



FURIOUS KANGANA

Actor Kangana Ranaut warns those who are trying to hurt the image of the nation amid the Covid-19 second wave

LEISURE P2



UN READY TO SUPPORT INDIA

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says the organisation stands ready to step up its support to India

INTERNATIONAL P10



CLASH OF TITANS

Chennai Super Kings lock horns with their fierce rivals Mumbai Indians in an IPL encounter, today

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



If things are fine why are banks offering me loans to buy oxygen, Remdesivir etc and to meet hospital expenses?

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of Orissa POST will remain closed May 1 (Saturday) on account of 'May Day'. Thus there will be no edition of the paper May 2 (Sunday).

SHORT TAKES

Soli Sorabjee dies of Covid

New Delhi: Distinguished jurist and former Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, who appeared in several historic cases like Kesavananda Bharti and SR Bommai, passed away due to COVID-19 at a hospital here Friday. He was 91. A recipient of Padma Vibhushan, the renowned human rights lawyer served as Attorney General from 1989-90 and then from 1998-2004 during the tenure of VP Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee respectively. President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled Soli's passing away. P7

Sputnik V doses to arrive today

New Delhi: Amid the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the country will start receiving consignments of Russian Sputnik V vaccine doses from May 1 onwards. India is expected to receive 5 million doses of the vaccine by June. According to media reports, around 150,000 to 200,000 doses of the vaccine will be delivered by early May and another 3 million doses by May end.

Over 44 killed in Israel stampede

Jerusalem: In one of the worst peacetime tragedies in Israel, at least 44 people were crushed to death and about 150 others injured in a stampede overnight at an overcrowded Jewish religious gathering in the country's north attended by tens of thousands of people flouting the coronavirus-related restrictions. The mass gathering was organised to celebrate the Lag B'Omer, an annual religious holiday. P10

No clampdown on info: SC

TOP COURT WARNS AUTHORITIES FROM THE CENTRE DOWN TO POLICE CHIEFS AGAINST SILENCING PEOPLE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 30: Terming the second wave of COVID-19 as a "national crisis", the Supreme Court Friday warned authorities, from the Centre down to police chiefs, against silencing people and their pleas for help on the presumption that they are raising false grievances on the internet.

The top court made clear that any attempt to clampdown on free flow of information on social media including the call for help from people would be treated as contempt of court.

"There should be free flow of information, we should hear voices of citizens," said a bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud, and asked the Centre, states and all DGPs not to take any action against anyone who is posting messages on social media about issues like shortage of oxygen, beds or doctors as spreading rumour. "If any action is taken against such posts by citizens in distress, we will treat it as contempt of the court," said the bench which also comprised Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat.

The observations assume significance in view of the recent decision of the Uttar Pradesh administration to prosecute people under the National Security Act for allegedly raising false alarms on social media.



A COVID-19 patient receives primary treatment inside a car, as she waits for her turn to get admitted to a government COVID-19 hospital in Ahmedabad, Friday. PFI PHOTO

The court also pulled up the Centre for not ensuring continuous supply of oxygen to Delhi and said "you cannot sit tight and do nothing. My conscience is shaken. We cannot have 500 deaths on our hands. You have to do something urgently and supply deficit 200MT oxygen to Delhi." It observed during the hearing that even frontline doctors and healthcare workers were not getting beds for treatment and the healthcare infrastructure inherited over past 70 years was not sufficient and the situation was grim. The

apex court said hostels, temples, churches and other places be opened for converting them as COVID care centres.

It said the Centre should adopt national immunisation model as poor people will not be able to pay for vaccines. "What happens to the marginalised and SC/ST population? Should they be left to the mercy of private hospitals, it asked, adding the government must think of providing free of cost vaccination to all citizens. The court said the government must

'Govt must think on free vaccination'

- The Centre should adopt national immunisation model as poor people will not be able to pay for vaccines
- Private vaccine manufacturers cannot be allowed to decide which state should get how much
- Hostels, temples, churches and other places be opened for converting them as COVID care centres
- The top court also pulled up the Centre for not ensuring continuous supply of oxygen to Delhi



consider National Immunisation Programme for vaccines and must think of providing free of cost vaccination to all. It said the healthcare sector has come to a breaking point and retired doctors could be re-employed in this crisis.

State to ramp up daily Covid testing count to over 50k

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: With an aim to identify and isolate Covid infected people, the state government has decided to ramp up the daily testing rate to over 50,000. Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Health, PK Mohapatra said here Friday.

Addressing media persons through virtual platform, Mohapatra said the RT-PCR testing has been increased from about 8,000 to nearly 18,000 per day now and there are plans to further increase it to over 25,000 in a phased manner. More new laboratories are being set up.

Similarly, the rapid antigen testing has also been increased so that at least 50,000 tests could be done each day, he said. All people can go for free of cost testing at government facilities, while at private facilities the cost is ₹100 for rapid antigen test and ₹350 for RT-PCR test, he stated.

As many as 30 contacts of a positive person are being traced and tests conducted, Mohapatra stated.

The ACS, Health, has claimed that the state has sufficient stock of Remdesivir, oxygen and other consumable products like PPE kits.

Traders' body moots downing shutters across state after 2pm



Rush at Unit I vegetable market ahead of the weekend shutdown, Friday. OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: In a bid to break the chain of Covid-19 infections, the Odisha Traders' Association has proposed to the state government that all shops across the state will down their shutters from 2 pm daily from May 3 to May 15.

Secretary of the Odisha Traders' Association Sudhakar Panda said, "The body has taken the decision to break the COVID-19 infection chain. In this regard, the body has communicated to the state government and

we hope the government will support us." Panda also mentioned that the association will hold a virtual conference May 1 to discuss the matter properly. All details will be informed to the media after the meeting.

But he hoped that all loading and unloading activities will not be restricted during the period. When asked about the impact of their decision on traders, Panda said all shops will remain open till 2pm.

According to media reports, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has also approved the proposal of

shutting down all shops in the city from 2pm. The restrictions will start from Monday and continue for 15 days, CMC Commissioner Ananya Das said while speaking to reporters.

However, shops providing emergency services have been excluded from the shutdown. Likewise, loading and unloading activities have been allowed in Chhatra Bazaar and Malgodown in Cuttack. The merchant and vendor association in Ganjam district took the same decision for a period of 10 days to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus.

China's Tibet infra push cause of worry for India

DRAGON PLANS TO TURN THE ONCE INDEPENDENT KINGDOM INTO A MILITARY HUB TO DOMINATE THE HIMALAYAS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, April 30: China is planning to develop a massive defence logistics infrastructure in Tibet that will turn the once independent kingdom into a military hub to dominate the Himalayas.

The plans were approved during the plenary session of China's National People's Congress (NPC) in March this year and also by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The Tibet infrastructure development projects have been included in the 14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025). The Long Range Objectives-2035 additionally identifies a number of strategic military projects for completion by 2025 and 2035. The G318 Sichuan-Tibet Highway and the G219 and G331 national highways will be upgraded and extended to run

along China's southwestern border.

