaurants/takeaways (33%), and if available, the next vehicle on-



line (57%) due to the various restrictions. But during the current race of the pandemic, the con-

sumption pattern of consumers brings out a cautious approach. The survey said the spending intent

shows that consumers are focussing more on non-discretionary items as compared to the previous waves of the survey.

For instance, 48% consumers show net spending intent towards healthcare, 33% towards medicines, 42% towards internet, 47% towards groceries and 44% towards household goods, indicating that consumers want to focus on non-discretionary spends in the time of crisis.

Moreover, the consumer persona shows that stock piler (63%), convenience seeker (69%) and bargain hunter (51%) still remain high among the Indian consumers, as per the survey. Also, Indians are significantly

MSI to shut Haryana factories to divert O₂ for medical use

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 28: Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) has announced the closure of its factories in Haryana to make oxygen available for medical requirements.



In a statement, the company said that as part of the car manufacturing process, Maruti Suzuki uses a small amount of oxygen in its factories while relatively much larger quantities are used by the manufacturers of components.

"In the current situation, we believe that all available oxygen should be used to save lives.

Accordingly, Maruti Suzuki has decided to advance its maintenance shutdown, originally scheduled for June, to 1st to 9th May," it said. It also said that Suzuki Motor Gujarat has also decided to shut its factory

Jindal Stainless despatches LMO from Jajpur facility

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 28: With an aim to reduce the oxygen shortage, Jindal Stainless has begun the supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) from its Jajpur facility in state.

"Over 40 MT of LMO is being despatched on a daily basis to meet the increasing demand of LMO in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and other states as required. Till date, about 128 MT of LMO has already been despatched for various medical facilities," stated a release by the company.

Managing Director, Jindal Stainless Abhyuday Jindal said, "Both in Haryana and Jajpur, we're extending all possible support to respective governments by ensuring an uninterrupted supply of oxygen from our facilities, irrespective of the impact on operations."



Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Jindal Stainless, Haryana, has been consistently supplying LMO of around 8 MT per day to all medical facilities in and around the plant. Nearly 2,170 MT of LMO has been supplied in a year till date to various hospitals.

"Through its 580-bedded multi-specialty hospital in Haryana, Jindal Institute of Medical Sciences, Jindal Stainless has been actively fighting the pandemic since last year.

Isolation wards, screening units, telephonic consultations, 150 ICU beds, 60 ventilators, and several other facilities have been activated to their maximum capacity to help patients," the release mentioned.

more concerned about returning to the workplace than they were in February 2021. About 28% today worry about returning to their offices, as compared to 15% in February 2021, said the Deloitte survey.

Individuals are not looking to venture out as they do not feel safe about going to a store, restaurant, staying in a hotel, returning to workplace, taking a flight etc., the survey brought out.

The other aspects captured by the survey includes a vast majority of consumers (67%) preferring more locally sourced items going forward even if they cost a bit more while 71% prefer brands that responded well during the pandemic.

Rutu, Faf script CSK win



RUTURAJ GAIKWAD



FAF DU PLESSIS

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, April 28: Ruturaj Gaikwad's (75, 44b, 12x4) cool quotient blended beautifully with Faf du Plessis' (56, 6x4, 1x6) flamboyance as Chennai Super Kings outsmarted Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets in an IPL match here, Wednesday. Gaikwad was calmness personified as he tore apart the Sunrisers' attack after Du Plessis launched the initial assault, making a target of 172 looking easier than it actually was. The win was CSK's fifth on trot which helped them leapfrog Royal Challengers Bangalore to the top of the table while Hyderabad stayed at the bottom. There was a stage at the end of the Powerplay, when Du Plessis

had scored double the runs of his younger partner but before one could bat an eyelid, the Pune batsman was on even keel with the former Proteas captain. And once both crossed 50, Du Plessis enjoyed Gaikwad's repertoire of strokes from the best seat in the house. The temperament was there for everyone to see and one would understand why MS Dhoni has been bullish about giving the youngster every possible opportunity despite a dry run at the start of the tournament. A pitch that his skipper Dhoni had termed a bit tacky before the start of the match looked like a batting paradise. The dew did play its part but not an ounce of credit can be taken away from the batsmen. By the time Rashid Khan (3/36)

