



LOVE FOR UNCERTAINTY

Actor Ileana DCruz says she likes to get into a sphere of uncertainty which brings out the best in her

LEISURE P2



RELIEF FROM THE US

US will be giving COVID-19 relief materials worth over USD100 million to India very soon, the White House said

INTERNATIONAL P10



MAN CITY TRIUMPH

Advantage Manchester City as they defeat PSG 2-1 in their Champions League first leg semifinal away encounter

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

OUT OF STOCK VISIT AGAIN!

We should be prepared for 'vaccines for all'. Get a couple of more such boards immediately!

New Covid test norms declared

Government asks all district-level officials to be proactive

Bhubaneswar, April 29: The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Thursday released a new set of guidelines to check delays in Covid-19 testing and delivery of reports. The norms were announced by PK Mohapatra, Additional Chief Secretary of the H&FW department. It has been circulated to all district collectors, commissioners of urban local bodies and chief district medical officers (CDMO). The department emphasised on early despatch of samples collected in the districts to the nearest labs and quick dissemination of reports. It will enable persons who test positive to follow Covid-19 protocols thereby preventing the spread of the disease. "It is essential that all persons are tested timely and quick action is taken for isolation of positive cases. In many districts, protocols are not being followed due to which there is delay in testing and isolation of affected persons," Mohapatra said in his letter to the officials. The new norms said that all Covid-19 appropriate behaviour like social distancing and wearing of masks must be followed at all testing centres across



A mobile RT-PCR test unit collects swab samples from a person in the City

COVAXIN RATE CUT TO ₹400 PER DOSE

NEW DELHI: Bharat Biotech announced Thursday a cut in price of Covaxin which it will sell to states. It reduced the price to ₹400 per dose from the earlier ₹600. The decision came after Bharat Biotech faced widespread criticism of its pricing policy as it sold Covaxin to the Centre at ₹150 per dose. "Recognising the enormous challenges in the public healthcare system, we have made Covaxin available to state governments at a price of ₹400/dose," Bharat Biotech said in its announcement. Earlier Serum Institute had Wednesday slashed the price of Covishield to ₹300 per dose from ₹400 for state governments.

SHORT TAKES

Family tests +ve, umpire quits IPL

New Delhi: India's top umpire Nitin Menon has pulled out of the ongoing IPL after his wife and mother tested positive for Covid-19, the BCCI said Thursday. Menon has left the IPL bio-bubble and returned to Indore. He was the only Indian umpire supervising in IPL matches. "Yes, Nitin has left as his immediate family members have Covid-19. He is not in a mental state to conduct games," a BCCI official said. It was also learnt that umpire Paul Reiffel wanted to quit, but changed his decision as he cannot return to Australia because of suspension of air travel with India

Naveen urges PM to waive off charges

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wrote Thursday to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to waive off ₹4,561 crore charged towards deployment of Central forces in Odisha to combat Left Wing Extremism (LWE) activities. The Ministry of Home Affairs has charged ₹4,561.23 crore to the Odisha government for deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) up to October 1, 2020. The Odisha CM said that the costs should be jointly shared by the Central and State governments because LWE is a national problem and not just a state issue. "The problem of Naxal violence has spread to large areas of India. Left Wing Extremism is a national issue and a grave internal security threat to the integrity of the nation. This major challenge has to be addressed by both Government of India and the State Government (s) jointly," Patnaik said in his letter. The Odisha government has been proactive in spending from its scanty resources in creating and deploying security forces even amidst the tight fiscal situation, Patnaik pointed out in the letter. The Odisha government has raised 15 battalions of state police, specifically to combat LWE, while another 30,000 posts in the police cadre have been created including armed troops trained specially to tackle the Maoists.



LWE is a national issue and a grave internal security threat to the integrity of the nation. So it has to be tackled jointly by the Centre and the State

NAVEEN PATNAIK

"Considering that LWE is an issue of joint responsibility, and the state government is doing its lot to combat the menace, the Centre may appreciate the difficulties of states like Odisha while charging for such deployment of Central Forces for dealing with LWE," Patnaik further stated in the letter. Earlier, the Chief Minister had requested the Centre in June, 2015 to reconsider the decision of charging the Odisha government for deployment of Central Forces. However, the proposal was rejected by the Home Ministry which said it was not feasible to exempt the state government from payment of deployment charges. The amount was charged as per policy approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security.

Import rules for medical devices eased

New Delhi, April 29: The government Thursday allowed import of 17 medical devices for three months with mandatory declarations immediately after custom clearance and before sale of such products in the domestic market. To meet rising demands in the ongoing pandemic, the government has allowed import of medical devices like nebulizer, oxygen concentrators, cannister, cylinders, oxygen generators and ventilators. An order in this regard has been issued by the Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry. "Government under the leadership of PM@ Narendra Modiji permits importers of medical devices for making mandatory declarations required under Legal Metrology Rules, 2011 after custom clearance and before sale," Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted Thursday. This will help fulfil India's demand of medical devices required



Rules have been relaxed for import of oxygen cylinders as Covid-19 rages in India

for Covid-19, he added. Due to the prevalent pandemic situation of COVID-19, the ministry in its April 28 order said, there is a steep demand for medical devices in these critical conditions on an urgent basis in view of the emergent health concerns and immediate supply of the medical industry. Therefore, considering the pandemic situation of COVID-19 and to meet the demand of medical devices, the central government under the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 hereby permits the importers of medical devices to import those for three months from the date of this advisory..", the ministry order said.

Seized Remdesivir must be used: HC

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court (HC) directed Thursday the deputy commissioner (DC) of the AAP government's revenue department to issue orders for the release of Remdesivir, used in the treatment of COVID-19, as soon as the medicine is seized by the police from hoarders and black-marketiers. A bench of justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli issued the direction to ensure that the seized medicine does not remain as case property, does not lose its effectiveness and can be administered to the patients in need. The court said once a seizure is made, the investigating officer (IO) shall immediately inform the DC of the same. Importers have been asked to inform the quantity of imported medical devices to state governments where they arrive, immediately after the shipment, it added.

MARKET WATCH

| INDEX | VAIATION |
|--------|------------------|
| SENSEX | 49765.94 ↑ 32.10 |
| NIFTY | 14894.90 ↑ 30.40 |
| DOLLAR | 74.90 ↓ ₹0.44 |
| EURO | 90.20 ↑ ₹0.05 |
| GOLD | ₹46,774 ↓ ₹319 |
| SILVER | ₹67,472 ↓ ₹314 |

WEATHER

| | BHUB | CTK |
|----------|------------------------|--------|
| TEMP MAX | 38.3°C | 36.6°C |
| TEMP MIN | 27.0°C | 26.0°C |
| Humidity | 48% | 63% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil |
| Forecast | Light rain very likely | |



Policemen get themselves sanitised before embarking on their duties at PMG Square

₹5.24 crore in fines collected from mask rule violators

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Odisha police have collected ₹5.24 crore in fines from people across the state for either not wearing masks or failing to don them properly from 1.5 lakh persons in the month of April, DGP Abhay said Thursday. Sources informed ₹4,00,000 has been collected as fines from people for failing to maintain social distancing protocols. They said the total amount of fines collected from over 1.7 lakh people in April stood at ₹5,66,000. The DGP appealed to the people to strictly follow Covid-19 protocols as that is the only way to prevent the pandemic from spreading. He also expressed satisfaction over the strict adherence to Covid-19 guidelines by a majority of people which he found during his recent visits to various districts including Nuapada, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Bhadrak, and Balasore. Abhay stated that 350 educational institutions including coaching centres have been sealed in April. During the same period 418 persons have been arrested for violation of Covid-19 rules and 18,000 vehicles have been seized. Cops have also collected ₹7 crore from vehicle owners for rule violations during the same period.

Exit polls predict Mamata retaining power in West Bengal

SAFFRON PARTY LIKELY TO SUFFER JOLT IN TAMIL NADU, FAVOURITES TO CONTINUE IN ASSAM

New Delhi, April 29: The elections to the West Bengal Assembly are finally over with the completion of the eighth and final phase of polls, Thursday. Even though, elections to three other states namely, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were also conducted in March and April, it is West Bengal which garnered maximum attention. In this state, the BJP is locked in a fierce battle with the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC). Now both the political adversaries eagerly await the results that will be announced May 2.



TMC CHIEF MAMATA BANERJEE

As far as Kerala and Tamil Nadu are concerned, the BJP is not expected to make much gains in these two states. The LDF is expected to retain power in Kerala by winning 104 to 120 seats according to the 'India Today-Axis My India' exit polls. It has predicted only two to five seats for the BJP in the southern state. The survey conducted by the same company predicts DMK and its allies to sweep power in Tamil Nadu. It said that the DMK-led combo is likely to win a staggering 174 of the 234 seats. It has said that the ruling AIADMK—the BJP's ally will finish with 57 seats.

For Assam however, the exit polls have predicted an easy win for the BJP. The 'India Today-Axis My India' survey has said BJP and its allies will win 75-85 seats while the Congress team will get 40-50 seats. The 'P-Marq' survey has said that the BJP and its associates will win 62-70 seats. Now comes the state which entire India will watch with bated breath once counting begins Sunday. Well most surveys have predicted a narrow victory for Banerjee and her party. All major exit polls have predicted that Banerjee will become the chief minister for the third time. However, the BJP will make substantial gains in West Bengal.

The 'ABPC Voter' exit polls said Banerjee is likely to retain power with her party winning anything between 152 to 164 constituencies in the 294-seat West Bengal Assembly. It has predicted 109-121 seats for the BJP while the Congress-CPI(M) alliance is likely to get 14-25 seats. The 'CNN News 18' exit poll has predicted that the TMC will win 162 seats, the BJP 115 and the Congress-CPI (M) alliance 15. 'ETG Research' has said that TMC will retain power winning anything between 164 to 176 seats while the BJP candidates will emerge victorious in 115 to 121 seats.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Your temper will be volcanic today. You're ready to pop and bust at the snap of a finger; but it just won't do. Instead of punching your boss, Ganesh suggests you burn that energy clocking a hundred laps at a pool side or simply run back home. Yes, all the 22 miles!

TAURUS
There is an unexpected occurrence waiting at every bend and turn in your path today. With maturity for sword and mellowness as shield, you will sift through everything that life throws at you. Some long-standing problems will also be solved by today evening, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
You need to beach your emotions and concentrate only on your work. Your day will be spent in meeting the demands of your family members. You will attend important meetings, be they personal or professional, in the afternoon, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Ganesh is foreseeing the conversion of your romance into marriage. But you will not have mind in the career or business and you lack enthusiasm in the same. So Ganesh advises you not to take up any new work, but finish off pending work.

LEO
While the schedule you have planned for today will see some major changes, you will still stick by your decisions resolutely. If you suspect anyone of wrongdoing, now is the time to clear your misgivings. The day may start off on a tense note but by evening, things will be peaceful and calm, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
From a tedious, weary morning, the day will gradually turn out to be very thrilling in the evening, says Ganesh. In the afternoon, though, you may hit a roadblock, and you will feel stressed out.

LIBRA
Ganesh says higher officials at work will shower you with appreciation and praise for your efforts. You may even be able to get a promotion or a pay rise today. There may be intensive arguments with your enemies. New relationships will get a chance to blossom today.

SCORPIO
Not so good, not so bad, is what you would feel after the day gets over. And average day at business with no major loss, foresees Ganesh. A feeling of insecurity may upset you, making you restless. Try to divert your mind by reading a self-help book. Await for a new dawn in your life.

SAGITTARIUS
Like a true Archer, targets are your aim today and focus, the buzzword. On the business front, the fast buck that you expected may not materialise. Though love may portray a rosy picture for you, today you end up having a tough time managing relationship. Be patient, advises Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You will fully utilise your talents and earn a reputation of perfectionist in your area of work. If you are stuck in a legal battle or dispute, it will come an end on a positive note. You will understand the importance of constructive criticism and learn to improve upon your behaviour, foresees Ganesh. Your opponents will get the hint that you are better than them.

AQUARIUS
It is the day of the creative people like musicians, artists, and orators. You will look beyond the criticism coming your way and develop an understanding to aim for a better future. With unmatched enthusiasm and charm you will outshine others at work. It is your day, make the most of it, advises Ganesh.

PISCES
You might leave for an unplanned work related or social journey today. Small things will give you happiness today. In short, your day after noon time will be easy going and lucky. Ganesh assures you of success at work.



HEATON IN REHAB FOR ALCOHOL ABUSE

Singer Michelle Heaton is currently in rehabilitation, receiving treatment for alcohol abuse that worsened during the lockdown. Heaton had experienced symptoms of menopause after a hysterectomy in 2012 and a double mastectomy in 2015, a report in *dailymail.co.uk* said.

BIEBER'S 'JAW DROPS' EVERY TIME HE SEES WIFE HAILEY

Pop star Justin Bieber is a big fan of his wife Hailey Bieber's style. According to Hailey's stylist Maeve Reilly, Justin's 'jaw drops' whenever he walks into a room and sees Hailey.



Season of period dramas on tube

Viewers love these subjects because they get to see many new things about a certain era on screen, says actor Gracy Goswami



Punyashlok Ahilyabai
Barrister Babu

Kyu Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye
Mere Sai: Shradha Aur Saburi

This seems to be the season of period and costume dramas on the tube, with a host of shows such as Punyashlok Ahilyabai, Mere Sai: Shradha Aur Saburi, Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye and Barrister Babu recreating the past through the stories they narrate.

Actor Gracy Goswami, who plays Amrit in Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye, says viewers love period dramas because they get to see many new things about a certain era on screen.

Child actress Aditi Jaltare, who plays Ahilyabai in the show Punyashlok Ahilyabai, says "It is challenging. We have a different body language right now, which was not there earlier. I had to practice a lot but now I find it easy."

These are the few period dramas on air right now

Punyashlok Ahilyabai
The show is set against the backdrop of 18th century Maharashtra, and narrates how a girl, Ahilyabai Holkar, takes on patriarchal society. Her father-in-law Malhar Rao Holkar supports her in her battle. Besides

Barrister Babu
Set in the pre-Independence era, the story of Barrister Babu revolves around the life of Bondita, who with the help of her husband, navigates through a patriarchal society. The role of Bondita is played by Aura Bhatnagar while the role of her husband is played by Pravisht Mishra.

Mere Sai: Shradha Aur Saburi
The show narrates the life story of Sai Baba of Shirdi and showcases how he helps multiple people. It talks about his path of Dharma and how he helps people find their way to God. The show stars Tushar Dalvi, Kishori Godbole and Vaibhav Mangle.

Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye
The show is based on the backdrop of the pre-Partition India. It is set in Lahore. The story narrates the story of Amrit, Radha and Vashma, who dared to dream and aspire to make these dreams come true.

Raashii excited shooting in sync-sound

Hyderabad: Actress Raashii Khanna is currently shooting for her upcoming Telugu film *Thank You in Milan*. This is the first time the actress shoots using sync-sound technology and she is excited.

A sync-sound set-up is one where the sound of the film recorded during a shot makes it to the final edit and doesn't have to be dubbed separately.

"This is the first time I am shooting for a Telugu film that will be shot with this technique. People will hear my real voice and not a dubbed voice. It's not easy to be shooting in such a set-up. I am nervous and excited because for the first time the audience will hear my voice over my face," said Raashii.

Raashii's upcoming projects include *Tughlaq Durbar*, *Aaramnani 3*, *Methavi* and *Bhramam*. She also awaits the streaming of her digital debut starring Shahid Kapoor and Vijay Sethupathi.



Ileana likes uncertainty

Mumbai: Actress Ileana DCruz says almost all her roles made her wonder how she would pull it off, and that is what pushes her forward.

"I think in most films that I have done I constantly question how I will do it, and that is what pushes me forward because I think if I walked into a film completely cocky and confident, I wouldn't be really able to do justice in a way," Ileana said. Ileana, who was recently seen in the digitally released film *The Big Bull* says she likes uncertainty.

"I like the uncertainty, not really knowing how I am going to do it. I like getting into a sphere that is uncertain. It sounds really strange but it pushes me to do better and work harder," she said. Ileana will next be seen in *Unfair N Lovely*, a comic take on India's obsession with fair skin. The film is set against the backdrop of Haryana, and casts Ileana opposite Randeep Hooda.



Madhuri's online dance campaign to spread positivity

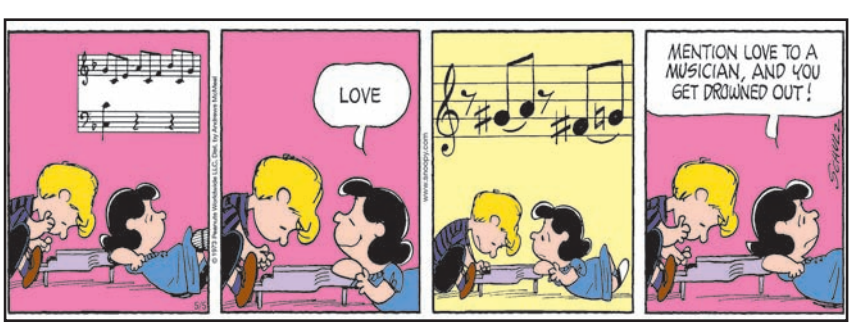
Mumbai: Madhuri Dixit launched a new online dance campaign Thursday, on the occasion of World Dance Day. The campaign aims at spreading positivity amid the Covid pandemic.

"The #UnitedByDance campaign aims at spreading positivity, social happiness, and mental and physical wellness through dance, from the sanctity of everyone's homes," said Madhuri.

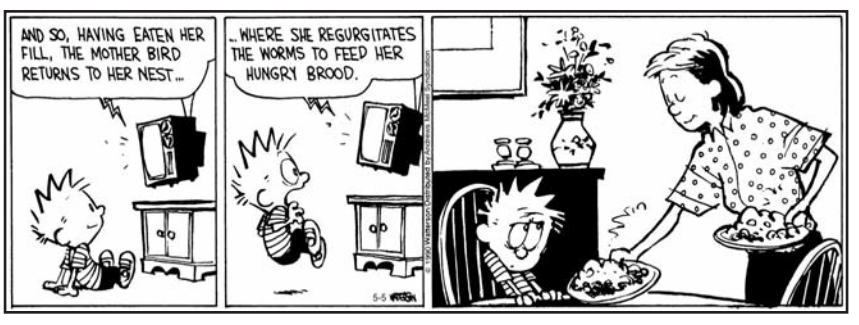
Through the initiative, participants will get a chance to join Madhuri in dance, along with dancers and choreographers across the world, from countries including the USA, Singapore, the UAE, and Mauritius.