The new 1,800-km Chengdu-Lhasa high-speed railway network will be the second strategic railway connecting Tibet to the Mainland, reducing travel time from Chengdu to Lhasa to just 10 hours.

Chengdu is now the headquarters of the integrated Tibet-Sichuan military command that makes it possible for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move strategic reserves swiftly from the borders with other Southeast Asian nations to beef up both offensives and strategic defence on the India front.

Shigatse (Rikaze), Tibet's second-largest city, will emerge as a rail transportation hub as work has begun on railways to link Shigatse with Jilong in Guizhou province and Hotan in Xinjiang province. To make up for aerial defence



weakness, China will construct at least 20 new border airports by 2025 in Tibet, in places like Tashkurgan and Longzi.

Tashkurgan, the last stop before the Karakoram Pass, is under the jurisdiction of the South Xinjiang

Military District and the PLA could easily threaten the Daulat Beg Oldi and the Depsang Plains from there.

The airport at Longzi in Tibet's Shannan County will also boost the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)

in the middle sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Analysts like Jayadeva Ranade, former Cabinet Secretariat's China expert, say that "in just over a decade, China will have a much-improved strategic border defence infrastructure."

"The considerably enhanced Chinese military presence will be a long-term potential threat for India," Ranade said.

Ranade has closely studied the 142-page, 70,000-character "14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025) and the Long Range Objectives through the Year 2035 for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China", whose English version is yet to be released. The document clarifies China's national strategic intent and identifies the core areas of national security and development.

Covid +ve couple commits suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 30: A couple after having tested positive for Covid-19 allegedly committed suicide at Beguniapatna under Ranpur police limits in Nayagarh district.

Following the incident, fear of Covid transmission has gripped the area. Local people, their relatives and even doctors are unwilling to extend a helping hand to the bereaved family, it was alleged.

According to reports, the couple and their son had tested positive for Covid-19. The couple was in home isolation while their son was under treatment at a hospital. Villagers believe that the couple might have sunk into depression which drove them to take the extreme step. The matter came to light when neighbours of the couple did not notice any activity from their house.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	48782.36	↓ 983.58
NIFTY	14631.10	↓ 263.80
DOLLAR	74.69	↑ ₹0.01
EURO	89.92	↓ ₹0.26
GOLD	₹46,693	↓ ₹33
SILVER	₹67,806	↑ ₹332

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 38.1°C	36.4°C
	MIN 27.4°C	26.4°C
Humidity	65%	62%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may be impetuous today, which may lead to unforeseen results. You may be in a hurry and complete work which has been pending for a long time. You will find the time to make long-term plans. Ganesh says you will rectify your past mistakes.

TAURUS
This may be, health wise, a bad day for you. Ganesh urges you to take special care and not to do anything that invites illness or discomfort. The least you can do is to ensure that you do not over exert or get into situations that generate tension and anxiety. Be careful about the food you eat.

GEMINI
Along with your house, family and business matters, you will also be busy with your social obligations today. You will be afforded the co-operation of those around you. New ways of thinking will flourish within you. Make full use of the opportunities you get today, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Ganesh believes that you are likely to have a heightened interest in the study of philosophy and the working of the metaphysical world. This may be mere curiosity or a part of your effort to improve your professional skills.

LEO
It's fun, fun and more fun on the horizon! Ganesh foresees you taking time out for some leisure and frolic today. Broaden your horizon with a bit of travel since you are very likely to be going on a small trip to recharge your batteries.

VIRGO
Reflect on past glories and assemble the machinery for accomplishing more in the future. New relationships will mark the road to progress. You easy-going nature will help you get along famously with people.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you shall be immersed in successfully completing all your remaining work today. Whatever work you undertake today you shall be able to do it to your best capability and successfully and your work ability will be praiseworthy.

SCORPIO
House renovation is in the offing. You may furnish it with portraits and artefacts. Today, you may also feel like playing the stock market game and stake your bets, says Ganesh. Have a great time at home by hosting friends over.

SAGITTARIUS
The pressing needs of your loved ones call for extra attention today. A small party at home may see a group of friends and relatives dine together. This may find you in a chatty mood. Ganesh says an intimate tête-à-tête with your better half would fare you well.

CAPRICORN
Unless you be calm and patient, your tendency to act impulsively will get you into hot water, warns Ganesh. Your image on the minds of your colleagues and bosses will remain intact, though. You will keep on climbing up the ladder and come closer to success, but don't get too excited if everything is turning out as per the plan. Keep your focus on your target, so that you don't miss a step on the ladder.

AQUARIUS
Most of the time it is your way or no other way, especially when you charging towards your goal. Today, you will push your limits to achieve what you have desired. You are talented, hard working, creative, and icing on the cake is your luck which is favouring you big time. You are determined to succeed and you will take up the tried and tested route of hard work, says Ganesh.

PISCES
There are indications you will be in hot pursuit of leisure today, says Ganesh. This will probably be in the form of a short trip to recharge your batteries, and is probably fuelled by your satisfaction in the realisation that the role you play within your organisation is consequential, satisfying as well as rewarding.

COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

Kangana furious over foreign reactions

Mumbai: Actress Kangana Ranaut shared a video Friday warning those who are trying to hurt the image of the nation internationally amid the Covid-19 second wave.

Kangana shared the video message on Twitter and Instagram. In the clip, she expressed her concerns over how other countries are reacting to the second wave of Covid in India.

Taking to Twitter, Kangana shared a video and wrote: "Please watch warning to all those who are going to their foreign daddies to cry about India... your time is up."

In the video, Kangana speaks about how photos of corpses burning at cremations were featured in an international magazine. She expressed her discontentment and further why leaders of other nations were not called out when their countries were tackling the Covid-19 waves.

IAN S



GEORGE CLOONEY ON TURNING 60: I'M NOT THRILLED

Actor George Clooney turns 60 May 6 but the idea does not make him very happy. "As far as turning 60, listen, I'm not thrilled with it but it's better than dead. So I'll take it. I got two options," Clooney said.

ELLIOT PAGE RECALLS COLLAPSING AT INCEPTION AFTERPARTY

Juno star Elliot Page, who came out as a transgender man last year, says he collapsed at the premiere afterparty of the 2010 film *Inception* because wearing a dress and heels to every single event was hampering his mental health.



Taapsee, Bhumi mourn demise of 'Shooter Dadi' Chandro Tomar

Mumbai: Shooter Chandro Tomar, fondly known as Shooter Dadi, died after battling Covid Friday. She was admitted to a hospital in Meerut earlier this week.

Actress Bhumi Pednekar, who played Chandro in the 2019 film *Saad Ki Aankh*, says Chandro Tomar's death comes as a personal loss to her.

"It is completely devastating to know that Chandro dadi is not with us anymore. It really feels like a very big personal loss. She was someone who lived a very fulfilling life. She made her own rules, paved her own path and she had a beautiful sisterhood and a beautiful partnership with Prakashi dadi and together they left an

impact on so many lives," says Bhumi.