quickly accounted for Gaikwad after a 129 run opening stand followed by Moeen Ali (15) and Du Plessis, SRH captain David Warner had a resigned look on his face. Two wickets in successive deliveries off Rashid reduced CSK to 148/3 at the end of the 15th over. However, Suresh Raina (17 n o) and Ravindra Jadeja (7 n o) comfortably sealed the victory for the Dhoni-led side with nine balls to spare. Earlier, after opting to bat, contrasting half-centuries from Manish Pandey (61, 46b, 5x4, 1x6) and skipper David Warner (57, 55b, 3x4, 2x6) along with a cameo from Kane Williamson ensured a decent 171/3 for SRH. Warner and Pandey added 106 runs for the second wicket at the Kotla but it was Williamson's 26

not out off 10 balls and Kedar Jadhav's 12 off 4 balls which ensured a competitive total for SRH. Lungi Ngidi was the best bowler for CSK, returning figures of 2/35 from 4 overs while Sam Curran (1/30) got the other wicket. Warner, who passed 10,000 T20 runs during the course of his innings, appeared frustrated at times at the inability to force the pace on a track where ball wasn't always coming onto the bat during his 50th IPL half century. **BRIEF SCORES**
Sunrisers Hyderabad 171/3 (Manish Pandey 61, David Warner 57; Lungi Ngidi 2/35) **lost to Chennai Super Kings 173/3** (Ruturaj Gaikwad 75, Faf du Plessis 56; Rashid Khan 3/36) **by 7 wickets.**

MI LOOK TO RETURN TO WINNING WAYS

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, April 28: Defending champions Mumbai Indians will look to sort out their middle-order woes and bring their campaign back on track when they take on an inconsistent Rajasthan Royals in an IPL game here, Thursday. MI are coming into the match after suffering back-to-back losses, the last one being a nine-wicket defeat against Punjab Kings in Chennai and need to start the Delhi leg afresh. The Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan have lost thrice in the tournament so far and will seek to build on the six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in the previous match. Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma (201 runs) has got starts but hasn't played a big knock and the Mumbaier would be itching to get one as would be his opening partner Quinton De Kock (47 runs). But Mumbai's middle order, which boasts of hard-hitting batsmen like Suryakumar Yadav (154 runs), Ishan Kishan (73 runs), Hardik Pandya (36 runs), Krunal Pandya (29 runs) and Kieron Pollard (65 runs), hasn't fired in unison so far. In the bowling department, pace duo of Trent Boult (6 wickets) and Jasprit Bumrah (4 wick-



ets) have been exceptional, particularly at the death. Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar (9 wickets) and Krunal (3 wickets) have also been impressive and will again need to play their parts to perfection. Pollard is used as the fifth or the sixth bowler. Mumbai, however, might play Adam Milne in place of Jayant Yadav. Rajasthan, on the other hand, have a lot of issues to ponder over; particularly in the absence of key foreign players - Jofra Archer, Ben Stokes, Liam Livingstone and Andrew Tye. RR are yet to have a settled opening combination. They tried Manan Vohra (42 runs) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (22 runs) at the top but both failed to convert their starts. Englishman Jos Buttler would need to score big to compliment his skipper Sanju Samson, who is the team's leading run-scorer (187) despite being inconsistent. And the likes Shivam Dube, David Miller and Riyan Parag, would have to support the top order by chipping in with much-needed contributions. All-rounder Chris Morris (9 wickets and 48 runs) has blown hot and cold and will again be under pressure to deliver his high price tag. Left-arm pacer Chetan Sakariya (7 wickets) has been a revelation, while the experienced duo of Jaydev Unadkat (4 wickets) and Mustafizur Rahman (4 wickets) have been decent. Leg-spinner Rahul Tewatia has got just one wicket from five games, while Shreyas Gopal, another leggie, has gone wicket-less in the two games he has played.