FUN post

PEANUTS



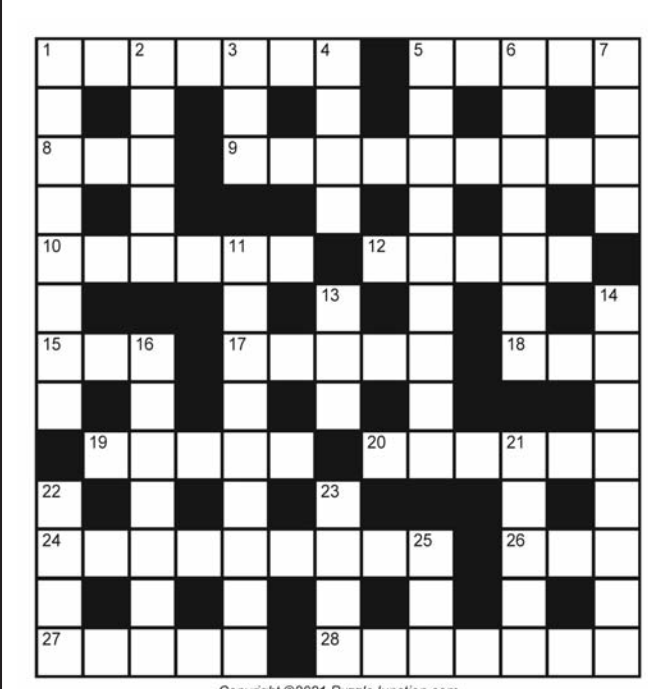
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



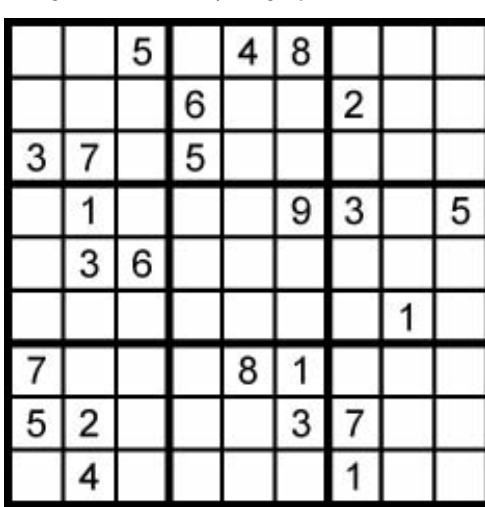
CROSSWORD



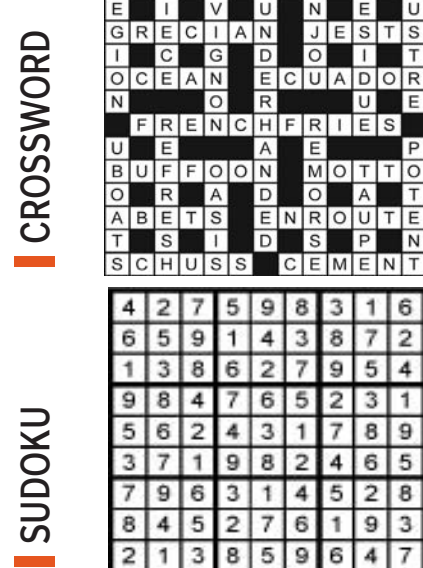
- Across
- 1 Nervous
 - 5 Foot warmers
 - 8 40 winks
 - 9 Disassemble (4,5)
 - 10 Runway walkers
 - 12 Semolina source
 - 15 Rascal
 - 17 Talent
 - 18 Jamaican pop
 - 19 Queen topper
 - 20 Alaska native
 - 24 Builder's blueprint (5,4)
 - 26 Egg cells
 - 27 Breeds
 - 28 Short pointed beard
 - 1 In-box nuisance (4,4)
 - 2 Lukewarm
 - 3 Little wriggler
 - 4 Tibet sights
 - 5 Beach finds
 - 6 Ascots
 - 7 Fill to excess
 - 11 They're found in arguments (4,5)
 - 13 Lend a hand
 - 14 Deliberate act of destruction
 - 16 Sitting room
 - 21 Off-white
 - 22 Rides for ETs
 - 23 Czech or Serb
 - 25 Conical buoy

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 | 10,479 |
| Occupied | 3,588 |
| Total ICU, HDU, NICU beds | 2,016 |
| Occupied | 1,270 |
| Total ventilators | 701 |
| Total ventilators in use | 257 |

COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World | 15,03,77,687 | 12,79,21,787 | 31,67,198 |
| India | 1,83,76,524 | 1,50,86,878 | 2,04,832 |
| Odisha | 4,35,513 | 3,80,400 | 2,029 |

Collectors, SPs to vet services at hosps

Bhubaneswar, April 29: In a bid to ensure seamless availability of healthcare to the needy, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Thursday directed the district Collectors, superintendents of police (SPs) and other senior officials to visit the state-run hospitals on a regular basis and inspect services like free drug distribution, dialysis and implementation of health insurance schemes at these facilities.

The department has also asked the Sub-Collectors and the sub-divisional police officers (SDPOs) to oversee disbursement of cash incentives to beneficiaries under various government schemes.

"Ensure regular visit to hospitals to review, monitor and ensure improvement in key areas of functioning of the hospitals like implementation of major government schemes such as free drug distribution, free diagnostic services, free dialysis services, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana and others," the H&FW department told the officials.

While Collectors, SPs, Sub-Collectors and SDPOs will monitor



delivery of health services at medical colleges and hospitals, district headquarters hospitals and sub-divisional hospitals, Block Development Officers and inspectors in-charge of different hospitals will check functioning of the community health centres (CHCs) and upper primary health centres (UPHCs), said the H&FW department's order.

The officials have also been entrusted with the responsibility of

MONITORING MATTERS

While Collectors, SPs, Sub-Collectors and SDPOs will monitor delivery of health services at medical colleges, district headquarters hospitals and sub-divisional hospitals, BDOs and inspectors in-charge of different hospitals will check functioning of community health centres and UPHCs

Sub-Collectors and sub-divisional police officers were asked to oversee disbursement of cash incentives to beneficiaries under various government schemes

the health system at every level. Though key officials of the district are part of District Health Societies and Rogi Kalyan Samitis at each facility up to PHC level, there is a need for further engagement through active involvement of all line departments by utilising the existing administrative structure at each level to bring vibrancy to the health system," the order pointed out.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



State loses 12 more lives to virus

1,00,41,204 SAMPLES HAVE BEEN TESTED FOR THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS IN ODISHA SO FAR, INCLUDING 44,064 WEDNESDAY



Swab samples being collected from a woman in Bhubaneswar

Infection curve flattening: DMET

BHUBANESWAR: The Health department Thursday claimed that the Covid-19 infection curve in the state is flattening and there is no need to panic.

Director of Medical Education and Training CBK Mohanty said that as compared to other states, the performance of Odisha in Covid management has been better.

"Odisha is in a better position as compared to other states when it comes to the second wave of Covid-19. The mortality rate in the state is less as compared to other states. There is no need to panic. There was a surge in the total number of cases Wednesday but the cases declined Thursday. There is flattening of the infection curve," he said.

He also added, "I wish, we maintain it for next few days. After stagnation of cases, the cases are likely to come down. For a rising graph there needs to be major difference in the daily cases. We are examining the issue and taking timely actions. There are many elderly patients who are dying due to reasons other than Covid."

meanwhile, has tightened the Covid restrictions in the Holy city. As per the revised norms, shops would remain open from 5am to 6pm from Monday to Friday. Only street food vendors and eateries are allowed to provide takeaway service till 9pm, sources said.

2,516 tonne O₂ sent to other states

Cuttack, April 29: Odisha has been sending life-saving oxygen to other states for the treatment of critically-ill Covid patients.

Odisha has so far sent 135 tankers carrying 2516.882 tonnes of oxygen to states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, sources said.

The oxygen tankers have been sent from various plants at Angul, Rourkela, Dhenkanal and Jajpur, sources added.

The state has supplied 889.55 tonnes of oxygen to Andhra Pradesh, 655.929 tonnes to Telangana, 53.46 tonnes to Tamil Nadu, 216.092 tonnes to Haryana, 112.06 tonnes to Maharashtra, 106.881 tonnes to Chhattisgarh, 212.26 tonnes to Uttar Pradesh and 270.85 tonnes to Madhya Pradesh.



TIGHTROPE WALK FOR GOVT OVER VAX SUPPLY



FILE PHOTO

Bhubaneswar, April 29: The Health department Thursday admitted that it would be difficult to administer second dose of Covid vaccines to the elderly as there is acute shortage of Covishield shots.

"We are unable to give the second dose to the beneficiaries above 45 years. The vaccine requirement for the beneficiaries due for second dose stands at 6.3 lakh while the available doses as on Thursday evening was only 1.1 lakh," a Health department official said.

The state government Thursday also said that it suspended the vaccination drive in 12 districts of

Vaccine requirement for the beneficiaries due for second dose stands at 6.3 lakh while the available doses as on Thursday evening was only 1.1 lakh

The govt has suspended vaccination drive in 12 districts owing to shortage of vax doses

Till now the new segment beneficiaries can only register themselves but cannot book their slots. Slot booking will open only after the stock is received from the vaccine manufacturers

While the drive was suspended in 12 districts including Khurda, the drive was undertaken in Bhubaneswar city. The officer also said, "The registration for people between 18 and 44 years age group is in progress and we request people to register themselves."

"Till now the new segment beneficiaries can only register themselves but cannot book their slots. Slot booking will open only after we receive the stock from the manufacturers. We are in contact with the manufacturers. They are examining the feasibility of sending the same to us. We will inform the public as soon as we get confirmation from them," he said.

₹50L ex gratia for Covid warriors to continue

Bhubaneswar, April 29: The state government Thursday said it would continue its scheme to provide compensation of ₹50 lakh to the families of Covid warriors who die on duty, an official said.

In an order issued in this regard, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said, "Keeping in view the second wave of COVID-19, the government has been pleased to decide to continue with the earlier policy guideline and allow payment of financial assistance of ₹50 lakh to the spouse/next of kin of any person drafted by government or its agencies to perform Covid-19 related duties and succumb to it while in active line of duty. Provided, he is not covered under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme (PMGKP) for Health Workers fighting Covid-19."

Incentives for healthcare professionals

The H&FW department has decided to provide incentives to contractual healthcare professionals on Covid-19 duty across the state.

An official circular (No.-HFWSCH-NRHM-0008-2020-12804/H, dated 28.04.2021) in this regard was issued by Deputy Secretary to the state government, Mamata Barik.

"Additional one month's remuneration will be provided to all

contractual and outsourced staff working under H&FW department, who are actively engaged in line of Covid-19 duty and Covid vaccination work for the period from April to July 2021 as they are putting their lives into great risk in saving the lives of people in the state," the department's circular read.

"In view of surge in Covid-19 cases and massive vaccination programme, it is highly essential to keep the morale of these contractual outsourced staffers high so as to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness," the circular further mentioned.

"The incentive amount will be met out of ECRP fund supported by MoH&FW, Government of India under NHM and respective state budget scheme fund as paid in the year 2020. Incentive of ₹1,000/- per month to each ASHA shall be paid for the period from April to July 2021 as they are taking active role in surveillance, contract tracing, containment measures and mobilisation of beneficiaries for Covid vaccination, in addition to their routine activities under NHM," it added.

"The issue of provision of experience allowances and EPF to all contractual staff under NHM and State Budget schemes will be decided later after detailed presentation by the Mission Director, NHM," the circular clarified.

DISTANCING GOES FOR A TOSS



People flout social distancing norms at a vaccination centre at Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Utkal to provide manpower to MS Law University

Bhubaneswar, April 29: The Higher Education department Thursday directed the Utkal University here to provide teaching and non-teaching employees to Madhusudan Law University in Cuttack.

Madhusudan Law College, one of the oldest law institutes in Odisha and India, was upgraded into a varsity recently.

In a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University, Higher Education department Secretary Saswat Mishra said, "Since the new varsity does not have any teaching and non-teaching employees of its own, the Utkal University is directed to allow continuance of the teaching and non-teaching employees of the university who were posted in the erstwhile Madhusudan Law College as on April 27, 2021, in the new university on deployment basis with effect from April 28 till the new institute recruits its own teaching and nonteaching staff."

The service related matters such as salary increment, pay fixation, promotion, pension and other su-



perannuation benefits of the deployed employees shall be accomplished by the Utkal University. However, for the day-to-day matters, the deployed employees may be placed under the administrative control of the new university as per the arrangements to be annually agreed upon between the two varsities, added the letter.

Notably, Kamaljeet Singh has been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of Madhusudan Law University.

The law institute has been named after Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, a great lawyer, statesman, industrialist, legislator, writer and social reformer of the 19th century.

Leopard hide smugglers have field day in Boudh

CP urges I-T dept to probe hawala fraud

Bhubaneswar/Boudh, April 29: The Special Task Force (STF), a specialised wing of the state Crime Branch, Thursday arrested a man after recovering a leopard skin from his possession in Boudh district Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of STF carried out a raid at Bandhanjhulli under Manamunda police limits in Boudh and arrested Mahendra Bhaina, a resident of Badalguda area under Manamunda police limits in the district, after recovering a leopard skin and other incriminating materials from his possession.

"A case (17/2021) has been registered with the police in this connection under Sections 379, 411 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code and 51 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The seized leopard skin will



be sent to Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for chemical examination," said a statement from the premier agency.

The STF team will also find out if any other persons were involved in the incident.

The leopard skin was the third such seizure by the STF in the month of April this year.

The agency had recovered a leopard skin and two elephant tusks

THIRD INCIDENT IN APRIL

The STF carried out a raid at Bandhanjhulli under Manamunda police limits in Boudh and arrested Mahendra Bhaina, a resident of Badalguda area under Manamunda police limits in the district, after recovering a leopard skin and other incriminating materials from his possession

The seized leopard skin will be sent to Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for chemical examination

They were planning to strike a deal with another smuggler when the STF team caught them. The leopard skin was 5.4-foot long and 2.7-foot wide at the centre. Similarly, the elephant tusks were 2.2-foot long, 6.5 inches wide and 1,310 kg and 1,305 kg in weight respectively.

The STF had April 2 arrested two poachers from Bolagada in Khurda district. A leopard skin had been seized from them.

According to sources, the STF has seized as many as 14 leopard skins, nine elephant tusks, two deer skins, three live pangolins and 5kg pangolin scales in the last one year from different districts as part of a special drive against poaching and trafficking. As many as 16 criminal cases have been registered during the period and 28 persons, allegedly involved in the cases, have been arrested.

Bhubaneswar, April 29: The Commissionerate Police (CP) Thursday requested the Income Tax (I-T) department to investigate into the money trail in the hawala fraud busted by Airport police Wednesday. Speaking to Orissa POST, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash revealed that a letter has been sent to the I-T department to initiate an investigation into the hawala fraud case.

Meanwhile, constable Prafulla Kumar Bhuyan of Cuttack UPD who was involved in the hawala fraud was suspended Thursday. Earlier, the DCP had suspended two constables, Dillip Mallick and Sandipta Prusty, working under

Two siblings held for lewd comments

Puri, April 29: Sea Beach police Thursday arrested two siblings on charges of passing lewd comments at a woman tourist here.

The accused have been identified as Anil Kumar Dash and Ajit Kumar Dash of Chandini Chowk area in Cuttack, police said. According to police, the siblings had passed lewd comments at Laxmipriya of Chandrasekharpur in Bhubaneswar near a restaurant in Puri Wednesday.

The duo also chased Laxmipriya and two of her friends and hurled abuses at them. The accused also touched the woman tourist inappropriately, police added.

Laxmipriya had lodged a complaint in this regard with police. "We've registered a case and produced the accused in a local court," said a police officer. Sources claimed that Laxmipriya is the daughter of a former MLA of Odisha.

FIGHTING PANDEMIC Depts to take call on office functioning

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Following large-scale outbreak of Covid-19 cases in some government offices in the Capital city and Cuttack, the state government has revised its order for functioning of these offices.

An order issued by the General Administration and Public Grievances department read, "Keeping in view the number of employees infected, the departments shall be at liberty to decide the scale of operations so as to further reduce the number of employees who will attend office."

In extreme cases, the government asked the offices to close

AT LORD'S ABODE



Devotees maintain social distance while offering prayers to Patitapabana at the Lions' Gate of Srimandir in Puri, Thursday

Covid blow to OBC survey

Bhubaneswar, April 29: In view of surge in Covid-19 cases across the state, the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes (OSCBC) has postponed the much-awaited survey of social and educational status of people belonging to backward classes.

The survey was scheduled to begin May 1 and continue till May 20 across the state while the final list of OBC people was scheduled to come out by June 11.

THE SURVEY WAS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN MAY 1 AND CONTINUE TILL MAY 20 ACROSS THE STATE WHILE THE FINAL LIST OF OBC PEOPLE WAS SCHEDULED TO COME OUT BY JUNE 11

THE STATE GOVERNMENT, IN FEBRUARY LAST YEAR, HAD FORMED THE OSCBC UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF FORMER HIGH COURT JUDGE JUSTICE RAGHUNATH BISWAL

State plea for low power transmission charges

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra has written to Union Power Minister Raj Kumar Singh urging him to look into some of the issues resulting in steep rise in transmission charges of Powergrid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL).

In the letter, Mishra said, "Odisha meets most of its power demand from the sources located inside the state. However, it avails the necessary additional quantum from the Central generating stations located outside the state through the Central Transmission Network of PGCIL paying necessary transmission charges. Over the past decade, it is observed that the national average of PGCIL Transmission Charges, which were in the range of 24 paise per unit in FY 2011-12 have gone up to 85 paise per unit in FY 2019-20 with a CAGR of 17 per cent which is very high."

He requested the Union power minister to issue advisory to the CERC under Section 107 of the Electricity Act, 2003 to review and align Sharing of Transmission Charges Regulations with the principles of National Electricity Policy and Tariff Policy.