The actress adds: "I feel so fortunate to have played her character; got a chance to learn about life from her and she has left a very big part of herself with me."

The actress says that she will always remember her.

"My condolences to the family and everybody whose life she impacted because I know there will be many who will be grieving her passing away today. But she always said *tann buddha hota hai, mann buddha nai hota*. I know in spirit she will always be with us because her teachings are going to be with us. She will thoroughly be missed," she says.

Sharing a picture with her on Twitter, actress Taapsee Pannu, who played the role of Prakashi Tomar in the film, posted: "For the inspiration you will always be... You will live on forever in all the girls you gave hope to live. My cutest superstar May the and peace be with you."

IAN S

Neetu remembers Rishi on his 1st death anniversary

Mumbai: On the first death anniversary of Rishi Kapoor Friday, the late actor's wife, actress Neetu Kapoor, penned an emotional note saying he was an extension of her existence. Along with her note, Neetu posted a black and white picture on Instagram featuring the couple in their younger days.

"All of last year has been of grief and sadness around the world for us maybe more as we lost him... Not a day has gone by when we have not discussed or reminisced him as he was an extension of our existence," she wrote.

"Sometimes his wise advice: his wise cracks: his anecdotes!! We have celebrated him all year with a smile on the lips as he will stay in our hearts forever we have accepted life will never be the same without

him!!! But life will go on...#rishikapoor," she added.

Neetu and Rishi Kapoor had tied the knot January 22, 1980. The couple

are parents to Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor and jewellery designer Riddhima Kapoor Sahni.

Rishi Kapoor passed away in Mumbai April 30 last year

after a two-year battle with leukemia.

IAN S



Uncertainty looms large on reality TV amid lockdown

Indian Idol 12 show used to be judged by Neha Kakkar, Himesh Reshammiya and Vishal Dadlani. Since they couldn't travel due to prior commitments, lyricist Manoj Muntashir and composer Anu Malik are now judging the show



Mumbai: If television as an industry has taken a hit after Maharashtra government stopped all shoots for the time being owing to the surge in Pandemic in Mumbai, reality TV, more than fiction shows, could be the bigger sufferer.

A number of factors make sustaining non-fiction shows under such circumstances extremely difficult, says JD Majethia, chairman, Indian Film and Television Producers Council (IFTPC).

"Non-fiction shows require huge sets and infrastructure. A lot of planning has to be done on a big level. Contestants come from

different cities, and their accommodation and everything else is a huge responsibility. It is a costly affair," he tells IANS.

Reports suggest that *Indian Idol 12* has temporarily moved its set to Daman from Mumbai, with a new panel of judges. However, Majethia points out, unlike fiction shows, moving a non-fiction show out of the city isn't always a prudent decision.

"Moving a huge show to some other city is not only challenging normally, but very challenging right now. You have to be careful during

this time that not a single person in the unit gets affected by the virus, so extraordinary care has to be taken. So, it's not only the financial responsibility but very stressful too," he points out.

While *Indian Idol 12* moved to Daman for now, there is also a new panel of judges. The show used to be judged by Neha Kakkar, Himesh Reshammiya and Vishal Dadlani. Since they couldn't travel due to prior commitments, lyricist Manoj Muntashir and composer Anu Malik are now judging the show.

Most reality shows are currently

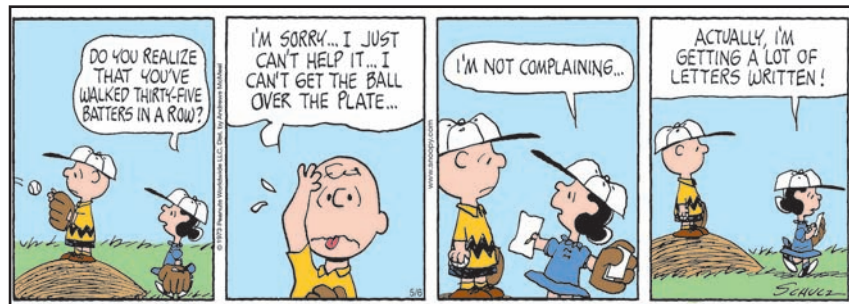
banking on episode banks they already have. The dance reality show *Super Dancer: Chapter 4* has an episode bank while *Dance Deewane* is currently being shot at Bangalore. Actress Madhuri Dixit, who was a judge on the show is not travelling, and dancer-actress Nora Fatehi will be taking her place alongside Tushar Kalia. Dharmesh Yelande has also returned to the show but Raghav Juyal's place has been filled by comedian couple Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiyaa.

The biggest reality show on television today, *Indian Pro Music League*, will not be shifting. Singer Kailash Kher, an integral part of the show, says that the show has a spectacular set-up and can't be shifted. The show could run old episodes if the lockdown doesn't open on time.

"We are hoping that the shoots resume. We cannot go to other locations. The set is like a Hollywood studio set. This is the first time that the production is on such a grand level. We have huge LEDs on the set. When you look at the LEDs, you feel larger than life. The set is huge and the production value is very big. It looks like an international concert set. It is the life of the show and we cannot move it," he says.