KKR face tough DC test



Press Trust of India

Ahmedabad, April 28: Kolkata Knight Riders' floundering batting will be put to test once again as they look to build a winning momentum against a star-studded Delhi Capitals in their Indian Premier League match here Thursday. KKR's batting woes emanate right from the top with the highly talented Shubman Gill continuing his poor run - 89 runs from six outings. While their bowling, especially the 'master-apprentice' spin duo of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, have done an excellent job in restricting the oppositions, KKR's top order batting has hurt them the most. Against a DC batting line-up boasting tournament's leading run getter Shikhar Dhawan (265 runs), Prithvi Shaw, Steve Smith and the dangerous Rishabh Pant, KKR can't afford any more slip-up if they want to continue their as-



piracy in the IPL points table. First-up, KKR skipper Eoin Morgan will have to fix the Gill conundrum. With scores of 15, 33, 21, 0, 11 and 9, the opener has failed to impress, extending his poor run of form from the England Test series. It would not be a bad ploy to drop Gill down the order and bring back Narine to open with Rahul Tripathi, something that was suggested by the legendary Sunil Gavaskar. The top order reshuffle may be the way forward as the likes of Morgan, Andre Russell and Dinesh Karthik looked to have found their mojo in the middle. Thursday's clash will see a mini battle between the Caribbean duo of Russell and Shimon Hetmyer who will be anxious to do well after the Capitals suffered an agonising one-run defeat against Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Tuesday. Chasing 172 for a win, the Capitals were struggling at 92 for

4 but Hetmyer upped the ante in company of his captain and another left-hander Pant as the duo smashed explosive half centuries but only to go down in a last-ball thriller. Russell too looked in his elements when he smashed Chennai Super Kings bowlers all around the park in his 22-ball 54 but only in a losing cause. It remains to be seen who among the Caribbean duo wins the battle Thursday. After Ravichandran Ashwin's pulling out, the Capitals' bowling got a boost from Ishant Sharma who cleaned up the in-form Devdutt Padikkal with a peach of a delivery en route to a tidy 1/26. KKR batting will be put to test against the likes of Ishant, Kagiso Rabada and young gun Avesh Khan, while the spin duo of Amit Mishra and Axar Patel will also look to make an impact. **TODAY'S MATCHES**
MI vs RR
TIME 3.30 PM
KKR vs DC
TIME 7.30 PM
Telecast: Star Sports channels

Chartered flight plan under consideration

Press Trust of India

Melbourne, April 28: A chartered flight to bring back Australian cricketers after the IPL in India is under consideration, the country's players union said Wednesday even as sports minister Richard Colbeck made it clear that such a move has not yet been cleared by the government Down Under. Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) chief Todd Greenberg said Cricket Australia will talk to the IPL franchise owners on this arrangement but conceded that it will not be a simple thing. "That's one of the conversations we're having with Cricket Australia at the moment about whether or not that's something that's available to us," Greenberg said on 2GB radio as quoted by 'Sydney Morning Herald'. "We can also work with all the owners of the Premier League franchises who are effectively contracting the players. There's certainly a conversation to be had about that," he added.



Todd Greenberg, ACA chief

"They're not simple things to organise, as you'd imagine. If we can try to find a seamless approach to AUSSIE PLAYERS' RETURN AFTER IPL get them home safely that's something between us and CA and our players that we'll work on."

The BCCI has already assured the IPL's foreign recruits that their safe return home will be its responsibility once the tournament ends May 30. India is facing an explosion of COVID-19 cases and the nation's health infrastructure has been severely strained dealing with lakhs of daily new cases. "Be rest assured that the tournament is not over for BCCI till

each one of you has reached your home, safe and sound," the Indian Board's COO Hemang Amin said Tuesday in a letter addressed to the players. Any such chartered flight would require the approval of the Australian government and Colbeck said no decision has been taken on this matter as yet. "There aren't any decisions that have been made yet with respect to (approval for a charter flight for) the cricketers," Colbeck told ABC radio. "One of the reasons for the pause was to give our hotel quarantine a little bit of space because of the load we've seen out of India," he said. As a second wave of COVID-19 infections battered India, the Australian government Tuesday suspended air travel with the country besides asking players to make their "own arrangements" for return. Even before that announcement, the fear of being locked out drove the likes of Andrew Tye to take an early flight back to Australia along with Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa.