Japan govt honour for Nripendra Misra

NEW DELHI: Nripendra Misra, former principal secretary to the Prime Minister, is among this year's foreign recipients of the 2021 Spring Decorations announced by the government of Japan Thursday. The Japanese embassy said in a statement that the former IAS officer will receive the "Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star" in recognition of his contributions to strengthening the economic relationship between Japan and India.

Man walks 5 km with burns, dies

Cuttack, April 29: A man, who covered a distance of nearly five kilometre walking on the national highway with burn injuries in his body, died while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar Thursday, police said.

The deceased has been identified as Gangadhar Behera (30) of Sheikh Bazaar, Cuttack. He had been to Safa village under Tungi police station of Cuttack (Rural) police district Wednesday afternoon.

Gangadhar's family members alleged that he was set on fire by some miscreants, who might have looted his motorcycle, wallet and a gold chain he was wearing.

Gangadhar's brother Mayadhar has lodged a formal complaint with

"In connection with the recent upsurge of SARS-CoV-2 related cases in the state, the survey of social and educational conditions of the people belonging to backward classes which was previously scheduled to commence from May 1, 2021, is hereby held up until further instructions from the Commission," the commission's member secretary Veer Vikram Yadav, said in an order. The revised schedule of the survey will be communicated later, he said.

The state government, in February last year, had formed the OSCBC under the chairmanship of former High Court judge Justice Raghunath Biswal. The other members of the Commission are Navneeta Rath, Mitall Chinnara and Prasanna Kumar Patra.

Odisha had first constituted the OBC Commission in 1993 in accordance with the provisions of Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. However, after the first tenure, the panel was never put back in place.

Ensure proper treatment to all: Samantara

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Prafulla Samantara, President of Lokshakti Abhiyan, Thursday appealed to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to extend hospital facility for Corona affected patients.

In his letter to Naveen, Samantara said, "Last year, the government had initiated medical arrangements for Covid patients by opening extra hospitals in different parts of Odisha. But this year, those arrangements have vanished instead of strengthening these hospitals with sufficient necessary equipments, Medicines and doctors. Now many patients are dying without getting bed and proper treatment in many hospitals."

"In many government hospitals, including MKCG College hospital in Berhampur, there is scarcity of oxygen kits, ICUs which are responsible for more numbers of deaths," Samantara informed in the letter.

Appealing to the government to arrange more hospitals with equipments and doctors so that not a single patient is deprived of getting treatment, he wrote, "It is the constitutional right of citizens to get proper and just treatment in this pandemic."

WITTFY APP FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Opera Mrs India Global 2020, Mrs Rosa, has launched a mobile app for improvement of communication skills of school students.

The Wittify app can be downloaded from Google play store. In the said app, students can reap the benefits of spoken English course, online practice sets at a very affordable cost. The students can view the practice sets offline and practice at their convenient time. Moreover, this course covers, phonics training, spoken English, and course curriculum English training (CHSE and NCERT) and online practice sets for grammar and translation.

Group discussion facility for students through Zoom app will also be provided through the app.



Three spl trains cancelled

Bhubaneswar, April 29: In view of increase in Covid cases, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has decided to cancel three special trains under jurisdiction.

Visakhapatnam-Rayagada-Visakhapatnam Special from Visakhapatnam from April 30 and from Rayagada from May 1 will remain cancelled.

The Visakhapatnam-Gunupur-Visakhapatnam Special from both the directions from April 30, 2021 will remain cancelled.

Similarly, Visakhapatnam-Palasa-Visakhapatnam Special from Visakhapatnam from April 30 and from Palasa from May 1 will remain cancelled. Earlier, due to poor passenger occupancy, it was decided to cancel the services of Bhubaneswar-Nayagarh Town-Bhubaneswar Special from April 28, 2021. It is seen that,



Bhubaneswar-Nayagarh Town-Bhubaneswar Special Train has less than 2 per cent occupancy since its restoration.

Similarly, it has been decided to cancel the services of Paradip-Puri-Paradip Special from both the directions from April 27, 2021. It is seen that Puri-Paradip-Puri has less than 10 per cent occupancy since its restoration.

Meanwhile, ECoR has taken all precautions for safe running of oxygen special trains under its jurisdiction.

SCW suspends hearing

BHUBANESWAR: The State Commission for Women (SCW) Thursday suspended hearing of all cases scheduled between May 1 and 13 till further orders in view of resurgence of Covid-19 cases. The Convener Secretary of SCW in a letter to the Information and Public Relations department has requested to share the information with media for the benefit of public.

Sonepur hottest in state

BHUBANESWAR: With 43.1 degrees Celsius, Sonepur remained the hottest town of the coastal state, Thursday. According to the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre, six towns, including Sonepur, recorded at least 42 degree Celsius Thursday. Titlagarh remained the second hottest place in the state with 42.6 degree Celsius, followed by Boudh with 42.5 degree Celsius and Bolangir with 42.2 degree Celsius. Bhanwinipatna and Sundargarh both witnessed 42 degree Celsius.

CAREGIVERS IN CITY HELP THE ELDERLY AGE HEALTHY

Bhubaneswar, April 29: A group of volunteers and caregivers from city has embarked on a journey of assisting the elderly in healthy ageing by holding the hands of this vulnerable section of the society.

Instead of keeping the elderly in old age homes, these volunteers let them live with their families but support them in their daily needs. They aim to reduce their dependency on their children, who find managing their parents' affair tough due to their busy work schedules.

The caregivers, trained in geriatric care, provide their assistance to the elderly in taking them to hospitals, recreation centres and locations of their choices, and deliver other services when needed.

"Most senior citizens want to age comfortably in their homes with their own families. However, with today's increasingly globalised work force and nuclear family structures, senior citizens often struggle to find that support at home from their children," said Tamojit Dutta, co-CEO of Tribeca Care which has started the doorstep service in the state capital recently with the help of dedicated volunteers.

According to the 2011 Census, senior citizens constitute 9.5 per cent of the state's population compared to the national average of 8 per cent.



The caregivers, trained in geriatric care, provide their assistance to the elderly in taking them to hospitals, recreation centres and locations of their choices

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Junagarh-Ambaguda rail project hangs fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, April 29: The Junagarh-Ambaguda railway project in Kalahandi is hanging fire for 58 years due to apathy of the central government. Besides, lack of political will is allegedly responsible for non-execution of the project, a report said.

Reports said, various outfits and intelligentsia have accused both the state and the central government of pushing the railway project into cold store.

It was in 1960 when the Japan government had wanted to lay this railway project so as to facilitate mineral transportation to Visakhapatnam port. This 179-km long railway project was planned from Kirandul in Chhattisgarh to Lanjigarh Road.

A survey for the railway project was conducted in Lanjigarh, Ambaguda, Papadahandi, Koksara, Junagarh, Bhawanipatna, Dantewada and Kirandul.

At that time, the Congress government was at the centre while Kalahandi Lok Sabha seat was then represented by MP of Ganatantra Parishad. The then Union government did not lay stress on the railway project at that time.

The Japan government revised its plan and wanted to lay the railway project from Ambaguda to Jotabalasa

IN COLD STORE FOR 58 YEARS



It was in 1960 when the Japan government had wanted to lay this railway project so as to facilitate mineral transportation to Visakhapatnam port. This 179-km long railway project was planned from Kirandul in Chhattisgarh to Lanjigarh Road

via Jagdalpur, Koraput and Arko. It conducted a fresh survey and built the new railway project. But the old plan was pushed into cold store.

The Japan government had then inked an agreement with the central government to export iron ores from Kirandul iron mine via Visakhapatnam port for 40 years.

In 1990, the then Union Railway Minister Bhakta Charan Das had given a go ahead to a railway project from Junagarh to Lanjigarh.

Three years later (1993), it was due to the efforts of MP Subash Chandra Nayak that then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and then Minister of State for Railway Kanhu Charan Lenka had laid the foundation of the railway project which was completed in March 2014.

Later, a survey for a new railway line from Junagarh to Ambaguda was approved by then Union Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee in 2008.

A private agency based in Bhubaneswar was awarded the survey work. After the survey, Railway Construction Organisation had submitted a detailed project report at the Railway Board in 2013.

Junagarh is 179 km from Ambaguda. The railway project entails construction of 17 railway stations at Junagarh Road, Mahichala, Moter, Koksara, Gotomunda, Nuapada, Sahajkol, Biriman, Choriadar, Dhanuli, Papadahandi, Nabarangpur, Kamjhor, Mandaguda, Kotpad Town, Chhiliari Dangar and Ambaguda.

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About 39 major bridges, 111 small bridges, seven road over bridges, 27 road underpasses and four manned level crossings are part of the railway project. In 2013, the project was estimated at Rs1,586 crore

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The railway project will pass through Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput and Jagdalpur districts. In 2016-17, the then Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu had approved the project and sent the proposal to the NITI Aayog.

As the commerce and transport department of the state government had proposed to be a joint partner for the Junagarh Ambaguda Rail Limited, Nabarangpur MP Balabhadra Majhi has drawn the attention of both the governments for the execution of the project.

Elderly woman gangraped in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, April 29: An elderly attendant of a patient, who was undergoing treatment at Dhenkanal district headquarters hospital (DHH), was gangraped near the DHH Wednesday night.

According to a source, the attendant, a 65-year-old woman, was at the DHH Wednesday night. It was when she came out of the ward for some work, some miscreants forcibly took her to a secluded place near a pond and forced themselves upon her. After committing the heinous act, they threatened her with dire consequences if she reveals her ordeal before anyone and left the spot.



However, the victim informed the DHH authorities about what had happened to her. Following this, the DHH authorities lodged a report with Town police station. Registering a case, the police had the victim's medical test conducted at the DHH. Later, the victim also led the police to the crime spot. Meanwhile, the police have detained two persons in this connection. Meanwhile, some attendants and local people said that the hospital's security arrangement is in dire need of improvement.

3 of family found dead in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil/Bonai, April 29: A reported tiff between a man and his wife over some issues resulted in tragic deaths of the couple and their child as police recovered the bodies in abnormal circumstances from separate places in Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts Thursday.

The deceased were identified as Prahllad Sahani, 34, his wife Ranjita Sahani, 27 and their three-year old daughter of New Garden Colony in Koida of Sundargarh district. Prahllad, a native of Karototha village under Kujang police limits in Jagatsinghpur district, worked in a private transport firm and was staying in Koida for the last three years. Police have seized a suicide note left by the woman. The police have detained the houseowner, Rajendra Samal.

Prahllad, who was missing from home since Wednesday, was found hanging from a tree at a roadside jungle on Jhargao-Roida road under Barbil police limits in Keonjhar district. His wife Ranjita and minor daughter were found dead in their Koida residence. Prahllad went missing from Wednesday after he had a fight with his wife over some issue late Tuesday night. Later, Ranjita lodged a complaint at Koida police station after her husband did not return home. The Barbil police recovered the body of Prahllad hanging from a tree in the forest. A bike was found parked on the Jhargao-Roida road with a helmet suspended from it nearby. Police recovered a mobile phone



Prahllad was missing from home since Wednesday. His body was found hanging from a tree in Barbil police limits of Keonjhar

from the spot and established the identity of Prahllad from his vehicle registration number. His family members have been informed and the body will be sent for post-mortem after their family people arrive, Barbil IIC Susant Dash said. Our Bonai correspondent added, when Ranjita did not open the door of the house, some neighbours called up the police. Later, a police team and the local tehsildar reached the spot and found both the mother and the daughter dead. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Ranjita killed her daughter before hanging herself to death.

Both the Koida and Barbil police have launched separate probes to ascertain the actual reason behind the deaths. It is suspected that the couple might have committed suicide while the deceased woman smothered her daughter to death.

Tusker dies due to excessive bleeding

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 29: Forest officials recovered the carcass of a tusker from a farmland near Kandunguri under Bamra forest division in this district, Thursday. Later, a veterinarian conducted a post-mortem of the carcass before burying it.

Preliminary inquiries indicated that the tusker aged about 12 years might have died due to excessive bleeding after sustaining a deep injury under its tusk. It is suspected that the animal might have sustained the injury after being hit by some iron material, Jamankira block veterinary surgeon Dr Rudra Narayan Sahu said. Two ivories measuring 2.5 feet were recovered by trimming them during the post-mortem.



A health worker of a mobile testing centre collecting swab of a person as Covid cases surge in Malkangiri, Thursday

Raikia tehsildar under Vigilance scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK

Raikia, April 29: A team of officials from Berhampur Vigilance division caught Raikia tehsildar Chakradhar Padhi red-handed while he was taking Rs 40,000 in Kandhamal district Thursday.

The tehsildar was arrested on charge of demanding and accepting bribe. Vigilance officials said, a tractor owner named Senapati Pradhan from Mandakia village under Raikia tehsil was carrying stones for use in a well project under MGNREGS.

Tehsildar Padhi detained Pradhan's tractor mid-way and demanded a bribe of Rs 40,000 for releasing the vehicle.

Acting on a complaint lodged by the tractor owner, the Vigilance team conducted a raid on tehsildar's office in the morning leading to his arrest.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
'e' Procurement Notice- BAID 02 OF 2021-22
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. BAID 02 OF 2021-22

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Name of the work | River Embankment & Canal Embankment for the year 2021-22. |
| 2 | Total No. of package | 50 Nos. |
| 3 | Tender cost | Rs.5.35 Lakhs to 26.26 Lakhs as per DTCN |
| 4 | Bid security | Only the bid security Declaration as per the tender schedule to be furnished instead of EMD/Bid Security |
| 5 | Cost of tender paper (Online) | Rs.4000/- to 6000/- as per DTCN |
| 6 | Period of completion | 30 days |
| 7 | Availability of tender online for bidding | From 03.05.2021 at 12.00 Noon to 12.05.2021 upto 5.30 P.M. |
| 8 | Date and place of opening | Dt.13.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M. in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Baitarani Division, Salapada |
| 9 | Tender inviting authority | Executive Engineer, Baitarani Division, Salapada, Keonjhar, Odisha |

Further details can be seen from the website <http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in/> / www.dowrodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/ cancellation to the above notice will be published in this website only.
Sd./- Executive Engineer, Baitarani Division, Salapada
OIPR-32006/11/0002/2122

KANJHARI DAM FARMERS' SORROW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 29: With the arrival of summer, Kanjhari irrigation dam under Sadar block of Keonjhar district has started drying up for various reasons. Water of the river Kanjhari has stopped entering into the dam.

According to sources, the significant reason is the drying up of Kanjhari riverbed owing to lack of adequate rainfall in the region. As the Kanjhari dam is a place of attraction for tourists, it provides livelihood to hundreds of local residents as well.

Avian guests through the irrigation dam in large numbers. Wild animals coming to the dam from nearby forests for drinking water fascinate visitors from within and outside the district.

That apart, it also irrigates the



nearby farmlands and provides drinking water to Keonjhar town. Hundreds of local fishermen eke out their living from fishing activities, a resident villager said.

The Kanjhari dam has been getting soil-casted gradually over the last one year. As a result, the water retaining capacity of its reservoir has drastically gone down. Its reservoir badly needs to be renovated, local environmentalist Bimbadhar Behera opined.

Kin allege theft of organ from Covid victim in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargaon, April 29: Amid the spike in Covid infections, a shocking allegation has come to the fore in Bargaon area of Sundargarh district Thursday. The kin of a Covid victim alleged that some organs of the deceased might have been removed from the body before or after his death.

According to the report, Debendranath Das, alias Raju (49) of Bargaon was infected with Covid-19. He was admitted to NTPC Covid Hospital April 10 and referred to JP Hospital in Rourkela April 12. However, he died April 22.

After admission, the hospital authorities did not allow his kin to

meet, it was alleged. He was allowed to talk to his younger brother Prashant over phone. During the telephonic conversation with his brother, Debendranath used to hint about something fishy going on in the hospital. But he did not reveal about it.

April 22, his wife was allowed to see the body in the afternoon after repeated pleas. At that time, she saw a tinge of blood on the stomach and was suspicious about it.

Prashant alleged that when his sister-in-law enquired about the blood on the belly, the medical staff tried to convince that the blood had oozed out during the Covid jabs.

Prashant alleged that something suspicious was going inside the hos-

pital while some organs might have been removed from his brother's body. He claimed that he has made written complaints at the CDMO and the Chief Minister's Office in this regard, apart from demanding examination of the CCTV footage of the medical.

Meanwhile, the rate of Covid-19 infection is spiraling by the day in the area. Six people have lost their lives to the virus in the area in the last 25 days, a report said.

Three people died of Covid Thursday. The deceased are Jyoti Panigrahi (62, wife of former BJD's district unit secretary Bijay Panda), former samiti member of Karangloi village Jugeswar Senapati and Sukra Dehuria (51) of Tудalaga.

Angul admin prepares to win Covid-19 battle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, April 29: With Angul district registering over 300 positive cases daily for three consecutive days, the district administration has taken some measures to break the chain of infection.

The district reported 393 positive cases Tuesday, 336 cases Wednesday and 325 Thursday.

In view of the Covid-19 graph's upward trend, the district administration has declared the worst affected areas as 'Containment Zones' and 'Red Zones'.

The district's Talcher area has been reporting the maximum cases. Keeping this in mind, three places of Talcher block have been declared as 'Micro Containment Zones'.

Similarly, two places under Talcher Municipality area have been declared as 'Containment Zones'. These places will remain inaccessible for outsiders for the next seven days.

Likewise, two places of Chhendipada



and Banarpal blocks have been declared as 'Containment Zones'. The restrictions of movement will be in place for a week.

In order to intensify preventive measures in the worst affected areas, the administration has also identified such places and declared them as Red Zones.

There are 171 Red Zones in rural areas and 26 places in different wards of urban areas. Talcher block has maximum 36 rural areas coming under

Red Zones, followed by Banarpal block with 34 rural areas, Kanihan block with 31, Angul block with 27, Kishorenagar block with 21, Pallahara block with 10, Athmallik block with eight and Chhendipada block with six places coming under Red Zones.

Most importantly, all the wards of Angul Municipality are under Red Zone areas. Similarly, Talcher Municipality's ward number 10 and 17 and Athmallik NAC's ward number 6 have been declared as Red Zones.