IAN S

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

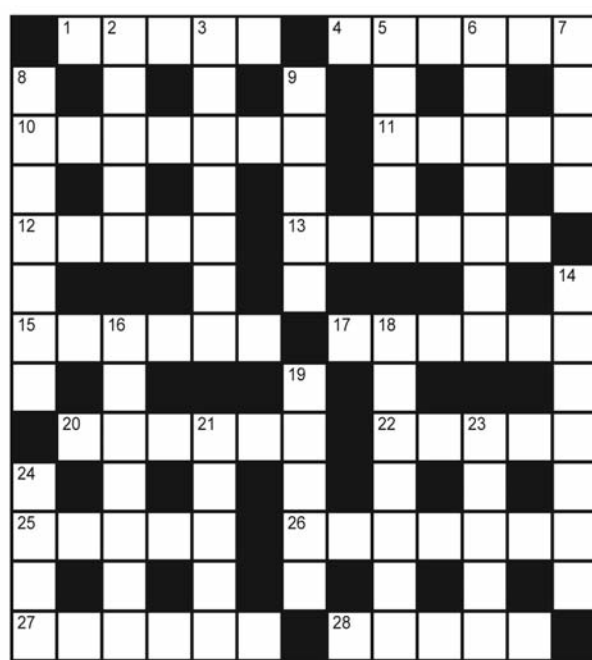


BREVITY



FUN post

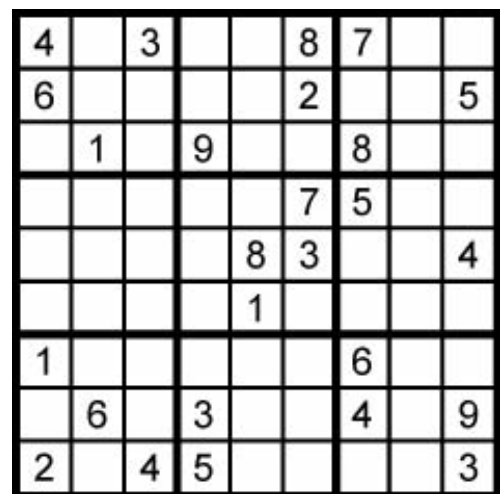
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Blacksmith's block
 - 4 High standards
 - 10 Physics topic
 - 11 Seaweed dish
 - 12 Deep cavity
 - 13 Frustrate
 - 15 Swallow
 - 17 Express disapproval
 - 20 Road features
 - 22 Deplete (3,2)
 - 25 Targeted
 - 26 A nod, for one
 - 27 Genuine
 - 28 Wens
- Down**
- 2 Poverty-stricken
 - 3 Panama has one
 - 5 Toothsome
 - 6 Fire up
 - 7 Go yachting
 - 8 Ill-fated ship
 - 9 Oversight
 - 14 Office machine
 - 16 Epicure
 - 18 Clear day sight (4-3)
 - 19 Kind of orange
 - 21 Bloody Mary ingredient
 - 23 Explode
 - 24 Long story

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



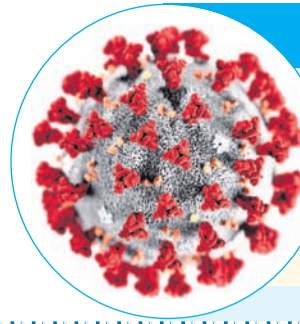
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



DISTANCING A MUST

A vendor draws round marks in front of his stall at Nayapalli in Bhubaneswar to ensure social distancing among the customers, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	15,15,35,025	12,88,26,029	31,84,351
India	1,87,62,976	1,53,84,418	2,08,330
Odisha	4,44,194	3,85,414	2,043

State logs 8,681 new cases, 14 fatalities



FILE PHOTO

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Odisha's Covid-19 tally mounted to 4,44,194 Friday as the state reported its highest-ever single-day spike of 8,681 new cases, while 14 fresh fatalities pushed the coronavirus death toll to 2,043, a Health department official said.

Of the new cases, 4,948 were reported from quarantine centres and 3,733 detected during contact tracing. The fresh infections were registered in all the 30 districts of the state, he said.

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the maximum number of new cases at 1,408, followed by Sundargarh (745), Cuttack (570), and Puri (514). Nineteen other districts reported more than 100 fresh cases. Taking to Twitter, the Health

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER HIGH

Khurda district recorded the maximum number of new cases at 1,408, followed by Sundargarh (745), Cuttack (570), and Puri (514). Three Covid positive patients each died in Koraput and Sundargarh, while two each succumbed to the disease in Khurda and Rayagada and one each in Ganjam, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur and Sambalpur.

has so far conducted over 1 core sample tests, including 45,452 Thursday. The positivity rate now stands at 4.4 per cent.

VACCINE CRUNCH

7,52,590 miss 2nd dose of Covishield in state

State govt urges Centre to immediately supply 25L Covishield shots

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: In a startling revelation, it has come to the fore that more than 7.52 lakh people in the state have missed their second dose of Covishield vaccine owing to shortage of the shots. In order to ensure that people aged 45 years and above get their second dose of Covid-19 vaccine, the state government once again urged the Centre to urgently supply at least 25 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine in a single lot.

THE STATE HAS SO FAR INOCULATED 43,02,094 BENEFICIARIES AGED 45 YEARS & ABOVE WITH FIRST DOSE AND 5,04,358 BENEFICIARIES WITH SECOND DOSE

IN BETWEEN APRIL 20 AND 29, THE STATE HAS RECEIVED ONLY 2.9 LAKH DOSES OF COVISHIELD IN THREE ALLOCATIONS, WHICH IS VERY LOW IN QUANTITY FOR SMOOTH CONDUCT OF VACCINATION SESSIONS

Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Minister Naba Kishore Das has written to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan in this regard, Friday. The state is facing a crisis due



to extremely low and erratic supply of Covishield shots to the state, Das said.

"Due to such short supply, the vaccination sessions could not be conducted in more than 1,100 sites in the recent past and our daily achievement has drastically declined from 2.71 lakh vaccinations April 3 to 0.27 lakh April 29, 2021," he said.

Giving data on vaccines received by the state, Das said, the state has received 53,32,870 doses of Covishield shots till Friday and balance stock available in pipeline across the state is 1.06 lakh. Moreover, in between April 20

Vax sites spreading infection: AIIMS doc

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Vaccination centres across the country are most likely to aggravate Covid infection rates if people continue to flout the safety protocol while waiting for the jabs, opined experts.

Participating in a webinar organised by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar, Sanjay Rai from the Community Medicine Department of AIIMS, New Delhi, said that the worrisome trend of people contracting the infection at vaccination centres came to the fore recently.

"We have found that many people, who had gone to the vaccination centres to get the jabs, contracted the disease. People often flout the Covid safety protocol at the vaccination centres, thereby increasing the chances of getting infected with the deadly virus," he said. Rai even suggested that the vaccination drive should be suspended temporarily in the wake of the recent surge in the positive cases. Now, more focus should be

on the treatment of people who have contracted the disease, he added. The community medicine expert also said that the Covid cases will continue to go up in the coming days. "The worst scenario is yet to come. So, the government resources need to be diverted towards the treatment of the infected persons. The vaccines are of little use to protect us from the second wave but they may help us to counter the third wave or any successive waves in future," he opined.

The expert also claimed that the mutations in the virus have led to surge in infection rate. "In the second wave, the UK strain, Brazil strain and South African strain proved to be more infectious. Indian double mutant strain was also more infectious. Many of the strains breached the immunity developed in the previously infected persons or in persons who were vaccinated," Rai said.

While two Indian vaccines are in use in the country, around six more are in clinical trial phase. These new vaccines could be rolled out after getting the necessary clearance.

The worst scenario is yet to come. The vaccines are of little use to protect us from the second wave but they may help us to counter the third wave or any successive waves in future

SANJAY RAI | COMMUNITY MEDICINE DEPT AIIMS, NEW DELHI



Social distancing norm goes for a toss at a vaccination centre in Cuttack, Friday

BMC gets ₹10Cr CMRF aid for Covid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Friday, sanctioned Rs 10 crore to Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) out of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) for Covid management.

As per sources, the BMC has received the largest contribution from CMRF amongst all other urban

local bodies (ULBs) in the state. The sanctioned amount will be utilised in procurement of drugs, remuneration of additional and existing healthcare workers, management of vaccination and quarantine centres and other Covid related activities.

"With the daily surge in Covid cases in the City, we are getting prepared on all fronts. A large number of Covid management activi-

ties need strong infusion of funds. Thus, we are hopeful of timely and efficient disbursement of funds to tackle any crisis," said a BMC official. Moreover, the Chief Minister also stated that food security beneficiaries in the state will get additional 5 kg rice free of cost in May and June. Around 12 lakh beneficiaries will be covered for which the government will bear the entire financial burden.