Advantage Chelsea against Real Madrid in CL

Associated Press

Madrid, April 28: With a dominant start and a milestone goal by Christian Pulisic, Chelsea showed its strength against Real Madrid in the Champions League semifinals. The second leg is in London, May 5. Chelsea took control early in Tuesday's first leg to hold the Spanish powerhouse to a 1-1 away draw, with Pulisic becoming the first US international to score in the tournament's last four. He also surpassed DaMarcus Beasley to become the top American scorer in Champions League history with five goals. A red-hot Karim Benzema equalized for a lackluster Madrid squad on a rainy night at the Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium in the first Champions League match since the controversial Super League folded last week amid widespread criticism. The largely closed break-away competition would have had Real Madrid as one of its leaders, and Chelsea also was among its founding members before dropping the idea along with the other English clubs. Madrid didn't officially back out of the Super League but had downplayed the possibility of retaliation



SMART PLAY: Christian Pulisic dribbles past a diving Thibaut Courtois before firing into the net for Chelsea's goal against Real Madrid, Tuesday

by UEFA in its Champions League matches. There were no refereeing controversies in Tuesday's match. Chelsea got off to a fast start and had chances to add to their lead after Pulisic opened the scoring with a nice finish in the 14th minute off a high pass by Antonio Rudiger

inside the area. Pulisic calmly got past goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois before hitting the net past the Madrid defenders trying to block his shot at the goal line. Pulisic is the second US international to play in a Champions League semifinal after Beasley for PSV Eindhoven in a first-leg game

against AC Milan in 2005. Madrid evened the match on Benzema's volley from inside the area in the 29th, and there were few significant chances either way during the rest of the game. Benzema's goal came a few minutes after he clipped the post with a long-range shot. The French striker

controlled a loose ball with his head before turning and firing a volley into the top of the net for his 13th goal in his last 14 matches. It was Benzema's 16th goal in his last 17 home games with Madrid. Chelsea gave little space to Madrid and was the more dangerous team early on at the Di Stefano in Madrid's training complex. The hosts struggled defensively with their setup of three central defenders. Not long before Pulisic's opener, Timo Werner had his strike from in front of the goal stopped by a superb reflex save by Courtois, a former Chelsea player. Former Chelsea forward Eden Hazard, coming off a long injury lay-off, entered the match in the second half but couldn't find spaces to spark Madrid to victory. Madrid, making a record 14th semifinal appearance, won three straight Champions League titles from 2016-18, before Cristiano Ronaldo left, but the 13-time champion was eliminated in the round of 16 in the last two editions. Chelsea won the European title in 2012 and returned to the semifinals two years later, but hadn't been back to the last four since. Tuchel is trying to make it to a second consecutive final after a runner-up finish with PSG last season.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Venue shifted
NEW DELHI: The Asian Boxing Championship, which was scheduled to be held here next month, was Wednesday moved to Dubai because of the deepening COVID-19 crisis in India but the national federation will remain a co-host along with its UAE counterpart. The tournament was to be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium May 21-31 in the national capital, which is recording over 20,000 daily cases right now. The ASBC stated that the upcoming edition will now take place between May 21 and June 1.

Tourney unlikely
NEW DELHI: The three-team Women's T20 challenge, which is held during the IPL, is unlikely to go ahead this year given the current restrictions imposed by countries on air travel with India due to the massive spike in COVID-19 cases here. While the BCCI was planning a camp for the Indian women, the tournament has hit choppy waters as none of the Australian, English, South African or West Indies cricketers will be able to travel to India because of the unprecedented 'health crisis'.

India miss Olympic qualifier World Relays
NEW DELHI: An Indian athletics team, including star sprinters Dutee Chand and Hima Das, was Wednesday forced out of next month's Olympic qualifying World Athletics Relays in Poland after the suspension of a connecting flight to Amsterdam owing to a record-shattering spike in COVID-19 cases here. The women's 4x100m and the men's 4x400m relay teams were to board a KLM flight to Amsterdam in the wee hours Thursday but the Dutch government suspended flights from India effective Monday evening. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) tried to book an alternate flight available to any European city en route to Silesia in Poland where the event will be held May 1-2 as there is no direct flight to Poland from India. The Indian women's 4x100m team includes Dutee, Hima, Dhanalaxmi Sekhar, Archana Suseentran, Daneshwari TA and Himashree Roy while men's 4x400m squad is comprised of Mohammed Anas Yahya, Arokia Rajeev, Amoj Jacob, Nirmal Noah Tom and Sarthak Bhambri. The top eight teams from the World Athletics Relays will automatically qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. The World Relays would have been the first major international event for Indian sprinters since the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha in April 2019.