In order to carry out screening in these areas, special committees involving ANM, male health workers, ASHA and Anganwadi activists have been formed. These committees are presently carrying out the screening in the Red Zone areas, visiting door to door.

Meanwhile, businessmen of Angul, Banarpal and Chhendipada areas have come forward to help the district administration in its fight against the virus. At a meeting between the administration and the businessmen, it was discussed that all the shops in the given areas will remain closed in afternoon hours.

Similarly, in Chhendipada and Banarpal, the businessmen will close their shops from 6 pm to 6 am. However, a decision on this will be taken soon.

Collector Siddhartha Shankar Swain said that the Angul Traders' Association has decided to close their shops while their counterparts in Banarpal and Chhendipada will shut their shops from evening to morning.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR ROAD
e-mail- nackhrd@rediffmail.com; Phone- 06678-221239
No.960
1st CORRIGENDUM Dt.29.04.2021

No. C-178:- The following changes have been made to Tender Call Notice No.971 dt.09.04.2021 Bid Reference No.- 2021_ORULB_67738 due to some typographical error & due to Shut down for COVID-19 pandemic situation.

- The Work Name "Development of Smart Park in Khariar Road" in over all DTCN for SI. No.2 should be read as "Construction of Kalyan Mandap at NAC, Khariar Road" except in the table of page No.4, 6 for S. No.1, Col No.2
- The Point No.6 (IV) in Page No.7 may be read as "The Bidder should have successfully completed & commissioned similar nature of single work Valuing not less than Rs.24.00 lakhs (40% of the estimated cost) in any one year during last (five) year in any State/Central Govt. of Public Sector Undertaking. The firms shall have to submit the performance satisfaction certificate of the works completed by them from appropriate authority i.e. not below the rank of Executive Officer. Weightage @10% per year shall be given on the value of the completed works in the preceding years."
- The Point No.6 (V) in Page No.7 is deleted.
- The critical dates has been modified as detailed below.

| SN | Description | Critical Dates |
|-------|--|---|
| (i) | Period of availability of tenders online | From 11.00 hrs. of 12.04.2021 to 17.00 hrs. of 13.05.2021 |
| (ii) | Last date & time of seeking clarification | 17.00 hrs. of 13.05.2021 |
| (iii) | Last date & time of bidding online | 17.00 hrs. of 13.05.2021 |
| (iv) | Date & time of submission of hard copies of uploaded documents | From 11.00 hrs. of 15.05.2021 to 17.00 hrs. of 19.05.2021 |
| (v) | Date & time of opening of Technical Bid | 11.00 hrs. of 20.05.2021 |

All other terms & condition of above Tender Call Notice are remain unaltered.
Sd./- Executive Officer, NAC, Khariar Road
OIPR-13136/11/0005/2122

FOCUS US-AFGHAN

INDIA IN THE LURCH



Contrary to some optimistic observations made by experts that India will have options in post-US security scenario in Afghanistan, India will have to address new threats emerging from Kabul and Pakistan; Islamabad uses the former as its strategic depth

The terrorist attack on twin towers in 2001 necessitated sending troops to Afghanistan. Since, those conditions no longer exist; there was no need to continue to station our troops. His supporters would contend that it was time to focus on China and Russia instead of Afghanistan.

In the US' military engagement with Afghanistan, it has spent \$2 trillion, losing 2,300 of its troops. Also 157,000 Afghans died in the battles with Taliban militants and other mercenaries. America had deployed up to 100,000 troops, out of which 3,500 remain. Supporters of Biden line argue that US has done enough to secure Afghanistan and the peace process set in motion should materialise in the interest of all stakeholders. However, there is no discussion whatsoever about what would happen to India in security terms in post-bellum Afghanistan.

Critics of the Biden decision express deep worries. Republican Senator Lindsay Graham called it a disaster in the making. He warns that Biden may be paving the way for the repeat of 9/11 attack. Pakistan will have a field day in using its strategic depth in

Afghanistan disrupting peace and security in the region. Beijing may use the situation to its advantage.

The wheel of history moved a full circle, when Pakistan, patronised by China and Russia, is using Taliban to fight the Americans through the government in Kabul. The US used Pakistan to fight the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; propped up the Mujahideen with the help from Islamabad. The US made the mistake of militarily feeding Pakistan as its frontline state against its arch rival Soviet Union. Now Pakistan is in another camp, that of China, which has replaced former Soviet Union as a challenger to American supremacy. The other mistake US made is not to have punished Pakistan severely for supporting Taliban and harbouring terrorists.

Since America is not factoring the possible sufferance New Delhi would face, observers would suggest that India should get its ducks in a row. What are India's options? One school of thought says New Delhi has spent about \$1 billion on development projects in Afghanistan, and thereby has earned goodwill of Afghan government, public and the moderates

among Taliban. New Delhi could harness that positivism for neutralising any anti-India action from Afghan soil.

Second, if it can manage to continue good relations with Iran, it can still influence the developments to a considerable extent in Afghanistan. Third, if New Delhi could keep Russia in good humour with its defense deals, the latter may continue to support New Delhi in the region. Apparently, Russia brings in New Delhi in its equation with China, be it BRICS or SCO, as counter-weight to Beijing. So New Delhi should have some room for maneuver.

One finds the foregoing forecast of India's diplomacy in Afghanistan quite optimistic. It is in fact unrealistic strategic thinking. India has no more options than the QUAD plus the support of other friendly countries like Israel, France and Britain. Amongst these countries, the US is critical to New Delhi's security and prosperity. But intriguingly both the US and India are faltering in cementing a robust partnership. If the US has determined to build New Delhi as a counter-vailing power to Beijing in the region, it should fully nudge and support India. It should give space to New Delhi to have a political and security toehold in Afghanistan, which includes New Delhi building up friendly relations with Iran.

To sum up, against the backdrop described above, New Delhi should step into Afghanistan with military force. US should put up an Allied command with forces from other countries including India before withdrawing fully. It should wait for the government in Kabul to be strong enough to fight religious fundamentalists, and terrorists. New Delhi could be a major stakeholder in the new scenario. If US wishes to retain its world supremacy, it should treat Afghanistan as its litmus test, so should New Delhi to maintain its security and as a beacon of democracy in the region. *IFA*

The writer is a professor of International Politics, JIMMC.

Dr D K Giri

THE GRAVE CONCERN HAUNTING PEACE BUILDERS IS WHERE THIS SECURITY VACUUM LEAVES INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN

American President Joe Biden has set September 2021 as the new deadline for the US troops to pack off from Afghanistan. The NATO soldiers will follow suit. Afghanistan government will be left to defend itself. President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai has reassured his country and other Afghan watchers that his government is capable of defending the country's security. This is more a rhetoric than reality. His main adversary, Taliban, actively supported by Pakistan and its mentors, will prove to be stronger and savaging in revenge and retaliation, after the American withdrawal.

The grave concern haunting peace builders is where this security vacuum leaves India and Afghanistan. Contrary to some optimistic observations made by experts that India will have options in post-US security scenario in Afghanistan, India will have to address new threats emerging from Kabul and Pakistan; Islamabad uses the former as its strategic depth. Things do not look propitious for New Delhi as it had not built any bridge to Taliban and Islamabad, despite the latest track-2 discreet negotiations, will seek to cause damage at the borders.

Afghanistan will remain highly vulnerable as America withdraws without putting any robust security alternatives in place. CIA Director William Burns, during a testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee underlined this point. He said the security threats to Kabul and beyond Afghanistan have not vanished and it would be difficult to gather intelligence without American troops on Afghan soil. Christine Fair, a scholar of South Asian political-military affairs said, 'ISI wins, Afghans lose'. This is a telling comment on American's decision to pull out its remaining troops from Afghanistan.

Reportedly, there are deep differences of opinion in the US about Biden's decision to withdraw by September. He announced that he no longer wishes to continue America's longest war and that



The existence of poverty is the proof of an unjust and ill-organised society, and our public charities are but the first tardy awakening in the conscience of a robber.

SRI AUROBINDO

Measuring What Matters

As many as 150 million people globally, roughly the combined population of Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, may have fallen into pandemic-induced extreme poverty over the past year. Partly as a result, governments are currently pumping unprecedented amounts of money into their COVID-19 response, spending over \$14.6 trillion on rescue and stimulus measures in 2020 alone.

But a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme and the University of Oxford indicates that only 18% of current recovery investments can be considered "green." That's a problem.

As governments prime the pumps of economic recovery, they must change the yardsticks by which they measure human progress and welfare. Otherwise, their investments risk further fueling the inequalities and environmental destruction that prepared the ground for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Environmental degradation and increasing contact between wildlife and humans enabled SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, to jump from animals to people. And the conditions the virus encountered - shaped by vast social inequities - enabled it to erupt into a pandemic with devastating health, social, and economic consequences.

Even in countries that have stated their intention to address both environmental destruction and inequality, rescue packages are dominated by spending that supports unsustainable pre-pandemic economic activities. These misguided investments reinforce the conditions that got us here in the first place.

For example, countries such as India, Canada, South Africa, and China have set aside funding for green recoveries but are simultaneously propping up their fossil-fuel industries. While China has put forward an ambitious green recovery plan, construction of coal plants in its provinces surged in the first half of 2020.

South Africa has earmarked \$3.5 billion of investment in three new energy projects that will ostensibly "reduce the use of diesel-based peaking electrical generators." But the state-owned electric utility, Eskom, previously built the world's third- and fourth-largest coal-fired power plants. The industrial region around Middelburg, with a population of 4.7 million, includes 12 coal-fired power plants and a huge refinery that produces liquid petroleum from coal. This facility generates more greenhouse gas emissions annually than entire countries such as Norway and Portugal. Respiratory diseases in the region likely cause more than 300 premature deaths per year.

Other unsustainable activities - such as destroying forests, plowing and paving grasslands, and polluting fresh water - continue unabated. These natural resources sustain billions of people. They account for 47% of the rural poor's household incomes in India, nearly 75% in Indonesia, and 89% in Brazil's northern Amazon. Over 70% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa depend on forests and woodlands for their livelihoods.

To correct our course, we must change the way we measure human development and social progress. Without the right signposts, we will be unable to achieve the transformation our economies and societies must undergo to ensure our survival. National gross domestic product, the most widely used economic-development measure, is useful and provides a great deal of information closely related to human welfare. But it offers no guidance regarding how to avoid unsustainable and unequal outcomes.

Fortunately, as countries plan their post-pandemic recovery expenditures, they can consider a new tool: the Planetary-Pressures Adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme and its partners.

The PHDI is a gauge of human progress that accounts for poverty, inequality, and planetary strains. It measures not only a country's health, education, and living standards, but also its carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint. The resulting index gives policymakers an indication of how development priorities would change if the well-being of both people and the planet were central to defining humanity's progress.

Using this approach, more than 50 countries drop out of the very high human development group based on UNDP's standard Human Development Index, while countries like Costa Rica, Moldova, and Panama rise at least 30 places. Planning that conserves nature would improve the well-being of billions of people.

Some might argue that GDP is a well-established universal yardstick, and that the PHDI is too complicated for countries facing urgent and competing development priorities. But the new index enables us to identify and measure the sustainability problem, and offers a clear alternative to relying on one main indicator - GDP - as a gauge of a country's progress.

Without a different approach, we risk inviting the next pandemic by widening inequities and deepening the environmental crisis. The two go hand in hand. And when disaster ultimately strikes, the best we can hope for will be timely humanitarian relief.

Instead, governments should adopt new measures to address the environmental crisis and growing inequality and make these a part of a longer-term strategy that begins now. By measuring what matters, governments will be able to deliver recovery plans that strengthen green stewardship and reduce inequities, improving the prospects for a healthier and more prosperous future for all.

The writer, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Rwanda, is a senior fellow of Aspen New Voices.

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Maxwell Gomera

As many as 150 million people globally, roughly the combined population of Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, may have fallen into pandemic-induced extreme poverty over the past year

SPECTRUM GREEN ECONOMY

Building a nature-positive economy

The planet's ecosystems are nearing critical tipping points, with extinction rates 100-1,000 times higher than they were a century ago. Our current economic system has put natural resources under ever-increasing pressure. As the recent UK Treasury-commissioned Dasgupta Review of the Economics of Biodiversity puts it, our economies "are embedded within Nature ... not external to it." The task now is to embed this recognition in our "contemporary conceptions of economic possibilities."

Many businesses, recognising the perils facing the planet, are changing the way they operate. But they can't do it all alone, and the current rules of our financial and economic system must change if we are to build an equitable, nature-positive, net-zero future.

Such changes make economic sense. Firms that take a long-term view and meet the needs of all stakeholders by prioritising environmental and social risks and opportunities over short-term gains and profitability outperform their peers in terms of revenue, earnings, investment, and job growth. Similarly, companies with strong environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies perform better and have higher credit ratings. According to the World Economic

Forum's 2021 Global Risks Report, four of the top five risks to our economies are environmental, including climate change and biodiversity loss. Human-driven nature loss, its links to the spread of diseases such as COVID-19, and the estimated \$300 billion annual cost of natural disasters caused by ecosystem disruption and climate change highlight the risks of unbridled economic growth. Thinking beyond GDP and short-term profit is therefore essential in order to restore our relationship with the planet and transform our system into a viable one.

The true risks arising from nature loss and climate change often are not accounted for or understood, including by investors. The economic cost of land degradation amounts to more than 10% of annual gross world product, and human-caused declines in ocean health are projected to cost the global economy \$428 billion per year by 2050. The flip side is that shifting toward a nature-positive economy could generate \$10 trillion of business opportunities and create nearly 400 million jobs.

Thriving companies supporting this transition are in a true leadership position. But if a sustainably-oriented firm's profits dip, reality hits. Investors often chase short-term profits instead of using ESG

indicators as a credible proxy - alongside financial performance - to measure a company's value. This definition of business success must change.

Consider the case of consumer goods multinational Danone. In 2020, Danone became the first listed French company to adopt the model of an enterprise a mission, or purpose-driven company, when 99% of shareholders agreed to embed sustainability into the firm's governance structure. This year, the company came under increasing pressure from activist shareholders - including from those in the 1% who opposed the new model - owing to what they regard as the firm's "prolonged period of underperformance." While Danone's share price has underperformed those of its rivals, the company is not in the red.

It is fair to say that not all shareholders value the same things, and the fact that investors are questioning companies' ESG efforts can only be positive. But that should not stop advocates of a purpose-driven strategy that considers a wider range of stakeholders and their interests from seeking ways to strengthen the rules and bolster non-financial performance further. As the Dasgupta Review argued, we must "change our measures of economic success to help guide us on

a more sustainable path."

First, we need meaningful and credible ESG data alongside traditional financial reporting in order to counter accusations of greenwashing. Corporate performance indicators must embed the true value of natural, social, and human capital to reveal the full state of health of the planet, people, and profits. Second, all investors should stop investing in activities that have a highly negative impact on the climate and biodiversity, and they should call for companies in their portfolios to issue reports aligned with the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures and the more recently established Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures.

Lastly, and perhaps most important, governments must implement ambitious policies that reflect a vision of the sustainable economy to which we aspire. Such measures could not only unlock new business opportunities but also create a level playing field and stable operating environment.

Paul Polman is Chair of the Food and Land Use Coalition. Eva Zabey is Executive Director of Business for Nature.

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WISDOM CORNER

- You simply have to put one foot in front of the other and keep going. Put blinders on and plow right ahead. GEORGE LUCAS
- Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. STEPHEN HAWKING
- The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence. CONFUCIUS

LOL

Suicide over sandwich



Three men are all working on building a house. They go up to the roof for lunch and then unwrap their sandwiches. The Brunette says, "If I get one more Tuna sandwich, I'm going to jump off this roof and kill myself." The black-haired one says, "If I get one more pickle and lettuce sandwich, I, too, am going to jump off this roof and kill myself." The blonde looks at his sandwich and also declares, "If I get one more peanut

butter and jelly sandwich, I'm going to jump off this roof and kill myself." The next day, they all get the same sandwiches and kill themselves. That night, their wives all meet up and mourn. "If I had known that my husband was going to kill himself over a sandwich, I wouldn't have given it to him." The brunette cries. "Same," the raven head replies. They both look at the blonde. "Don't look at me, he packed his own lunch!"

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Beware of fake oximeter

Sir, In the current pandemic situation, the importance of an oximeter is immense. Many companies' oximeters are being sold in the market but how do we know if the device is original or fake? Before we know about it, we need to know the usefulness of this device. This is a small device that measures oxygen saturation in the blood, which we call SaO2. The outbreak of corona has taken a toll and is spreading around the world. Signs and symptoms of this terrible disease are known only by the amount of oxygen is present in the blood. The normal oxygen saturation in the blood ranges from 95% to 100% (normal SaO2 95 to 100%). If anyone diagnosed less than 95% then the lungs don't functioning properly. We know that the corona virus attacks our lungs the most. The pulse oximeter is useful for assessing the patient's coronary recovery or for assessing symptoms. If an oximeter is fake it will always show a normal pulse level of 95 to 100% oxygen parameters. So how do you know if it's right or fake? Its authenticity can be ascertained using a simple method. Tie a rubber band tightly to the top of the finger on which you are using the device so that the blood flow stops. Naturally the reading will show less than the actual. Then again open the rubber band. If there is a variation, the device is OK. If there is no variation the device is fake. Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

EC's role in Covid time

Sir, This has reference to the Election commission's lax behaviour in conducting elections in some poll-bound states. When the Covid cases saw a downward trajectory in India, the EC came with its faulty blueprint of conducting elections taking precautions only on paper with no compliance on the ground. Consequently, Covid cases rose steeply as people attended mass rallies flouting the guidelines such as wearing mask, maintaining social distancing etc. When virtual rally was the norm, physical rally became the practice and EC just remained a mute spectator. The EC did not take all the safeguards that were necessary to protect people from Covid. Even our elected representatives showed scant respect for the guidelines by attending mass rallies and remaining unmasked. It had been better if India would have followed the online voting by mail as in Australia and proxy voting on behalf of Covid patients. Sambit Palei, BHUBANESWAR

Sneak peek into Kerala exit polls 'predict' Left's return

Though the results of the exit polls have unofficially started to trickle out and are not looking good for the Congress-led Opposition

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 29: Even though the official announcement of the various exit polls done especially by TV channels in Kerala will be officially out Thursday after 7 p.m., the preliminary indications say the Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left government stands a good chance to create electoral history by becoming the first government to retain power.