OHRC office shut for 11 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: In view of sky-rocketing Covid-19 cases in Odisha and particularly in Khurda district, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has decided to close its office at Toshali Bhawan in Satya Nagar here for 11 days beginning May 3.

"The OHRC office will remain closed from May 3 to 13, excluding scheduling holiday and until further decision," OHRC secretary said in an order Friday. The decision has been taken to contain the spread of the disease in the office by regular sanitisation of the premises.

During the period, only urgent cases will be taken up for hearing. Complaint petitions may be filed through official email (ohrc@nic.in). In case of any urgency, the Assistant Registrar, OHRC, can be contacted over his cellphone (No-8763642080). Extremely urgent cases can be taken up after obtaining permission from the Chairperson, the order stated.

"The employees of OHRC shall be available to attend to any office work as and when required on short notice and be available on telephone during such period and not leave the headquarters without prior permission," it added.



Workers engaged at a construction site near Nayapalli in Bhubaneswar, Friday, even as the world celebrates International Labour Day, Saturday

Pneumonia shots at govt hosps from June

PNEUMONIA VACCINES ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT PRIVATE HOSPITALS ONLY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: If things go as per plan, the state government would start free pneumonia vaccination programme for the children from June this year, state Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said Friday.

H&FW department Director Bijaya Panigrahi Friday said that the state has received the vaccine doses from the Centre and that it is all set to start training programme for departmental employees for the purpose.

"We have received directions from the Union government to start training the medical staff and other workers engaged in immunisation works for the pneumococcal vaccines (PCV). We have planned to start the sensi-

sation works from May," he told Orissa POST.

Panigrahi said that the vaccination programme to help prevent the kids from contracting pneumonia is likely to start from June. "The drive is likely to start in the country at same time. As soon as we get information from the Union government to start the drive, we will go for it," he said.

Currently, the pneumococcal vaccines are available only in private health centres in the country. It was rolled out in pockets of the country on pilot basis. The cost of 10-valent pneumonia vaccine in the private hospitals is around Rs 1,600 while 13-valent pneumonia costs around Rs 3,200 per dose.

While 10-valent protects kids from 10 types of pneu-

PREVENTION FIRST



mococcal diseases, the 13-valent protects kids from 13 such types of diseases causing pneumonia. The 10-valent doses are said to give cross protection to the additional three variants.

Now, it will be made available for kids at free of cost. This comes after the last Union

Budget made provisions of starting the pneumonia vaccine drives in government hospitals to reduce chances of the infection in kids in their formative days of development.

"Inclusion of vaccines in government setups is likely to scale up the administration of the same to larger sections of the population. It can help in checking the chances of spread of the disease in children and thus prevent several preventable deaths in the state. Earlier, it was either available in private hospitals or at a few government setups under a pilot project," Dr Braja Kishore Behera, a paediatrician from the city, said.

He also said that these vaccines not only protect the kids from pneumonia but also from infections of ear and brain.

OSAT-2021

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Interim orders of HC extended till June 30

3,007 VILLAGES DECLARED CHILD MARRIAGE FREE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Taking suo motu cognisance of the upsurge in Covid-19 cases in the state, a two-judge Bench of Orissa High Court headed by Chief Justice S Muralidhar ordered extension of validity of interim orders till June 30.

The High Court allowed several relaxations to different stakeholders in the light of the pandemic. It also said that keeping in mind the Supreme Court hearing on the related matter, it passed orders which are not likely to be dealt in the apex court. The court granted extension of timings in several cases either pertaining to the HC or lower courts under its superintendence.

"That all interim orders/directions issued or protection granted including any order requiring any compliance by the parties to such proceedings, by this Court or any court subordinate to it or any Family Court or Labour Court or any Tribunal or any other Judicial or Quasi Judicial forum in the State of Odisha, over which this Court has



COVID SURGE Vacation of courts advanced by 3 weeks

CUTTACK: The summer vacation of the courts of the state was advanced by three weeks. "The summer vacation of the High Court commencing from May 24 is advanced to May 3 and the vacation shall continue up to June 5," said a notification issued by the Orissa High Court Registry here Friday. "The High Court shall reopen June 7 but shall, however, remain closed from June 14 to June 16 on account of Raja festival," the notification said. The Registry also said that the vacation for subordinate courts in the state was also advanced to May 3.

power of superintendence, subsisting as on this day, and those passed hereafter, unless a longer date is specified, shall stand extended till 30th June, 2021," the HC said in its order.

The HC said that the interim orders or directions of any court in the state, which are not of a limited duration and were meant to operate till further orders, shall continue to remain in force until mod-

ified/altered/vacated by specific order of the court concerned in a particular case.

It also said that filing of written statement/return in any case or proceedings before any civil court or forum unless directed would also be extended till June 30. It also stayed the orders of eviction, dispossession, demolition and others as per earlier court orders till the date.

The HC also ordered extension of

the bail orders till June 30 with certain restrictions. "...subject to the condition that, on every 10th day from today the defence counsel shall file a petition supported by affidavit before the competent court in season over the matter, to the effect that the person on interim bail is not abusing his/her liberty and he/she is living within the jurisdiction of the Court."

Parole granted to a person through orders passed by a court exercising the criminal jurisdiction and limited by timeframe specifying an expiry date, was also extended till June 30. The court also advised the police department not to arrested persons till the time unless required in non-serious cases.

"Unless there is necessity of arrest for maintenance of law and order, in a cognizable offence prescribing sentence up to seven years' imprisonment, the police should not be in a hurry to arrest the accused without complying with the provision of Section 41(A) Cr P.C. This shall be effective till 30th June, 2021," the order said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The 11th state-level PCMA committee meeting for prohibition of child marriage in Odisha was held Friday under the chairmanship of W&CD department Principal Secretary Anu Garg. It was organised virtually and was attended by several departments.

In the meeting, 3,007 villages were declared as child marriage free with not a single occurrence of child marriage in these villages during 2020-21.

The meeting is held bimonthly to review the implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006 and the State Rule 2019 with regard to the State Strategy Action Plan to end child marriage by 2030. The district, block and panchayat level task forces and committees that have been constituted for this purpose are being regularly intimated to take forward district specific programs and campaigns, with



Schemes like Sudakhya and Kasturaba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya were appreciated for engagement of adolescents and easy hostel facilities

the support of partner agencies, to sensitise the public to the emotional, physical and mental hazards of child marriage.

The committee, in the meeting, appreciated the innovative pro-

grams taken up by the district administrations of Koraput, Ganjam, Nayagarh and Kandhamal. Schemes like Sudakhya and Kasturaba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) were appreciated for engagement of adolescents and easy hostel facilities. Considering the instances of child marriage amidst Covid-19 lurking high and the fact that Akshaya Tritoaya being an occasion where mass marriages take place, vigilant efforts of the district level task force will be geared up and all-out measures will be taken to stop any instance of child marriage.

Also, efforts like putting up information boards with the message that the temple authorities do not support child marriage will help curb the issue.

Besides this, it is felt that making the submission of date of birth or school leaving certificate mandatory will also help strengthen the efforts to stop child marriage.

Court digitisation centres launched in four districts



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The Chief Justice of Orissa High court, Justice S Muralidhar, Friday inaugurated the district court digitisation centres in four districts - Cuttack, Sambalpur, Ganjam and Balasore. These four centres will carry out scanning and digitisation of case records of the matters

which are disposed of.

The process of digitisation of court records has received a shot in the arm after the Chief Justice took charge in January 2021. Several digitisation hubs have been established on the High Court premises for the purpose.

In four months, 71,98,023 pages and 93,065 cases' records have been scanned, taking the tally of

the same to 2,24,86,717 and 2,89,272 respectively in the Orissa High Court.

A similar drive to digitise the case records of district and subordinate courts has been in the pipeline for a long time.

Speaking on the occasion, chairman of the High Court Computer Committee Justice Satrugana Pujahari shared valuable insights on the project and its future prospects. The event was also attended by Manoj Kumar Pattnaik, CEO of OCAC, Bhubaneswar which has provided the technological backbone to this endeavour.

Later, the Chief Justice in the presence of Justice Dr B R Sarangi, the Administrative Judge for the District of Sambalpur, inaugurated the extension building, the Court of Senior Civil Judge (LR & LTV) and the Senior Civil Judge (Commercial Court) of Sambalpur through videoconferencing.

SEASONAL FRUIT



A street vendor sells lychee at Jobra in Cuttack, Friday

OP PHOTO

OSPCPCR suggests steps for protection of child rights

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) Friday recommended a host of measures for protection of child rights amid Covid-19 pandemic.

In a letter to special relief commissioner and additional chief secretary to state government (Disaster Management) Pradeep Jena, OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan said, "As Covid is inducing issues like child marriage, child labour, trafficking and abuse, there is a need to strengthen the community mechanism through panchayat level child protection committees and women self help groups, and help them address the issues. Necessary awareness drive and supply of information to these community groups may be extended."

The recent study of the commission on street children in five different urban locations of the state has exposed the plight of the children as well as their parents. "The urban local bodies may carry out special drive to make them aware on Covid appropriate behavior and may also provide safe shelters," Pradhan said.

Children of destitute, who were infected with Covid, may need care and protection. Also in case of death of parents, the child may require immediate support and care. Necessary arrangements need to be done to reach out to these children at the earliest, the commission observed.

₹121Cr for Mo School

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The 24th Executive Council meeting of 'Mo School Abhiyan' was held Friday under the chairmanship of Satyabrata Sahu, Principal Secretary, S&ME department.

The virtual meeting approved projects worth Rs 121.26 crore for 24 districts. In last one month, more than 36,000 alumni have joined the Abhiyan and have donated Rs 5.20 crore for the development of their respective schools.

NZP shut till May 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) and Botanical Garden, located on the outskirts of the City here, will remain closed for visitors from May 1 to 15 as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19, NZP deputy director said Friday.

After remaining shut for around seven months, Nandankanan and Botanical Garden were reopened for visitors with adequate safety measures October 4 last year.

Notably, Khurda district, of which Bhubaneswar is a part, reported 1,408 Covid-19 cases Friday.

Ascend Telecom's noble gesture

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Ascend Telecom Infrastructure Private Ltd, Odisha organised its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives at Barakana Primary School in Jajpur April 21. The company handed over some basic support amenities like desks, benches and book racks, and installed street light posts and water filters in the school campus. After Covid subsides, this initiative will provide better facilities to the students of the village and encourage them to join the classrooms again, claimed the organisation.

The leading Telecom Tower Company has also installed a telecom tower in the village for enhancing network coverage in the locality with the aim of facilitating proper network for on-line studies during the Covid times. The tower installation along with Airtel network was also formally dedicated to the locality during the function.

Pregnant women exempted from attending office

Bhubaneswar: The General Administration & Public Grievances department Friday decided that employees with disabilities and pregnant women may be exempted from attending government offices. However, they shall continue to work from home, until May 31, 2021. They must be available to attend to any office work of urgent nature, at short notice and be available on telephone.

Assets list submission date extended

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The state government Friday extended the deadline for submission of property statements by its employees till June 30.

General Administration & Public Grievances department has issued a circular to all departments, revenue divisional commissioners and Collectors in this regard.

"It has come to notice that a large number of officers could not submit the property statement by extended time. Considering the introduction of mandatory submission of the property statement by the employees, the government has

been pleased to allow extension of the timeline for submission of property statement online (using HRMS portal) for the period 01.04.2020 to 31.12.2020 up to 30.06.2021," read the circular.

As per new guidelines, every government servant is required to make a true and complete declaration of all the assets, movable and immovable, and the value thereof every year.

Such declaration for the period ending December 31, 2020 was supposed to be submitted online by March, 2021.

The timeline was earlier extended upto April 30, 2021 and now till June, 2021.

SDPO in soup over illicit affair

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: A senior police officer's wife has brought serious allegations of harassment and torture against the cop. The accused officer is currently posted as the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) in Angul.

The victim has approached the DGP seeking justice. She also alleged that no action has been taken against her husband yet.

According to her complaint, the couple got married in the presence of their family members July 13, 2004. It was a happy married life till the cop's transfer to Jajpur as the inspector in-charge, a few months after the birth of their son in 2006. The policeman reportedly developed extramarital affairs with one of his lady colleagues, a sub-inspector (SI).

The victim alleged that her husband started torturing and ha-

The accused had reportedly developed extramarital affair with a lady sub-inspector, and used to harass and threaten his wife for a divorce



rassing her without any reason due to the illicit relationship with the lady constable. She had also caught both the lady colleague and her husband in compromising position during the posting of the accused at Bhanjanagar.

The cop reportedly apologised

for the incident and assured the victim that he would end the relationship with the woman SI.

Later, the accused brought his wife and son to Bhubaneswar as his son took admission in a school here. The couple took a rented house in Chandrasekharpur area while the accused got posted as the SDPO of Angul.

However, the victim recently came to know from various newspapers that her husband has filed a divorce petition against her at a court in Cuttack without her knowledge.

When she accosted him, he revealed that he had already married his lady colleague in a temple in Cuttack in 2014.

The policeman had allegedly warned his wife of dire consequences January 27 this year, which included killing her with his service gun, if she disagreed for a mutual divorce.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 30: Odisha has so far dispatched 2,879.082 metric tonne (MT) of medical oxygen in 153 tankers to several needy states in the country, official sources said Friday.

Sources said that as many as 21 tankers with 342.82 MT of the life-saving gas were dispatched from Angul, while 28 containers with 453.7 MT of medical oxygen were dispatched from Dhenkanal.

Similarly, 43 tankers with 895.66 MT of oxygen were dispatched from Jajpur and 61 containers were dispatched from Rourkela with 1,186.902 MT of the gas.

2,879 MT O₂ sent to needy states

As many as 49 tankers with 1,035.36 MT of oxygen were sent to Andhra Pradesh, while 41 containers with 702.439 MT of oxygen were dispatched to Telangana.