Though the results of the exit polls have unofficially started to trickle out and are not looking good for the Congress-led Opposition, they continue to portray a sense of confidence that no such polls done so far have been correct.

Kerala went to the polls April 6 to elect 140 legislators and counting will take place Sunday.

Putting up a strong face a Congress leader on condition of hearing the unofficial report of the exit polls, said generally the Congress party do not give much significance to such exercise, which are not foolproof.

"Apart from giving a feel good factor, when one hears, there is nothing beyond that. Did any poll



PINARAYI VIJAYAN

agency predict that the Congress-led UDF would win 19 out of the 20 Lok Sabha seats at the 2019 polls? So we do not give any significance to it, even if it favours us. We know we are certain to win with around 75 to 80 seats," said the Congress leader.

Another Congress leader pointed out exit polls to some extent comes out right when there is a clear winner, but it falls flat whenever there is a tight contest. "This time all have accepted that there were very close fights in at least two dozen seats and in such seats, it could go to either to the two traditional fronts and in some places where the BJP is strong, that also could go to any of the three fronts. So in these constituencies, no such computational exercise has

so far become right. Anyway we have waited anxiously from April 6. So let us wait for another two more days," said the Congress leader.

Following the unofficial reports surfacing, the Congress-led UDF top brass were, however, wary at the way the voting of the above 80 years was done and the way the postal votes for election officials was managed, which together account for around 5 lakh votes and all know that the Left's machinery in such exercise are far better than their rivals and in close contests, this could well be the deciding factor.

On Wednesday Vijayan, sporting a 'naughty smile', reiterated to the media that none needs to build castles in the air. He had just come out after chairing the last Cabinet meeting.

The Congress-led UDF woke up Thursday to the news of the passing away of 56-year-old Malappuram district Congress Committee president VV Prakash, who was the candidate at the Nilambur constituency and the party was hugely confident of he winning the polls.

Prakash suffered a cardiac arrest earlier in the day and was brought dead to a hospital at Manjeri.

'Is Aadhaar must for prisoners to get vax?'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 29: The Bombay High Court Thursday asked the Centre and the Maharashtra government to clarify if an Aadhaar card was mandatory for prisoners to get the vaccine against COVID-19.

Prison inmates should not be denied the vaccine because they did not have an Aadhaar card; the HC said and observed that making the document mandatory for prisoners for the vaccine was an "important policy issue that would have pan-India ramifications".

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni raised the query after it was informed that several prisoners were missing inoculation due to lack of a valid Aadhaar card.

The bench was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) taken up suo motu (on its own) on containing the spread of COVID-19 in prisons across Maharashtra.

The court said as per common sense, an Aadhaar card is required for getting the vaccine to help collate data and keep track of those getting the vaccine shots.

"However, given that the vaccine was the surest and most cost-effective way of containing the spread of the virus, inmates must not be denied the vaccine because they did not have an Aadhaar card," the high court said.

"If the Aadhaar card is coming in the way, then let Aadhaar regis-



Prison inmates should not be denied the vaccine because they did not have an Aadhaar card; the HC said

■ Making the Aadhaar card mandatory for prisoners for the vaccine was an "important policy issue that would have pan-India ramifications", the high court said

■ The court said as per common sense, an Aadhaar card is required for getting the vaccine to help collate data and keep track of those getting the vaccine shots

tration camps be organised then and there (in prisons or vaccination centres for inmates) and such cards be issued," the bench said.

It directed Advocate General (AG) Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, who appeared for the state government, to discuss the issue with the Centre's counsel, Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, and inform the HC of their stand by May 4.

Making the Aadhaar card mandatory for prisoners for the vaccine was an "important policy issue that would have pan-India ramifications", the high court said.

The bench also said it would issue directions to the state high

power committee (HPC), constituted last year; to help decongest prisons in the wake of spread of the viral infection, to meet more often and supervise if its recommendations were being implemented.

The court's direction on the HPC came after Prof Vijay Raghavan of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and senior counsel Mihir Desai, the amicus curiae in the case, told the HC that the panel had met last in April 2020.

They also informed the court that prisons continued to be congested despite the committee's guidelines on granting emergency parole and temporary bail to eligi-

ble inmates. Advocate Desai told the HC that the Taloja prison, which had 2,500 inmates in 2020, currently houses 3,500 prisoners.

Letting inmates out temporarily as per the high power committee's guidelines should be an ongoing process, he said.

To this, AG Kumbhakoni said the prison authorities were letting eligible inmates out as per the guidelines.

Currently, there were 26 inmates across 47 prisons in the state, who were eligible for emergency parole, he said, adding that most of them did not wish to leave.

"Some feel safer inside the prison. Some of them do not have the resources to sustain outside, and still others have few months of sentence left and so they want to complete their entire sentence in one stretch and then leave the prison finally," Kumbhakoni said.

Professor Raghavan informed the HC that trial courts were not considering the undertrial review committee's suggestion on letting undertrials out on temporary bail.

While the 47 prisons in the state had a capacity to house 23,000 inmates, they currently had 35,000 inmates, he said, adding that this was the situation after 10,000 prisoners were released in the last one year.

AG Kumbhakoni, however, said the suggestion should be taken with a "pinch of salt".

Kerala opens call centres to help migrants

Call centre services are available in various languages including Assamese, Oriya, Bengali and Hindi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 29: In the wake of unprecedented Covid-19 surge, the Kerala government has set up multilingual call centres and opened control rooms to help migrant workers, who have come in search of job in the southern state.

As per the directions of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Labour Department has made several precautionary measures to ensure the safety of migrant workers, fondly being called as 'guest workers', during the time of the pandemic and elaborate arrangements to address their fears and concerns.

"Call centres and control rooms have been set up for guest workers at the state level in the Labour Commissionerate here and also at 14 district headquarters," a Labour department official said here.

Directions have been given to



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

listen to their issues empathetically while arriving at the call centres and give them enough mental support to resolve and overcome it, the official said.

Bilingual officials are assigned in these centres to answer the queries and doubts raised by the guest workers, he added.

Call centre services are available in various languages including Assamese, Oriya, Bengali and Hindi.

Besides this, the existing facilities of guest workers would also work as their help desk in various districts.

Assistant labour officers are deployed across the state to prepare the migrant workers to register in the CoWIN portal and get them vaccinated, department sources said. Posters and video-audio WhatsApp messages about Covid-19 have already been circulated in

various languages to create awareness among the guest workers.

Besides visiting their dwellings to create awareness about the precautionary measures to be taken to fight the pandemic, the Labour department officials are also trying to ensure their timely ambulance service if necessary. The Labour department is mulling to set up special firstline Covid treatment centres in Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram, the districts which have a comparatively huge guest worker population.

The railways have been approached to get details of guest workers, who are planning to return to their home state, they said adding that steps are also being taken to open facilitation centres in all major railway stations in the state.

Labour Commissioner S Chitra said the department is prepared to help them from ensuring smooth working conditions in the state.

Maha may see Covid-19 3rd wave in July-Aug: Tope

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 29: Still reeling under a deadly second wave of Covid-19, Maharashtra may witness a third wave of the infection in July-August, said health minister Rajesh Tope Thursday.

The grim prediction by Tope came on a day when Maharashtra, the state worst-hit by the pandemic in the country recorded 66,159 fresh coronavirus cases and 771 fatalities. Speaking to reporters here, he said, As per epidemiologists, Maharashtra could witness a third wave of Covid-19 in July or August.

"Maharashtra is trying to be self-sufficient in terms of availability of medical oxygen by then.

It has been said the state could reach to the plateau level of Covid-19 cases by the end of May. If it is hit by a third wave in July or August, it would increase the challenges before the state administration, he said.

He was speaking after taking part in a review meeting with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray where various aspects of Covid-19 management and vaccination were discussed. District collectors and divisional commissioners also took part in the virtual meeting.

"During the discussion, the Chief Minister stressed on setting up 125 PSA (pressure swing adsorption) plants (for generating medical oxygen) at the earliest for treating patients with mild to moderate Covid-19 infection," Tope said.

District Collectors were told the government will not tolerate any complain about non-availability of oxygen when the state is hit by a third wave, said the Health Minister.

70K people across India dialled a mental health helpline last year

Besides employees of corporate groups, teachers and farmers also sought help for mental health issues

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 29: Over 70,000 people across India dialled a mental health helpline in the last financial year, indicating the profound impact that the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown has had on people's psychological state.

The Mpower helpline, which has an ongoing tie-up with the Government of Maharashtra and the BMC, received maximum calls from people between 26 to 40 years of age. Besides employees of corporate groups, teachers and farmers also sought help for mental health issues. Psychiatrists recounted a case where a man in his mid-twenties reached out to the helpline with increasing depressive thoughts. He was finding it difficult to overcome heartbreak. Trapped at home during lockdown and conflicts with family members made him feel suicidal.

He was advised medication and psychotherapy. After extensive work on grief therapy, his symptoms have reduced.

In another case, a young student reported having constant thoughts of his arm being cut off and facing disability for life. He was suffering from an obsessive compulsive disorder. The helpline team referred him for medication and Exposure Response Prevention (ERP) therapy which helped him gain control over obsessive thoughts. He is now doing better and is studying for competitive exams.

"Nearly 25% of our callers reported stress and anxiety, whether



it was anxiety related to career growth, health, exams, the pandemic or problems at the workplace," said a spokesperson. About 8 per cent of calls were about relationships, which included concerns with partners or conflicts with family. Ten per cent of calls pertained to depression and loneliness. A large number of patients also called up with anger management and addiction problems.

In one of the cases the helpline received, a man pursuing his MBA while working in the sales sector reported feelings of work stress, self doubt and constantly feeling less qualified compared to colleagues. He thought that people around him

were judging him for the way he walked or spoke to others. Due to overtime and working on holidays, he was experiencing burnout. He couldn't recall the last time that he was cheerful and when stressed, he would skip meals and sleep for just five to six hours at night. He was diagnosed with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and therapy.

Seventy percent of all callers on the helpline in the past year were male. "In the 2020 lockdown, there was a lot of anxiety but still a lot of optimism. What seems to have changed this time is the feeling of hopelessness and acceptance of fate. There is numbness setting in about

how long we can go on this way," said child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Sapna Bangar. With increasing instances of younger children catching Covid, there is a whole new spectrum of anxiety among parents with regard to child mortality, she added. Information overload via social media is not helping either.

"In patients already suffering from mental health conditions, round-the-clock flow of news like insufficient hospital beds or difficulty in finding oxygen cylinders is exacerbating their condition," said Dr Ambrish Dharmadhikari, head psychiatrist at Mpower Foundation.

IIT Bombay finds innovative way to generate O2

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 29: Amid the shortage of medical oxygen for treating Covid-19 patients, the IIT Bombay has come up with an ingenious solution to help address the issue by converting a nitrogen unit into an oxygen generating unit, the institute said Thursday.

The pilot project, which has been tested successfully, relies on a simple technological intervention of converting a Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) nitrogen unit into a PSA oxygen unit, according to an official statement.

It claimed that initial tests conducted at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay have shown "promising results". The oxygen production could be achieved at "3.5 atm pressure with a purity level of 93 per cent to 96 per cent", the statement said.

This gaseous oxygen can be utilised for Covid-19-related needs across the existing hospitals and upcoming Covid-19-specific facilities by providing a continuous supply of oxygen, it said.

"(conversion of nitrogen unit into an oxygen unit) has been done by fine-tuning the existing nitrogen plant setup and changing the molecular sieves from Carbon to Zeolite," the statement said quoting Prof Milind Atrey, Dean (R&D), IIT Bombay, who led the project.

Atrey said such nitrogen plants, which take air from the atmosphere as raw material, are available in various industrial plants across India.



"Therefore, each of them could potentially be converted into an oxygen generator; thus helping us tide over the current public health emergency," he said.

The pilot project is a collaborative effort among IIT Bombay, Tata Consulting Engineers and Spantech Engineers, Mumbai, who deal with the PSA nitrogen and oxygen plant production, the statement said.

To undertake this study on an urgent basis, an MoU was signed among IIT Bombay, Tata Consulting Engineers and Spantech Engineers to finalise a standard operating procedure (SOP) that may be leveraged across the country, it said.

IIT Bombay Director Prof Subhasis Chaudhuri congratulated all the involved parties and said such partnership between academia and industry is "highly" desirable and essential for the growth and success of the nation, it added.



Last phase of the 2021 West Bengal elections takes place today. In line with the COVID-19 protocols, I call upon people to cast their vote and enrich the festival of democracy

TIBETANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO PM CARES FUND

Amid the surge in the Covid-19 pandemic, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has appealed to Tibetan communities worldwide to contribute to India's ongoing relief measures to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund)



of the day quote

Who has the right to hide the number of deaths? Everything is being done in a transparent manner in Delhi

Congress can put their point, if there are shortcomings. They can point out. But they are in habit of indulging in spit-and-run politics

It's a welcome decision to impose stringent restrictions during corona curfew but what steps is the government taking to ensure adequate vaccine supply?

Health Ministry issues revised guidelines, warns against Remdesivir use



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 29: The decision to administer Remdesivir or use any other investigational therapy must be taken by a medical professional and the drug must be administered only in a hospital setting, said the 'Revised guidelines for home isolation of mild asymptomatic Covid-19 cases' issued by the Union Health Ministry Thursday.

Do not attempt to procure or administer Remdesivir at home, the revised guidelines said.

The guidelines said that systemic oral steroids are not indicated in mild disease and if symptoms persist beyond seven days (persistent fever, worsening cough etc), one should consult the treating doctor for treatment with low dose oral steroids.

In case of falling oxygen saturation or shortness of breath, the person should require hospital admission and seek immediate consultation of higher treating physician surveillance team, the revised guidelines said.

For the treatment of asymptomatic patients or those with mild symptoms under home isolation, the revised guidelines said, Patients

to follow symptomatic management for fever, running nose and cough, as warranted. Patients may perform warm water gargles or take steam inhalation twice a day.

If fever is not controlled with a maximum dose of Paracetamol 650 mg four times a day, consult the treating doctor who may consider advising other drugs like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) (ex Tab Naproxen 250 mg twice a day). Consider Tab Ivermectin (200 mcg/kg once a day, to be taken empty stomach) for three to five days, the guidelines said.

Inhalational Budesonide (given via inhalers with spacer at a dose of 800 mcg twice daily for five to seven days) to be given if symptoms (fever and/or cough) are persistent beyond five days of disease onset, they added.

The guidelines said that a patient or a caregiver will keep monitoring the health and seek immediate medical attention if serious signs or symptoms develop.

These could include difficulty in breathing, dip in oxygen saturation (SpO2 94 per cent on room air), persistent pain or pressure in the chest and mental confusion or inability to arouse, they said.

'Delhi govt's job to handle healthcare in capital'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 29: The Centre Thursday said the Delhi government is responsible for handling the present COVID-19 crisis in the national capital as providing healthcare to the people of the city continues to be under its domain.

The clarification from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) came after the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021 came into force from Tuesday.

The MHA also said the amendments to the GNCTD Act will in no way alter the constitutional and legal responsibilities of the elected government in the national capital, but would ensure better governance.

"The amendments to the GNCTD Act, 1991 in no way alter the constitutional and legal responsibilities



of the elected government to take necessary action, in respect of the subjects transferred to them in the State and Concurrent Lists of the Constitution of India, including subjects such as health, education etc.," the MHA said in a statement.

It said the amendments will define the responsibilities of the elected government and the lieutenant governor (LG) and "create a harmonious relationship" be-

tween the legislature and the executive.

The GNCTD (Amendment) Act, 2021 came into force Tuesday, after being passed by the Lok Sabha March 22, by the Rajya Sabha March 24 and after the assent of the president March 28.

Sections 21, 24, 33 and 44 of the Act were amended.

The MHA said the objective of the amendment act is to make it more

relevant to the needs of the capital, further define the responsibilities of the elected government and the LG and create a harmonious relationship between the legislature and the executive.

"The amendments would ensure better governance in the NCT of Delhi and lead to improved implementation of schemes and programmes meant for the common people of Delhi," the statement said. The amendments are consistent with the existing legal and constitutional provisions, and in line with the judgments of the Supreme Court July 4, 2018 and February 14, 2019, it added.

According to the legislation, the "government" in Delhi means the "Lieutenant Governor" and the city government will now have to seek the opinion of the LG before taking any executive action.

SHORT TAKES

Yogi govt extends lockdown by a day

Lucknow: Amid surging coronavirus cases, the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh, Thursday, announced the extension of weekend lockdown in the state by one day. Weekend lockdowns were earlier imposed from Friday 8 pm to Monday 7 am to curb the spread of the virus. The state government has extended the weekend lockdown to include Monday. The lockdown will now remain in force in the state from Friday 8 pm to Tuesday 7 am, said a government spokesman. Night curfew will also continue in all districts of the state.

Chardham Yatra to be postponed

Dehradun: The Chardham Yatra to the four famous Himalayan shrines in Uttarakhand, which was scheduled to begin next month, has been postponed in view of the massive surge in COVID-19 cases. Announcing this here Thursday, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat said conducting the yatra amid the raging pandemic is not possible. However, the portals of the four Himalayan temples known as Chardham will open as scheduled, he said. However, they will open only for priests to perform regular prayers and not for devotees. Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are the four famous shrines.

Doctor held for black marketing

Mahasamund: A doctor attached to a government hospital has been arrested in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh for allegedly selling Remdesivir injections in black market, police said Thursday. A joint team of the district's cyber cell and local police laid a trap at Rajim and arrested Dr Datyanashan Patel (30) and seized six vials of the drug, used to treat coronavirus patients, from him, said an official.

Covid +ve youth commits suicide

Lucknow: The scare of corona drove a young patient to end his life by suicide at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) here Thursday. Kamal Kishore, who was suffering from chronic kidney disease and was undergoing dialysis, had tested positive for coronavirus April 16 and was admitted to Rajdhani Corona Hospital in the SGPGIMS April 18. Around noon Friday, when washrooms were empty on the fourth floor, he jumped out through a window.

Plea in SC to exempt GST on COVID-19 related drugs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 29: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking GST exemption for Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, Favipiravir and other COVID-19 related drugs with similar generic constitution as well as medical equipment.

The intervention application has been filed by an NGO, 'Public Policy Advocates', in the pending suo motu case by the apex court on distribution of essential supplies and services during pandemic.

The application sought direction to the Centre to issue appropriate ad-hoc guidelines, orders or notifications "exempting COVID-19 related drugs including but not limited to Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, Favipiravir and other drugs with similar generic constitution, medical equipment including but not limited to Ventilators and Bipap Machines, and other medical treatment..."

It also sought direction to Goods and Services Tax (GST) council secretariat to convene a meeting



expeditiously and direct exemption of GST with immediate effect on COVID related drugs and medical equipment which also include ventilators, medical grade oxygen and oxygen concentrators.

"That as the country grapples with an acute and devastating surge in cases with the second wave, an overnight demand for the aforesaid drugs and necessary medical equipment has exponentially increased manifold", the plea said.

The NGO sought exemption of COVID-19 related drugs, medical equipment, other medical treatment for infection prevention, control measures and supportive care for patients from GST in accor-

ULFA-I leader killed, aide held by forces

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 29: A top leader of the outlawed ULFA-I was killed and one of his aides arrested during an encounter with the security forces Thursday in Bongaigaon district of western Assam, Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said.

The Assam police chief said that the encounter between the security forces and the United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent took place at Besimari under Manikpur police station in Bongaigaon District early morning Thursday. In a tweet Mahanta said ULFA-I commander western command, recently appointed to replace Drishti Rajkhowa, self-styled Col Dwipen Saud appears dead with bullet injury. He's being taken to the hospital now.

His gunman Padum Rai is apprehended alive with a weapon. Another weapon and a grenade recovered in the PO (place of occurrence). The DGP said, "We had intelligence (report) that the ULFA-I western command was planning some high profile kidnapping in collaboration with other anti-India forces which now appears to be foiled.

'White House type' test kits to arrive in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 29: Two days after US President Joe Biden's pledge to help, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Covid-19 emergency aid materials shall start landing in New Delhi from Thursday onwards, an official spokesperson said here Thursday.

This would include 10,00,000 Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs), the same used by the White House, to provide reliable results in less than 15 minutes to identify the virus and prevent community spread.

The first consignment on the world's largest military aircraft would bring 440 oxygen cylinders and regulators donated by

the State of California, plus 9,60,000 Rapid Diagnostic Tests and 100,000 N95 masks for the India's frontline healthcare teams.

"The US has stood shoulder to shoulder with India for more than 70 years and will continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic together. Just as India sent assistance to the United States when US hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are now helping India during its time of need," said the spokesperson.

The latest announcement builds on USAID's earlier assistance of over \$23 million which directly reached 10 million Indians, and it now delivering supplies worth over \$100 million in the next few days to this country.

Urban Indians endorse introduction of 'vaccine passports'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

A 'VACCINE PASSPORT' IS A RECORD OR HEALTH DATA CERTIFICATE THAT WOULD CARRY INFORMATION ABOUT WHETHER A PERSON HAS BEEN INOCULATED OR HAS TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19

New Delhi, April 29: Most urban Indians and global citizens endorse the introduction of Covid-19 vaccine passports for citizens for travel and other purposes, including visiting events and commercial places, showed a WEF-Ipsos survey.

A 'Vaccine Passport' is a record or health data certificate that would carry information about whether a person has been inoculated or has tested negative for Covid-19. The information would be accessible electronically, on mobile apps, or as printed documents or cards.

An Ipsos statement said that an overwhelming majority of urban Indians and global citizens favour Covid-19 Vaccine Passports for citizens to aid in different ways. Around



78 per cent global citizens and 84 per cent Indians support the use of the vaccine passports for entering any country. Around 73 per cent global citizens and 82 per cent urban Indians agree that the passports would be important for making travel & large events safe.

As many as 67 per cent global citizens and 82 per cent urban Indians agree that the passports should be used for entry at large public places, like concert halls and stadiums. Further 1 in 2 global citizens agree and 78 per cent urban Indians want that such documents should be

needed for visiting shops, restaurants & offices.

In fact, at least 81 per cent of urban Indians polled foresee vaccine passports becoming a reality by the end of the year. Two third of global citizens (66 per cent) too expect positive outcomes with the vaccine passport decree.

Among Indian respondents, 84 per cent agreed that all travellers entering their country should be required to have a vaccine passport.

Globally, the support level drops when it comes to accessing parts of daily life only recently re-opening.

Globally, 55 per cent support these kinds of requirements - ranging from the strongest support in India at 78 per cent, 75 per cent in Chile and 70 per cent in Peru to widespread opposition in Russia (72 per cent dis-

agree) and 52 per cent in the US. "Covid-19 Vaccine Passports or Health Certificates will provide the best safety measure to citizens, to usher in normalcy. Majority of urban Indians advocate its implementation and global citizens too," said Amit Adarkar, CEO of Ipsos India.

"After mass vaccination and testing, certification should be the next logical step. Such resounding popular support suggests an overwhelming desire of people to return to a sense of normalcy. Vaccine passports could be a good enabler to overcome vaccine hesitancy," he added.

The survey also found that people are more comfortable with their employer accessing their personal health data and vaccination records than their government.

national



The Covid mismanagement has been criticised in the international media across the world. The government should focus on managing the crisis instead of managing headlines in the media
KAMAL NATH | FORMER MADHYA PRADESH CM

EX-PM MANMOHAN SINGH DISCHARGED FROM AIIMS

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was Thursday discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, where he was admitted after testing positive for COVID-19. He received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine March 4 and the second April 3



of the day quote

Remdesivir injection, Ivermectin tablets, Tocilizumab injection, Favipiravir Capsule, Enoxaparin injection and Dexamethasone tablet should be notified as essential commodities immediately
BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CM

It has become very important to provide beds to every patient who needs oxygen. We have to expedite the process to add more ICU and oxygen beds in the coming weeks
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

The government should provide 750 lakh financial assistance to families of officers, teachers and employees who died due to coronavirus while performing their election duty in the Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls
AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

Why MP, Maha got more O₂: Delhi HC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 29: The Delhi High Court Friday questioned the Centre as to why various states, including Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, were being allocated more oxygen than they demanded while the national capital was not getting even the quantity necessary for treating COVID-19 patients.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli made it clear that it was by no means interested in securing more oxygen for Delhi than required and that too at the cost of any state or Union Territory.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, said that while the national capital's requirement was 700 MT per day, it was allocated 480 and 490 MT and the Centre has not increased it.

Mehra and senior advocate Raj Shekhar Rao, who is amicus curiae in the case, informed the court that as per the national allocation plan, Maharashtra demanded 1500 Metric Tonnes (MT) of oxygen per day and was allocated 1661 MT; similarly, Madhya Pradesh demanded 445 MT and it was allocated 543 MT and that the situation was similar for several other states. The court said that if the information provided was to be accepted, it would appear that the central government needed to explain this aspect and granted it a day to respond. The Centre has to either show some justification for this or "make amends" now that the situation has been brought to its attention, the high court said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, said the gov-



ernment will file an affidavit on the court's query and will give the reasons for giving more oxygen to Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, if that is the case. "There are states which received less than what they had asked for. We have been rationalising," he said.

During the hearing, when the court asked a senior central government officer as to why Delhi's supply was out of line while MP and Maharashtra were given more oxygen, Mehta said the population of MP was more than the national capital. He then told the officer, "You cut from MP and give it to Delhi. It would be at the cost of some lives in MP but let us do it for Delhi." This was objected to by the judges who said, "Don't give it an impression as if we are asking something extra for Delhi. Don't project like this. We don't appreciate this. We are asking this on the basis of facts and figures. You can't be emotional about it. You have to take this head on, you can't duck it." Delhi government counsel also projected before the court, the position of ICU and non-ICU beds here.

Mehra said there are currently 16,272 non-ICU beds and 4,866 ICU beds and they are in the process of adding more beds. The existing oxygen demand in hospitals is 704 MT per day and after further augmentation, the daily oxygen demand will be around 1000 MT, he said, adding that his grievance was the allocation of 480-490 MT oxygen was far less than Delhi's requirement. The solicitor general said more tankers are being imported to transport oxygen and it was a matter of few days and once the logistical issues get settled, the Centre will ensure whatever maximum supply is possible will be given.

When the bench pointed out that 25 per cent more oxygen was supplied to MP than its demand, Mehta said there must be some reason why MP was given more oxygen and urged the court not to go into pan India allocation. The court is hearing the matter on the oxygen crisis and other issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic which the national capital is presently grappling with. The hearing started at 11.30 AM and is continuing.

IAF airlifts 13 empty oxygen tankers from Bangkok, S'pore, Dubai

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 29: The Indian Air Force (IAF) airlifted 13 empty cryogenic oxygen tankers from Bangkok, Singapore and Dubai to India Thursday.

India is struggling with the second wave of the coronavirus infection as hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

The IAF is currently transporting empty cryogenic oxygen tankers from three destinations outside India, a statement issued by it said. Three tankers from Bangkok, four from Singapore and six from Dubai were airlifted to India using the C-17 aircraft, it added.

The IAF is also conducting multiple domestic flights to transport oxygen tankers and cylinders within the country: It said three oxygen tankers were taken from Hindon to Ranchi, two from Chandigarh to Ranchi, two from Chandigarh to Bhubaneswar, four from Mumbai to Bhubaneswar, two from Lucknow to Ranchi and two from Jodhpur to Jammagar Thursday. The transportation of these tankers took place using the C-17 aircraft, the IAF added. It said it also airlifted 75 empty oxygen cylinders from

Help from Germany

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri Thursday said that first consignment of oxygen concentrators have arrived from Germany on an Air India flight. An oxygen concentrator, is a medical device that concentrates oxygen from ambient air.

Vadodara to Hindon using its C-130 aircraft. Since last Friday, the IAF has been airlifting empty oxygen tankers and containers to various filling stations across the country to speed up the distribution of the much-needed medical oxygen in treating COVID-19 patients. With a record single-day rise of 3,79,257 cases, India's COVID-19 tally has climbed to 1,83,76,524, while the number of active cases has crossed the 30-lakh mark, the health ministry said Thursday.

The death toll due to the viral disease has gone up to 2,04,832 with a record 3,645 daily new fatalities, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am. Along with oxygen containers, the IAF has transported essential medicines as well as equipment required by the designated COVID hospitals in various parts of the country.

DELHI HOSPS STILL RUNNING OUT OF OXYGEN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 29: Hospitals in the national capital continue to face shortage of oxygen, with the Sehgal Neo Hospitals and Rosewood Hospitals now raising alarm over their depleting stocks.

In a series of tweets, Sehgal Neo Hospital said: "We need Oxygen. One hour of oxygen left for 70 out of 150 patients on O2 support. Latest govt orders removed our old vendor Seth (LMO tank) and assigned Paramount (only cylinder) who can't supply capacity we need." "We are distressed that we have to do this again. We have received so much help. Our staff is working 24x7, but this is the crisis we have faced every few hours for the last 10 days. Please help us save lives and continue to do our work." In a statement, the hospital located at Meera Bagh in Paschim Vihar area of west Delhi, said: "We have allocated over 80 per cent of our beds for Covid patients and have two additional linked hotels with 35 rooms which are fully occupied and are also being used for treatment of Covid patients. We have a total occupancy of 150 patients (including non-Covid patients). 70 out of 150 patients are on medical oxygen support.

SHORT TAKES

Two AMU teachers die

Aligarh (UP): Two more teachers with "COVID-like symptoms" have died at the Aligarh Muslim University, which has lost seven faculty members in recent days amid a surge in COVID-19 cases. Prof Mohammad Ali of Centre of Agricultural Sciences and Prof Qazi Jamshed of Political Science Department passed away Wednesday after a brief illness, a university spokesman said Thursday. With these two deaths, AMU has lost seven members of its teaching staff in the past 10 days, he said.

Four bears found dead

Chandrapur: Two bears and two bear cubs were found dead in a well at a village in Chandrapur forest range of Maharashtra Thursday, an official said. Local forest guards were alerted when a foul smell emanated from a well in Wadholi village in the morning, an official said. Carcasses of two adult bears and two cubs were found inside the well, he said, adding that the animals must have fallen in accidentally. Following initial probe, forest officials have ruled out poaching or foul play, he said.

100 thatched houses gutted

Dimapur: One person was charred to death and more than 100 thatched houses were destroyed in a devastating fire that broke out at Burma camp in Nagaland's Dimapur district, a fire department official said Thursday.

Lalu set free

Ranchi: RJD president Lalu Prasad was released from jail Thursday evening after completion of bail formalities in the special CBI court in Ranchi. After the Bar Council of India allowed lawyers to attend necessary court works, Prasad's lawyers submitted bail bond and two sureties of ₹1 lakh each in the Ranchi CBI court during the day.

Bank guard killed

Hyderabad: A bank employee was killed, and another injured in when armed robbers opened fire at an ATM in Kukatpally area in Hyderabad Thursday, police said. Security guard Ali Baig, an ex-serviceman, was killed and the other bank employee, Srinivas was injured in the incident.

20 AFTERSHOCKS JOLT ASSAM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 29: People of central and northern Assam spent a sleepless night Wednesday as 20 aftershocks continued till Thursday afternoon after the powerful earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale jolted the state, causing damages to many buildings and injuring 10 persons.

According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the powerful quake which first shook Sonitpur in northern Assam at 7.51 a.m. Wednesday, were also felt in North Bengal, other north-eastern states including Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, neighbouring Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The NCS data said that after the main quake at a depth of 17 km from the surface, 20 aftershocks of magnitude 2.3 to 4.7 on the Richter scale were recorded Wednesday and Thursday (until 4.17 p.m. Thursday) in the vicinity of Sonitpur, Nagaon, Morigaon districts.

The disaster management officials in Guwahati said that there are reports of damage to buildings, roads and some other infrastructure in different parts of Sonitpur, Tezpur, Nagaon, Morigaon and adjoining areas.

At least 10 persons were injured in Darrang, Kamrup Metro, Nagaon and Sonitpur districts. The official said that several apartments, buildings and hotels developed cracks.

'Overweight linked with severe nCoV risk'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 29: Being overweight is associated with an increased risk of worse outcomes from COVID-19, including higher ICU admissions, according to a study published Thursday in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology journal.



The researchers from the University of Oxford in the UK noted that this is the first large study to report the effect of bodyweight on risk of worse outcomes from COVID-19 across the full range of body-mass index (BMI).

BMI is a measure of body fat calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilogrammes by the square of height in me-

tres. The study is based on more than 6.9 million people living in England and included data from over 20,000 COVID-19 patients who were hospitalised or died during the first wave of the pandemic in the country.

The researchers found that the risk of worse outcomes from COVID-19 start rising in people with a BMI above 23 kilogrammes per square metre (kg/m²), which is considered to be in the healthy range. The risks of hospitalisation were 5 per cent higher for each one unit increase in BMI and the risk of ICU admission was 10 per cent higher for each unit increase, they said.

People who were underweight (BMI less than 18.5) also experienced worse outcomes from COVID-19, they said. The effect of excess weight on the risk of severe COVID-19 was greatest in young people aged 20 to 39 years of age and decreased after age 60, according to the study.

Increasing BMI had very little impact on the risk of severe COVID-19 in people aged over 80 years, the researchers said. However, the overall incidence of severe COVID-19 among people aged 20 to 39 years of age was lower than all other age groups, they said.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



Labourers sorting wheat grain at a market in Jabalpur

UNI PHOTO

India to get assistance from over 40 nations to fight 2nd Covid-19 wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 29: Over 40 countries have committed to provide India urgently-required medical supplies like oxygen-related equipment and critical medicines to help it deal with an unprecedented second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said Thursday.

At a media briefing, he said India is looking at getting in the immediate future around 550 oxygen-generating plants, 4,000 oxygen concentrators, over 10,000 oxygen cylinders and 17 cryogenic oxygen tanks, some of which have already arrived.

Shringla said the government, in many senses, has been very quick to try and make an assessment of where it has capacity shortfall and based on some of these considera-

tions, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been trying to find the most effective means of addressing the resource constraints.

Late last night, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had a video conference with the Indian heads of missions all over the world to apprise them about the domestic requirements in view of the situation, he said. Shringla said certain areas were prioritised which included procurement of liquid oxygen as well as equipment that produces oxygen, oxygen generators, oxy-

gen concentrators, transportation equipment for oxygen.

He said there has been an outpouring of solidarity and assistance to India. "Over 40 countries have actually committed to provide us with many of the items that we need urgently," he said.

The foreign secretary also said that India is looking at procuring 400,000 units of antiviral medication Remdesivir from Egypt besides attempting to get it from countries like the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh and Uzbekistan.

We are facing an unprecedented second wave of the pandemic. As of now, we have over three million active cases. This has obviously put considerable pressure on our healthcare system; on the capacities and resources that we have
HARSH VARDHAN SHRINGLA | FOREIGN SECRETARY

FB restores #ResignModi posts after blocking by 'mistake'

JUST A FEW DAYS BACK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS REMOVED ABOUT 100 POSTS AND URLS AFTER THE GOVERNMENT ASKED THEM TO REMOVE CONTENT THAT WAS CRITICAL OF THE HANDLING OF THE CURRENT MEDICAL CRISIS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 29: Facebook blocked posts tagged '#ResignModi' amid raging criticism of the government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis, but restored it hours later calling it a mistake. However, Facebook was quick to clarify that the blocking which happened Wednesday, wasn't at the behest of the government.

"We temporarily blocked this hashtag by mistake, not because the Indian government asked us to, and have since restored it," a Facebook spokesperson said in a statement on Thursday. The com-

pany however, did not elaborate on the matter. Facebook isn't the first social media company to censor posts critical of government handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Twitter had removed or restricted access to several critical posts on orders from the government, which called it fake news.

"Government has not issued any direction to remove this hashtag, Facebook has also clarified that it was removed by mistake," the Ministry of Electronics and IT said in a tweet: "Media has a very important role to play in acting as a force multiplier to the efforts of our front-line workers and medical



professionals. At a sensitive time like this, we would urge the media to partner with crores of ordinary Indians as we collectively fight the pan-

dem," the Ministry further said. According to reports, a hashtag calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was

blocked on Facebook for hours on Wednesday. Users searching the hashtag were given a message that said such posts were 'temporarily hidden here' because 'some content in those posts goes against our Community Standards'.