Tamil Nadu has received three tankers filled with 53.46 MT of medical oxygen, while Haryana got 13 tankers with 297.662 MT of the gas.

Similarly, six tankers with 112.06 MT of oxygen were sent to Maharashtra, while 121.321 MT of medical oxygen filled in eight tankers have left for Chhattisgarh.

As many as 13 tankers have carried around 238.43 MT of oxygen to Uttar Pradesh and 20 tankers with 318.35 MT of the life-saving gas were sent to Madhya Pradesh

in last eight days.

Oxygen Express with LMO leaves for Haryana

Two empty Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) tankers, that were unloaded from cargo flight Thursday evening, have been loaded with 32 Tonne LMO at Tata Bhushan Steel Plant at Angul and dispatched to Haryana by train Friday morning with the roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) service of Indian Railways.

On request of Telengana government, another Oxygen Express Special having five empty tankers from Secunderabad has also been placed for loading at Tata Bhushan Steel Plant at Angul.

Vehicle lifters' gang busted; 7 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: The Commissionerate Police has busted a vehicle lifters gang involved in theft of more than 20 four-wheelers in Bhubaneswar in the last couple of months. The police arrested seven persons including the mastermind Sk Jumma in this regard. Jumma (25) is a resident of Purbazar in Jagatpur area of Cuttack.

According to sources, a team of police officials from Nayapalli police station arrested Jumma from Salia Sahi area while he along with his three aides was planning to dispose of two stolen vehicles, a Bajaj Pulsar and a TVS Apache. During interrogation, Jumma revealed that his gang was involved in more than 20 four-wheeler thefts in and around Bhubaneswar. They have also lifted numerous motor cycles from different places in Capital. The accused vehicle lifters drop the two wheelers at Mancheswar

and Salia Sahi and sell the four wheelers to a person identified as Ajay Gupta in Kolkata.

Gupta used to pay him around Rs 50,000 per four-wheeler. Jumma would give Rs 30,000 to his aide Abdul Nai Khan, Jamil Hussain and Sk Alijan and keep Rs 15,000 with him. They mostly stole vehicles of models before 2015. Jumma would transport the stolen vehicle in a truck of his friend Naran Parida alias Sima.

DCP Umashankar Dash praised the special squad for the arrest of the gang through subsequent raids. However, sources revealed that the gang was actually busted by the officials of Nayapalli police who succeeded in arresting the mastermind from Salia Sahi April 27 night.

Some even claimed that giving credit to the special squad, that failed to crack the series of four-wheeler lifting cases in the city for the last couple of months, is completely preposterous.

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MARINE POLICE STATIONS CRIPPLED BY STAFF CRUNCH

Poor vigil on coastline fuels infiltration fears



When Balaramgadi marine police station was set up, it was provided with an inspector, six sub-inspectors, six ASIs, 17 havildars and 48 constables. The police station had two vans and two boats for patrolling. Besides, 16 ex-Army personnel were appointed at the police station. It is now manned by a sub-inspector, a havildar, four constables and six home guards

It is alleged that many people from West Bengal and Bangladesh are fishing in territorial waters and come to Odisha to repair boats and spin their fishing nets. Their entry will worsen the Covid situation in coastal pockets like Bhograi, Baliapal, Sadar area, Bahanaga and Remuna

situation in coastal pockets like Bhograi, Baliapal, Sadar area, Bahanaga and Remuna.

Notably, after the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, the central government took steps to tighten coastal security along the porous coastline. Thereafter, three marine police stations were set up along the coast in Balasore.

When Balaramgadi marine police station was set up, it was provided with an inspector, six sub-inspectors, six ASIs, 17 havildars and 48 constables.

The police station had two vans and two boats for patrolling. Besides, 16 ex-Army personnel were appointed at the police station. Now, the police station lacks half of the previous manpower. It is now manned by a sub-inspector, a havildar, four constables and six home guards.

Kasaphala police station is also plagued by staff shortage. It is manned by an inspector, a havildar and seven constables while Talasri marine police station has an inspector, three ASIs and four constables.

The existing personnel have been feeling the pinch of work pressures. At this pandemic time, patrolling along the coast has been vital to check infiltration, but staff shortage in the marine police stations fails to ensure strict vigil along the coastline.

IIC of Balaramgadi police station, Ajay Kumar Murmu, said they are still carrying out patrolling in the sea with a boat.

Bhograi block.

However, all these marine police station are plagued by staff shortage, which has resulted in poor vigil on the waters. Given the situation, many people from West Bengal (one of the hotspot states for Covid) are seen entering Odisha through water routes when Covid pandemic is surging fast in the state.

On the other hand, the rate of Covid infection is spiking in fringe areas of Balasore. It is alleged that many people from West Bengal and Bangladesh are fishing in territorial waters. They come to Odisha to repair boats and their fishing nets. Their entry will worsen the Covid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 30: Balasore district is endowed with a 84-km long coastline. However, owing to lack of adequate security measures and proper vigil, coastal pockets in the district have remained vulnerable to intrusion of infiltrators, a report said.

According to the report, there are three marine police stations along the coast to keep vigil on unlawful activities and check infiltration from across Indian waters. Balaramgadi marine police station and Kasaphala police station are under Sadar block while Talasri Marine police station is under

COVID MANAGEMENT

Rapid Response Teams on toes in Sundargarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela/Vedavyasa, April 30: Even as Covid-19 cases are surging in Sundargarh, Rapid Response Teams (RRT), formed to regularly check health of people in home isolations, has started its work.

Members of the RRTs are making door-to-door visits and checking body temperatures, recording oxygen level with pulse oxymeter and trying to know other symptoms of people in home isolation.

They also provide necessary medicines and in some cases, patients are sent to Covid hospitals.

The RRT members are recording data about the suspicious cases and reporting them to the district administration.

Now, the district administration has laid stress on tracing, tracking and treatments of Covid cases in both urban and rural areas.

Each RRT comprises a doctor, a pharmacist, an ANM worker, a

laboratory technician and an administrative official.

Gaon Kalyan Samitis in rural areas and Rogi Kalyan Samitis in urban areas are extending necessary support to the RRTs working in 17 blocks, Rourkela Municipal Corporation, Biramitrapur, Rajgangpur and Sundargarh municipalities.

These teams have intensified their checking in some areas where the rate of Covid infections are rising.

Scribe loses battle

Senior journalist Adwaita Prasad Biswal died of Covid-19 while he was under treatment at a hospital here Friday. The 78-year-old Biswal breathed his last at JP Hospital in Rourkela. He was admitted to the hospital a week ago after his condition deteriorated due to Covid infection. Various journalists' associations, political leaders, litterateurs and labour unions condoled his death.

2 Angul villages shut down for seven days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, April 30: Covid-19 infections are exponentially soaring in various panchayats under Kishorenagar block in Angul district. Given the severity of Covid, two villages were shut down for a week starting Friday.