Facebook periodically blocks hashtags and posts for a variety of reasons. Some of the blocks are done manually and some are automated. The Modi government has drawn a lot of flak in domestic and international media for handling of the second wave of Covid-19 infections, which Thursday crossed the 1.8-crore mark. Just a few days back, Twitter and other social media plat-

forms removed about 100 posts and URLs after the government asked them to remove content that was critical of the handling of the current medical crisis. Among those were posts by a sitting MP and prominent filmmakers. Government sources had said the social media platforms were asked to remove the posts and URLs (uniform resource locators) to 'prevent obstructions in the fight against the pandemic' and disruption of public order due to the said posts. Blurb "Government has not issued any direction to remove the hashtag. FB has clarified that it was removed by mistake" IT Ministry

international

of the day quote

Sri Lanka has demonstrated resilience in the implementation of its test, trace and treat pandemic management strategy, which has relied on its well-established public healthcare system



FARIS HADAD-ZERVOS | COUNTRY DIRECTOR, WORLD BANK

The Chinese side will continue to do its utmost to provide support and help according to the needs of India. We hope and believe that under the leadership of the Indian Government, the Indian people will surely prevail over the epidemic at an early date



WANG YI | FOREIGN MINISTER, CHINA

The privacy of users is always a priority. While Google must solve the problem, I can limit the consequences. That's why we're taking this decision,



HUGO DE JONGE | HEALTH MINISTER, THE NETHERLANDS

SHORT TAKES

300k vax from China to Pak

Islamabad: A Pakistan International Airlines special plane arrived in Islamabad from Beijing carrying doses of the coronavirus vaccine. According to sources, PK6852 landed at the Islamabad airport from Beijing carrying over 300,000 coronavirus vaccines. Sources said that around one million vaccines are being brought to Pakistan by three Boeing 777 planes.

EU extends junta sanctions

Brussels: The European Union has extended sanctions for a year against senior officials in Myanmar, including junta leader Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, and others involved in the military coup in February. EU headquarters said in a statement Thursday that the sanctions, which include asset freezes, travel bans, an arms embargo and restrictions on the export of equipment that can be used for military and police repression, would remain in place until April 30, 2022.

Islamist group hardliners held

Dhaka: Four leaders of a hardline Islamist group have been arrested from different parts of Bangladesh, in connection to pending cases of violence, according to a media report Thursday. The four Hefazat-e-Islam leaders, who were arrested Wednesday, are likely to be charged for instigating violence during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bangladesh visit last month and the violent demonstrations in 2013 when several other people were killed as the group demanded the enactment of a blasphemy law, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

Pope aims to cut down on corruption

Rome: Pope Francis issued tough new anti-corruption regulations Thursday that require Vatican cardinals and managers to periodically declare they are investing only in funds consistent with Catholic doctrine and aren't under criminal investigation or stashing money in tax havens. A new law published Thursday also contains a prohibition that, if broadly applied, would amount to a revolution in curial culture: It prohibits any Vatican employee from receiving work-related gifts with a value of over 40 euros (USD 48).



Wishing The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge a very happy wedding anniversary. Today marks ten years since Their Royal Highnesses exchanged vows at Westminster Abbey

ELIZABETH II | QUEEN OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

CHINA LAUNCHES CORE MODULE FOR PERMANENT SPACE STATION

China Thursday launched the core module for its first permanent space station that will host astronauts long-term. The Tianhe, or "Heavenly Harmony," module blasted into space atop a Long March 5B rocket from the Wenchang Launch Center



US delivering supplies worth over USD100 million to India: WH

The first shipment includes 440 oxygen cylinders and regulators, 960,000 Rapid Diagnostic Tests and 100,000 N95 masks to protect India's frontline healthcare heroes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 29: The United States will be delivering COVID-19 relief materials worth over USD100 million to India in the coming days, the White House said as the first flight carrying urgent health supplies left for the country.

The flight took off from the Travis Air Force Base on the world's largest military aircraft on Wednesday night, the US Agency for International Development said.

The shipment includes 440 oxygen cylinders and regulators, generously donated by the state of California, USAID said.

In addition, on this first flight, USAID is sending 960,000 Rapid Diagnostic Tests to identify infections early to help prevent the community spread of COVID-19, and 100,000 N95 masks to protect India's frontline healthcare heroes, it added.

US state governments, private companies, non-government organisations and thousands of Americans from across the country have mobilised to deliver vital oxygen-related equipment and essential supplies to Indian hospitals during the current outbreak, the White House said.

Asserting that this reflects America's solidarity with India as it battles a new wave of COVID-19, the White House said that the immediate emergency assistance

includes oxygen support, oxygen concentrators, oxygen generation units, personal protective equipment, vaccine manufacturing supplies and rapid diagnostic tests.

According to the White House, an initial delivery of 1,100 cylinders will remain in India and can be repeatedly refilled at local supply centres, with plane loads more to come.

The US is providing Oxygen Generation Units (PSA Systems) as well.

"Multiple large-scale units to support up to 20 patients each and additional mobile units will provide an ability to target specific shortages. A team of US experts will support these units, working hand-in-hand on the ground with Indian medical personnel," the White House said.

The Biden administration has re-directed its own order of AstraZeneca manufacturing supplies to India. This will allow India to make over 20 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, the White House said. According to a fact sheet issued by the White House, the US is providing the first tranche of a planned 20,000 treatment courses of the antiviral drug remdesivir to help treat hospitalised patients.

The White House said American COVID-19 assistance has reached more than 9.7 million Indians across more than 20 states and union territories.

MYANMAR PROTEST

ROCKETS FIRED AT 2 AIR BASES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, April 29: Rockets were fired at two Myanmar government air bases Thursday, causing minor damage but no injuries, the military junta said. The attacks are the latest sign that as the junta attempts to control widespread protests in cities against its February seizure of power, it is facing new military challenges in other areas.

No group claimed responsibility for the attacks on the bases in Magway and Meiktila in central Myanmar, and the government said it is seeking those responsible.

Capt. Aye Thazin Myint, a junta spokeswoman, said at a news conference in the capital, Naypyitaw, that four 107mm rockets were fired at the air force base in Magway at 3 AM Thursday, with three landing in a field and one on a road. She said one building was slightly damaged in the attack, which the military determined originated from two nearby villages.

She said five rockets were fired between 5 AM and 9 AM at the air base in Meiktila, where gunfire was also heard from nearby villages.

The rockets are commonly used by insurgent groups because they are cheap and easily deployed, although they are not particularly accurate.

The junta, which ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in its Feb. 1 coup, is engaged in open warfare with guerrillas from the Kachin and Karen minorities that have allied themselves with the protest movement against military rule.

Street protests are continuing but on a much smaller scale since the security forces stepped up their use of lethal force. More than 700 protesters and bystanders have been killed, according to several detailed tallies. The junta puts the figure at roughly one-third of that and says it used force appropriately to curb rioting.

The state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported Thursday that an accused protest leader, Wai Moe Naing, was formally charged with offences including murder and treason for allegedly heading a well-organized local network of resisters to military rule.

'US increasing military activity against China'

Activity by US military ships was up 20% and by planes 40% in Chinese-claimed areas since Biden took office in January over the same period last year, said Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Chinese Defense Military



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 29: Activity by US military ships and surveillance planes directed at China has increased significantly under President Joe Biden's administration, a spokesperson for the Chinese Defence Ministry said Thursday.

As an example, Wu Qian said the Navy destroyer USS Mustin re-

cently conducted close-in observation of the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning and its battle group.

That had "seriously interfered with the Chinese side's training activities and seriously threatened the safety of navigation and personnel on the both sides," Wu said.

The ship was warned to leave and a formal protest was filed with the US, he said. Activity by US military ships was up 20% and by planes

40% in Chinese-claimed areas since Biden took office in January over the same period last year, Wu said.

"The US frequently dispatches ships and planes to operate in seas and airspace near China, promoting regional militarization and threatening regional peace and stability," Wu said at a monthly briefing held virtually.

China routinely objects to the US military presence in the South China Sea, which it claims almost in its entirety, as well as the passage of Navy ships through the Taiwan Strait.

In an interview with Britain's Sky News, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu reiterated recent warnings that the military threat from China is growing through "misinformation campaigns, hybrid warfare, and ... Grey zone activities."

"This is our country, this is our people and this is our way of life. We will defend ourselves to the very end," Wu said.

Kremlin critic defiant but gaunt after hunger strike

REUTERS

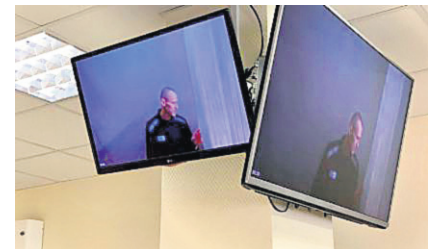
Moscow, April 29: Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "naked, thieving king" Thursday, looking gaunt but defiant in a courtroom video link from prison, his first public appearance since ending a hunger strike last week.

His remarks on a blurry video piped into a Moscow courtroom came amid new legal pressure on Navalny and his movement. Allies said he faced new criminal charges and they had been forced to disband his network of regional campaign offices, which the authorities are seeking to ban as "extremist".

Navalny, his head shaven, said he had been taken to a bathroom to look "decent" for the hearing. He undid his prison uniform to reveal a T-shirt that barely hid his thin torso.

"I looked in the mirror. Of course, I'm just a dreadful skeleton," he said, adding that he now weighed 72kg (11.3 stones), the same weight as when he was at school.

Later in the appeal hearing against a guilty verdict on a charge of defaming a World War 2 veteran,



Your naked, thieving king wants to continue to rule until the end ... Another 10 years will come, a stolen decade will come

ALEXEI NAVALNY | OPPOSITION LEADER, RUSSIA

Navalny, 44, went on the attack against Putin and the Russian justice system. At one point, he interrupted the judge, and was reprimanded.

"I want to tell the dear court that your king is naked," he said of Putin. "Millions of people are already shouting about it, because it is obvious... His crown is hanging and slipping."

Reiterating allegations of corruption that the Kremlin denies, he said: "Your naked, thieving king wants to continue to rule until the end... Another 10 years will come, a stolen decade will come."

Navalny came to prominence with an anti-corruption campaign of caustic videos cataloguing the wealth of senior officials he labelled "swindlers and thieves". He has emerged as Putin's fiercest

political rival in an era when mainstream opposition parties have managed to build up only narrow support.

A separate court is considering whether to declare Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and his network of regional campaign offices "extremist", which would give authorities the power to jail activists and freeze bank accounts. That court said Thursday it would hold its next hearing on May 17.

"Maintaining the work of Navalny's network of headquarters in its current form is impossible: it would immediately ... lead to criminal sentences for those who work in the headquarters, who collaborate with them and for those who help them," Leonid Volkov, one of Navalny's close allies, said in a YouTube video.



Members of an asylum-seeking migrant family wait to be transported by the US Border Patrol after crossing the Rio Grande river into the United States from Mexico in La Joya, Texas

'White supremacy is terrorism'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 29: In his first joint address to the US Congress, President Joe Biden identified white supremacy as a domestic terror threat that America must remain vigilant against.

While discussing his decision to withdraw American troops from war-torn Afghanistan, Biden noted global terror networks have largely moved beyond the country and that white supremacists posed a bigger threat than foreign actors.

"We won't ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to our homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism," Biden said in the House chamber, which just three months ago was attacked by the supporters of former president Donald Trump in an effort to overthrow the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

"White supremacy is terrorism, and we're not going to ignore that either. My fellow Americans, look, we have to come together to heal the



soul of this nation," the president said.

"As we gather here tonight, the images of a violent mob assaulting this Capitol — desecrating our democracy — remain vivid in all our minds. Lives were put at risk — many of your lives. Lives were lost. Extraordinary courage was summoned. The insurrection was an existential crisis — a test of whether our democracy could survive. It did," Biden said.

But he underscored that "the struggle is far from over" and that "the question of whether our democracy will long endure is both ancient and urgent."

NZ, Oz reflect divided stances toward China

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Beijing, April 29: New Zealand, one of the Five Eyes Alliance countries, has distanced itself from Australia, another partner of the group, to blacken China on its human-rights record, according to a recent report.

"It's not necessary, all the time on every issue, to invoke Five Eyes as your first port of call in terms of creating a coalition of support around particular issues in the human-rights space," New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said at a news conference with her Australian counterpart Marise Payne in Wellington.

While Payne said that, "We also have to acknowledge that China's outlook — the nature of China's external engagement both in our region and globally — has changed in recent years."



Brazilian Covid variant more transmissible, can evade immunity

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, April 29: The Brazil variant (also known as P1) is likely to be more transmissible than previous strains of Coronavirus and able to evade immunity gained from infection with other strains, according to researchers.

The team from Brazil, the UK and University of Copenhagen estimated that "there is an aggressive variant of the coronavirus called P1 which seems to be the cause of problems" in Manaus city, Brazil.

"Our analysis shows that P1 emerged in Manaus around November 2020. It went from not

being detectable in our genetic samples to accounting for 87 per cent of the positive samples in just seven weeks. It has since spread to several other states in Brazil as well as many other countries around the world," said Samir Bhatt, a researcher at Copenhagen University's Department of Public Health.

The findings, published in the journal Science, showed that P1 is likely to be between 1.7 and 2.4 times more transmissible than non-P1-lineages of the coronavirus. P1 was also likely to be able to evade between 10 and 46 per cent of the immunity gained from infection with non-P1 coronavirus.

For the study, the team used many



forms of data from Manaus to characterise P1 and its properties including 184 samples of genetic sequencing data. They found that genetically speaking P1 is different from the previous strains of coronavirus. It has acquired 17 mu-

The findings, published in the journal Science, showed that P1 is likely to be between 1.7 and 2.4 times more transmissible than non-P1-lineages of the coronavirus

tations including an important trio of mutations in the spike protein (K417T, E484K and N501Y).

The researchers also used an epidemiological model to estimate how transmissible P1 seemed to be. As well as estimating signs of P1 evade-

ing immunity gained from previous infection. The model compared two different virus strains — one was the 'normal coronavirus' and the other was dynamically adjusted using machine learning to best fit the actual events in Brazil, Bhatt said.

Manaus city was hit so hard by the first wave in 2020 that it was actually thought to be one of the few places in the world to have reached herd immunity. An estimated 75 per cent of the population in the city had been infected. Then the second wave hit in November and December. The massive second wave outbreak has led to many daily deaths and instances of the health care systems collapsing.

"New Zealand is adopting an extremely Beijing-friendly stance on these questions and breaking away from a much stronger position adopted by the other Five Eyes partners," said Clive Hamilton, a professor at the Charles Sturt University.

Australia had barred Chinese enterprises from participating in its 5G network construction on trumped-up charges, frequently denied investment of Chinese companies in the country under the pretext of "national security," and arbitrarily raided Chinese journalists based in the country.

business



Banking in the digital era will have to adopt digitisation or it will perish
SC GARG | FORMER FINANCE SECRETARY

'TRADE SHOWING STRONG RESILIENCE'

The India-China trade is showing strong resilience, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said Thursday as the bilateral trade in goods in the first quarter of this year touched \$27.7bn, a y-o-y increase of 42.8%. Chinese analysts say the trade between the two countries is growing despite the downturn in relations since May 2020



of the day quote

There are over 2 crore merchants in the country with approximately USD 780 billion in value of transactions in 2020. They are expected to grow rapidly in the coming years



ANUP BAGCHI | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ICICI BANK

We're requesting all our global partners and customers to support us in our initiative. This is a small effort from our side to help people in distress. Entire proceeds of this campaign will be donated to 'Doctors For You'



BALA SARDA | FOUNDER & CEO, VAHDAM INDIA

With normalcy returning in the latter half, our focused businesses have witnessed continued momentum in disbursements, with increased market share across desired businesses (15% in farm and 11% in two-wheeler finance)



DINANATH DUBHASHI | MD & CEO, L&T FINANCE HOLDINGS

POST-COVID WORLD LOOKS PROMISING: KPMG

The optimism for the industry emanates from projection of exponential growth in demand for processed food in rural areas and tier 2/3 cities



FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 29: The post Covid-19 world looks promising for India's food processing industry as it recalibrates itself to capitalize on increased opportunities in the industry and ears up to capture new markets, a KPMG report on Indian food processing industry said Thursday.

According to the report, the op-

timism for the industry emanates from projection of exponential growth in demand for processed food in rural areas and tier 2/3 cities. Moreover, a lot of untapped potential remains to enhance India's

export to the top 10 food importing countries of the world where the country at present has a limited presence.

The report had recommended that government can support the ex-

porters by negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), lowering Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and expeditious implementation of Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme. This will help in larger penetration of Indian value added food products in bigger global markets.

According to the report, the food processing industry is one of the mainstays of the global economy with a value addition of \$ 1.7 trillion. Also, the Indian processed food market is expected to grow to \$ 470 billion by 2025 from \$ 263 billion (2019-20).

The report titled "Indian food processing industry - growth opportunities post the Covid-19 pandemic", further said that the pandemic had provided opportunity to the Indian industry to scale but the success would also depend on

the development of high quality food testing and certification infrastructure in the country as hygiene needs grow in post Covid world.

Innovative products focused on wellness, health and nutrition are likely to see a huge opportunity in the domestic market, the report said harping on the importance increasing cold storage capacity in the absence of which scalability of perishable products has been challenge. Moreover, Digitalised Supply chain, Smart warehousing and logistics using industry 4.0 technologies can help India reduce wastage during storage and transit, it said.

According to KPMG, the pandemic has given rise to a new normal with sustainable food chains, growing preference for healthy food and localized food supply with increased trade barriers.

Global gold demand falls by 23% in Jan-Mar 2021: WGC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 29: Global gold demand dropped by 23% during January-March quarter of this year to 815.7 tonne compared to the same period of 2020, mainly driven by outflows of gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and low Central bank buying, according to a World Gold Council (WGC) report.



The overall gold demand stood at 1,059.9 tonne during the January-March quarter of 2020, according to WGC's Gold Demand Trends Q1 2021 report.

The January-March quarter witnessed 71% decline in investment demand at 161.6 tonne compared to 549.6 tonne in the same quarter of 2020, mainly on account of hefty outflows from gold ETFs.

During the quarter there was strong outflows from gold ETFs, which lost 177.9 tonne in the first quarter compared to 299.1 tonne in the corresponding quarter of 2020, as higher interest rates and a downward price trend of the precious metal weighed on investor sentiment, it said.

However, bar and coin investment went up by 36% y-o-y to 339.5 tonne during the quarter under review as against 250.5 tonne, mainly on account of the opportunity to buy at lower prices as well as by expectations of building inflationary pressures, it pointed out.

Gold prices during the quarter softened to by 4.21% to around \$1,795 an ounce compared to \$1,874 in the October-December 2020.

Most Indian firms have hedged against weakening ₹: Moody's



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 29: Most Indian corporate have currency protections against a weakening rupee said Moody's Investors Service. "Most companies have protections to limit the effect of currency fluctuations," said Annalisa Di Chiara, a Moody's Senior Vice President.

"These include natural hedges, where companies generate revenue in US dollars or have contracts priced in US dollars; some US dollar revenue and financial hedges; or a combination of these factors to help limit the strain on cash flow and leverage, even under a more severe depreciation scenario."

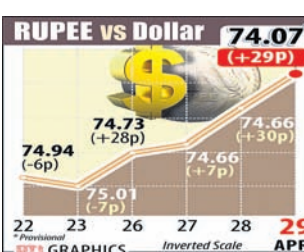
As a result, weaker credit metrics under a scenario in which the rupee depreciates a further 15% against the dollar can be accommodated within the companies' current rating levels.

"Refinancing risk associated with US-dollar debt over the next 18 months also appears manageable, as most companies are repeat issuers and others are government-owned or linked entities with good access to capital markets," Moody's Investors Service said in a new report.

According to the report, a sustained weakening of the Indian rupee against the dollar will be credit negative for rated Indian companies that generate revenue in rupees, but rely heavily on US-dollar debt to fund operations and thus have significant dollar-based costs.

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, A SUSTAINED WEAKENING OF THE INDIAN RUPEE AGAINST THE DOLLAR WILL BE CREDIT NEGATIVE FOR RATED INDIAN COMPANIES THAT GENERATE REVENUE IN RUPEES

REFINANCING RISK ASSOCIATED WITH US-DOLLAR DEBT OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS ALSO APPEARS MANAGEABLE, AS MOST COMPANIES ARE REPEAT ISSUERS AND OTHERS ARE GOVERNMENT-OWNED WITH GOOD ACCESS TO CAPITAL MARKETS



On April 27, 2021, the Indian rupee closed around 74.66 against the US dollar, or about 3 per cent lower than levels in mid-March.

Lately, India is reporting new record daily increases in coronavirus infections, prompting new lockdowns and restrictive measures to curb the spread of the pandemic.

The exponential rise in new coronavirus cases in India is a humanitarian crisis. It also raises concerns about the country's economic recovery and currency fluctuations.

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

Goldman Sachs commits \$10mn support to India

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 29: The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. Thursday announced an additional \$10 million (Rs 74 crore) commitment to support relief and recovery efforts in India, as the country experiences a surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths.

"Since the onset of the pandemic, our firm has been focused on how we can help communities around the world, including those where we live and work," said David M Solomon, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

"India is home to three Goldman Sachs offices and we have a responsibility to respond and provide our firm's support and assistance."

The additional funding for India will focus on support for frontline health facilities that are leading



the fight against Covid-19 in cities such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi, including ongoing vaccination efforts.

The funds will also be deployed to support initiatives promoting mental health in communities across India and will help economic recovery within those communities.

Frontline health facilities include portable Covid-19 care centres, oxygen concentrators and generators, and isolation care units at homes for non-critical patients from low income communities.

We are proud to support India in combating this crisis, helping to augment its medical infrastructure and drive vaccination efforts

SONJOY CHATTERJEE | CHAIRMAN AND CEO, GOLDMAN SACHS (INDIA)

Sonjoy Chatterjee, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Goldman Sachs in India, said, "We are proud to support India in combating this crisis, helping to augment its medical infrastructure and drive vaccination efforts."

The latest commitment builds on the \$42 million Goldman Sachs has already deployed to more than 300 non-profits across 31 countries through the Covid-19.

Oxygen Express to carry LMO from Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Indian Railways Oxygen Express continues transporting life-saving Oxygen on mission mode. Haryana will receive its first Oxygen Express as the train with two tankers is expected to leave Angul, Thursday.

According to the railway authorities, two empty LMO tankers unloaded from cargo flight Thursday has been moved to Angul. It will be loaded on train to load oxygen from the Steel Plant, tonight and thereafter to proceed towards Haryana.

Oxygen Express Operations of Indian Railways continues to bring relief to states as its operations expanded to Haryana and Telangana after Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

The Telangana government has also requested Indian Railways for Oxygen Express. An empty rake is on its way from Secunderabad to Angul via Raipur with five empty tankers and is expected to reach Angul, Friday. It is expected that cumulative liquid medical oxygen (LMO) carried by Indian railways will reach almost 640 MT in next 24 hours. Indian Railways is in full preparedness for providing oxygen transportation services to all the states in need.

Doorstep delivery of diesel begins as 'demand' rises

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 29: Doorstep diesel delivery is a new revolution in the field of energy distribution in India. To ease the lives of the end-consumers without the hassles of diesel procurement, Sambalpur-based fuel startup Shakti Fuels and Balasore-based fuel station named Jagannath Service Station has started the doorstep diesel delivery facility through their mobile petrol pumps.

Shakti Fuels is run by Bismoy Babu, who is an Indian Oil dealer since 1996 and has recently acquired two single and one double dispensing unit mobile petrol pump which will go around the Sambalpur city to meet the demand for diesel by various end-users at their doorstep.

Laxminarayan Mohanty, owner of Jagannath Service Station runs a retail outlet of HPCL in Balasore. He has a double-dispensing Mobile Fuel Pump, which will go around Balasore city within 50-60 km radius from the pumps. "Mobile dispensing unit is solving



To ease the lives of the end-consumers without the hassles of diesel procurement, fuel stations have started the doorstep diesel delivery facility through mobile petrol pumps

ing the problem of diesel distribution and meeting the demand of the diesel in the quickest and safest way possible. I get most of my orders from malls, construction sites, offices and housing societies for DG sets," Laxminarayan shared.

Doorstep diesel delivery is approved by the government and is a new-age concept of effective distribution of diesel. It allows fuel startups to maintain quality and creating availability of fuel for the consumers and will hugely benefit the agricultural sector, hospitals, housing societies, heavy machinery facilities and mobile towers.

Earlier, the bulk consumers of the diesel had to procure it from retail outlets in barrels which used to cause a lot of spillages and dead mileage in energy procurement. Door-step diesel delivery will solve many such problems and will provide diesel to bulk consumers in the most legal and facet manner.

'World to spend \$157bn on Covid vaccines through 2025'

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 29: Total global spending on Covid-19 vaccines is projected to reach \$157 billion by 2025, driven by mass vaccination programs underway and "booster shots" expected every two years, according to a report by US health data company IQVIA Holdings Inc released Thursday.

IQVIA, which provides data and analytics for the healthcare industry, said it expects the first wave of Covid-19 vaccinations to reach about 70% of the world's population by the end of 2022. Booster shots are likely to follow initial vaccinations every two years, the report said, based on current data on the duration of

effect of the vaccines.

The United States is preparing for the possibility that a booster shot will be needed between nine to 12 months after people receive their first full inoculations against Covid-19, a White House official said earlier this month. Pfizer Inc has also said boosters may be needed within 12 months.

Vaccine spending is expected to be highest this year at \$54 billion with massive vaccination campaigns underway around the world. It is expected to decrease after that eventually to \$11 billion in 2025, as increased competition and vaccine volumes drive down prices, said Murray Aitken, a senior vice president at IQVIA.



The forecast for such meteoric growth in sales for a new class of drugs or vaccines is unmatched,

but reminiscent of the \$130 billion spent on the new hepatitis C cures between 2014 to 2020, due to pent up

Vaccine spending is expected to be highest this year at \$54 billion with massive vaccination campaigns underway around the world. It is expected to decrease after that eventually to \$11 billion in 2025

demand, Aitken said in an interview. The spending forecast for Covid-19 vaccines represents 2% of the roughly \$7 trillion forecast for all prescription medicines during that

time period, IQVIA said.

Excluding the cost of COVID-19 vaccines, overall medicine spending is forecast to be \$68 billion lower over the six years from 2020 to 2025 than it would have been without the pandemic, according to the report.

The pandemic caused major disruptions to doctor visits, procedures and medicine use, leading to some stockpiling in the early days for some medications and then a return to a more normal trend, the report said.

"While COVID-19 vaccines will cost \$157 billion over the next five years," Aitken said, "that is a very small price to pay relative to the human cost of the pandemic."

DE KOCK FASHIONS MI WIN

Shaw show lifts DC



QUINTON DE KOCK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 29: Opener Quinton de Kock (70 n o, 50b, 6x4, 2x6) roared back to form with a blistering half century as Mumbai Indians beat Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets in their IPL game here, Thursday.

Put in to bat, Rajasthan rode on 42 (27b, 5x4) by skipper Sanju

Samson and Jos Buttler's 41 (32b, 3x4, 3x6) to post a competitive 171/4 but their efforts were overshadowed by De Kock as MI completed the task in 18.3 overs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. Krunal Pandya (39, 26b, 2x4, 2x6) also played a useful cameo.

Mumbai openers Rohit Sharma (14) and De Kock put up 49 for the first wicket. The South African fetched his first boundary, a cover

drive, and then launched into left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) for a four and a maximum. While Rohit played his trademark pull-shot to get a six in the fifth over.

De Kock hammered Chris Morris (2/33) for another maximum but Rohit perished in the sixth over, giving a dolly to Chetan Sakariya at mid-on.

Leg-spinner Rahul Tewatia (0/30) conceded three boundaries in the seventh over, two by Suryakumar Yadav (16) and one by De Kock, as Mumbai got 14 runs. However, Morris brought back Rajasthan by removing Surya, as Mumbai slipped to 83/2.

Krunal joined De Kock. They needed 41 runs from the last five overs. De Kock and Krunal added 63 runs for the third wicket and brought the side closer to a win. A profligate Morris conceded 16 runs in the 18th over, as Kieron Pollard (16 n o) and De Kock took them on the cusp of a win.

Earlier, Samson led from the front to help Royals post a competitive 171/4. Put in to bat, Rajasthan openers Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal (32, 20b, 2x4, 2x6) laid the foundation with their 66-run stand in 7.4 overs.

Buttler, who got a life, then upped the ante. Jaiswal too changed gears

as his team amassed 14 runs in the sixth over and raced to 47/0 after powerplay. Buttler was dismissed off Rahul Chahar (2/33) after being stumped by De Kock.

Samson started with a boundary, a cut-shot and then hit two boundaries off Krunal in ninth over, in which RR got 12 runs. But Chahar struck again, this time removing Jaiswal, as he lobbed off a return catch.

Shivam Dube (35, 31b, 2x4, 2x6) and Samson added 57 runs for the third wicket, with the Mumbaikar playing some aggressive shots. Samson also kept playing shots at will, as he hit two successive boundaries, in the 16th over off Trent Boult (1/37), which fetched his team 14 runs.

However, Boult cleaned up Samson in the 18th over and then Jasprit Bumrah (1/15), who had a spell-bound outing, dismissed Dube in the penultimate over, as the Mumbai bowlers kept things tight in the last four overs. RR got 45 runs in the last five overs.

BRIEF SCORES
Rajasthan Royals 171/4 (Sanju Samson 42, Jos Buttler 41, Shivam Dube 35, Yashasvi Jaiswal 32; Rahul Chahar 2/33) **lost to Mumbai Indians 172/3** (Quinton de Kock 70 n o, Krunal Pandya 39; Chris Morris 2/33) by 7 wickets.



Rahul Chahar takes a catch off his own bowling to dismiss Yashasvi Jaiswal during Mumbai Indians' IPL match against Rajasthan Royals, Thursday

drive, and then launched into left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) for a four and a maximum. While Rohit played his trademark pull-shot to get a six in the fifth over.

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For KKR, lead pacer Pat Cummins finished with excellent figures of 3/24. This was DC's fifth win in seven outings while KKR suffered their fifth loss in as seven games.

Earlier, KKR suffered another familiar batting collapse before late fireworks from Andre Russell lifted them to 154/6 after being put in to bat.

KKR were at a decent position at 69/1 in the 10th over but slumped to 82/5 in the 13th before Russell saved them with a 27-ball 45 not out (2x4, 4x6). Struggling opener Gill top-scored with a 38-ball 43 (3x4, 1x6), but he failed to convert his solid start into a big score.

For DC, Axar Patel (2/32) and Lalit Yadav (2/13) were impressive with two wickets. KKR were 45/1 at the end of powerplay overs after

in the fourth over bowled by Axar. Gill was going strong as he took on Ishant Sharma and Axar by hitting a few boundaries but lost Rahul Tripathi to Marcus Stoinis in the 10th over.

KKR's familiar batting slump came to the fore as captain Eoin Morgan and Sunil Narine both got out in the space of three balls without opening their accounts.

Lalit, who replaced an injured Amit Mishra in the DC playing XI grabbed both the wickets as KKR slumped from 69/1 in the 10th over to 75/4 in the 11th over. Gill, who is yet to score a half century in seven innings this season, went for a big shot off a slower ball from Avesh Khan, only to hole out to Smith in the 13th over.

BRIEF SCORES: Kolkata Knight Riders 154/6 (Andre Russell 45 n o, Shubman Gill 43; Lalit Yadav 2/13, Axar Patel 2/32) lost to Delhi Capitals 156/3 (Prithvi Shaw 82, Shikhar Dhawan 46; Pat Cummins 3/24) by 7 wickets.

EFFORTLESS: Prithvi Shaw plays a backfoot drive during his match-winning innings against KKR, Thursday



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Zampa, Kane reach Australia PBKS have task cut out against RCB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, April 29: Australians Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson Thursday returned home after withdrawing from the IPL and on arrival, the leg-spinner clarified that his comments on "vulnerability" of bio-bubble had nothing to do with fear of the virus engulfing the controlled environment.

A day after deciding to quit the league midway citing personal reasons, Zampa had said the bio-bubble put in place for the ongoing T20 event was the "most vulnerable" he has been a part of while also suggesting that it should have been held in UAE, like last year.

"Thanks to everyone for the messages of concern. Kane and I have both reached Melbourne safe and sound," Zampa said in a statement.

The Royal Challengers Bangalore duo landed in Melbourne after taking a connecting flight out of Doha. "My comments about the vulnerability of the IPL bubble had nothing to do with feeling like the virus would enter the bubble at any stage. The BCCI and RCB had many precautions to make us feel safe. I believe the tournament is in great hands and will definitely see the fin-

ish line," Zampa said. There were concerns that the players may not be able to make it to Australia after their government temporarily suspended all flights out of India due to the resurgence of a deadly second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Zampa thanked his franchise and BCCI for helping them with the logistics. "Thanks to RCB management for the way they dealt with the situation. As soon as we made the choice that we felt the right thing to do was to come home, they were fully supportive and did

everything they could to help. Their understanding of the situation made the process a lot easier."

Zampa, who did not get a game this season after being bought for ₹1.5 crore, said a lot of factors contributed to his decision to leave the IPL.

"I am understanding the velocity of the situation in India and my thoughts go out to the whole country. It was a personal choice to leave for several reasons."

As per the standard guidelines, Zampa and Richardson will spend the next two weeks in hotel quarantine.



Adam Zampa in an Australian cricket jersey.

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 29: Punjab Kings (PBKS) will have to play out of their skins to get their stuttering campaign back on track when they face a high-flying Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL here, Friday.

Smarting from a five-wicket defeat at the hands of Kolkata Knight Riders, it will not be an easy task for a struggling Punjab side to stand up to the challenge thrown by a RCB team, which has been firing on all cylinders.

Following four losses and two wins, Punjab are currently placed sixth in the league table with four points, whereas RCB are second with 10 points from five wins, only behind Chennai Super Kings on net run rate.

Apart from the sole loss against CSK, RCB have emerged as strong contenders for a maiden IPL title, with many of their players striking form as the tournament progresses.

Punjab's inconsistent batting has been a letdown so far. In their six games, the KL Rahul-led side have gone on to make the three low totals batting first - 106, 120 and 123.

While Rahul, who has scored 91, 5, 61, 4, 60 not out and 19 so far, has been their most successful batsman this season. He will once again be expected to provide his side with a solid start with the willow.

Mayank Agrawal has been guilty of wasting his starts barring one game while Chris Gayle has made only two good scores in six outings.

The dynamic Nicholas Pooran is having a woeful season to say the least. The swashbuckling West Indian

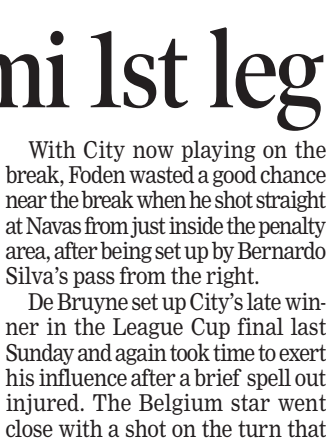


Virat Kohli in a Royal Challengers Bangalore jersey.

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by one-run. While it was Ab de Villiers who delivered once again with the bat, the bowlers put up a collective effort to give RCB their fifth win of the season.

The RCB batting is top heavy and reliant on the performances of Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, de Villiers and Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell. It augers well for the team that all four players have performed well.

Rajat Patidar showed what he is capable of in the previous match while Kyle Jamieson can also hit a few down the order. The RCB bowling department has been impressive led by pacers Harshal Patel, the Purple Cap holder, and Mohammed Siraj.

has managed just 28 runs in the five innings which includes three ducks. His highest was 19 against KKR. The team could replace him with the premier T20 batsman in the world, England's David Malan. With not enough runs on the board against KKR, the Punjab bowlers could not do much. But the bowling unit has lacked aggression.

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