The block recorded 38 Covid positive cases Friday. Luhumunda sarpanch Tilotama Nayak declared a week-long shutdown of Daberopalli village.

Similarly, Handap panchayat has shut down Pratapur village for seven days. Sub-Collector, Athmallik, Athmallik Sub-Collector and Kishorenagar BDO were intimated about the shutdown decision.

Covid spike: Kalahandi village declared CZ

Kesinga, April 30: In view of the rising COVID-19 cases, Balsi village of Kesinga block in Kalahandi district has been declared a 'Containment Zone'. The restrictions would be there in place from April 30 to May 6.

According to health department sources, Balsi panchayat currently has 107 active COVID cases while the village with the same name accounts for 82 of those. Four critical patients have been shifted to COVID Care Centre in Kalahandi town while the rest are in isolation.

Kesinga block development officer (BDO) Prafulla Kumar Adu, after consulting with sarpanch Chudamani Majhi, declared the Balsi village a 'Containment Zone'.

The administration is creating awareness among the villagers re-



People of Subalaya village under Ganjam block carting away 'daru' (holy logs of wood) which will be used for 'Chaturdhamurti' in a newly-built Jagannath temple, Friday

LOGS FOR DEITIES

Online betting racket for IPL matches thrives in Sambalpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 30: Betting has been rampant in various parts of the country over the 60-day IPL matches. Sambalpur has not been an exception in IPL betting. It is alleged that online daily betting transactions in Sambalpur are estimated at Rs 2 crore. Digital ease has made such unlawful activities easier for bookies.

According to sources, a bookie is active in Dhanupalli area while another bookie started betting in Town police station area. The two bookies are at loggerheads, allegedly handing out an opportunity for police to take advantage of it.

It was said that police had alerted a bookie before conducting a raid on him. The accused has gone out of the state.

In the night of April 25, police conducted a raid on another bookie and arrested two of his aides. One of them is the son of a doctor in Ainthapalli while the other is the son of a businessman of Marwadipada.

The two were detained for four days. After media reports in this regard, police produced the doctor's son Subham Sahu in court. Police have registered a case against him under various sections of IPC.

However, it was alleged that police have set the son of the businessman free through a deal of Rs 10 lakh. A senior police officer having links with the special squad

BOOKIE ESCAPES OUT OF STATE



An investigation into the IPL betting is on while two youths have been arrested. Another accused has gone out of the state while some bookies are operating the online betting by staying out of the state

SAMBALPUR SP | BATTULA GANGADHAR

had allegedly brokered the deal. It was said that police had carried out raids at different places and seized Rs 50 lakh, laptops, and costly cell phones. But such things have been hushed up, it was alleged. Various circles are abuzz about the hushed up seizures.

Sadar SDPO Tapan Kumar

Mohanty said the businessman's son was detained and interrogated about it, but there was no evidence against him. He was set free, the SDPO added.

Police came to know that many people are involved in online betting while deposits in the bank accounts of suspects are being checked. During the accounts checking, it was noticed that transactions worth over Rs 20 crore have been done. Police have interrogated the son of a political leader.

When contacted, SP Battula Gangadhar said investigation in the IPL betting is on while two youths have been arrested. Another accused has gone out of the state while bookies are operating the online betting by staying out of the state, the SP added.

Youth beaten to death in Balasore for raping woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Soro, April 30: In a shocking incident, a youth was beaten to death by villagers allegedly for raping a married woman at Karanjabania village of Singhakhunta panchayat under Soro police limits in Balasore district Thursday.

The deceased has been identified as Basant Singh (35), a resident of Karanjabania village.

According to a source, finding the woman alone at her house, Basant entered the house Thursday afternoon and attempted to rape her. It was when she resisted, Basant attacked her and raped her.

However, hearing her cries, villagers came to her rescue and nabbed Basant. Rescuing the severely injured woman, the villagers rushed her to Soro government hospital. Later she was shifted to Balasore district headquarters hospital as her condition deteriorated.

The villagers taking the law into their hands beat him black and blue. The villagers' anger did not subside there. They tied him to a tree and kept thrashing him till he died. Night had already set in by then.

After getting information, Soro police station IIC M Mohanty along with a team reached the spot at about 9:30 pm. They recovered the body and launched a probe. Police also started searching for the people who were involved in the crime.

Bhadrak: ASI suspended for demanding ₹5,000

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 30: An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Bhadrak district was placed under suspension Thursday afternoon on the charge of demanding Rs 5,000 and a large share of prawns from an accused. The suspended policeman was identified as Harekrishna Padhi who was working in Chandbali police station in the district, an official said. He was suspended by Bhadrak SP Charan Singh Meena.

Sources said Padhi had demanded the bribe for releasing the accused who had been brought to the Chandbali police station in connection with a case in 2018. An audio in which Padhi was heard demanding the bribe went viral on social media, they said.

Once the audio went viral, police launched a probe which was conducted by Chandbali SDPO Umashankar Maharana. It was found that the ASI had demanded money in connection with a case of Tentulidih panchayat under Chandbali police limits.

79 Odias held captive by Telangana bizzman rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, April 30: Telangana police have rescued 79 migrants from Bolangir and Nuapada districts, who were reportedly held captive for days by a brick kiln owner there. The administration of the neighbouring state sent the rescued migrant labourers to Odisha in a bus Friday.

The matter came to the fore after social activist of Bargarh, Ranjita Priyadarshini tweeted about it to the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Odisha. She had urged both the Chief Ministers to take step for their rescue.

According to reports, among the migrant workers are four pregnant women and 21 minor boys. A few months ago, a middleman had lured them with jobs and took them to Telangana. All of them were engaged in a brick kiln there. They alleged that though they had been working hard, they had not been paid wages rightly.

Among the migrant workers are 4 pregnant women and 21 minor boys. Months ago, a middleman had lured them with jobs and taken them to Telangana

Besides, the brick kiln owner had been torturing them. Even though some of them were down with cold, the brick kiln owner did not get their Covid test.

They alleged that instead of taking them to hospital, the brick kiln owner forced them to work despite their sickness.

"They alleged they were not served food properly," the social activist lamented. She has also apprised the Collectors of Bolangir, Nuapada about the incident. She had demanded immediate step for their rescue from the clutches of the brick kiln owners.

Pranab Kumar Patel, new CVO of MCL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher, April 30: Pranab Kumar Patel has joined as the Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd. Patel assumed charge as the ninth CVO of the MCL, Wednesday.

Earlier, he worked in the store services department of Indian Railways and deputy CVO of East Coast Railways and held various other posts. Patel, an alumni of National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Rourkela, has completed his M Tech from IIT, Kharagpur. Patel was welcomed by senior officers after he joined in his new post.

SANITISATION DRIVE



Firefighters sanitising Dabugaon Town in Nabarangpur following detection of Covid-19 positive cases

Water scarcity hits Patna

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 30: With the onset of summer, water scarcity has affected several villages under Patna block in Keonjhar district. Locals have taken up the issue with the Collector, demanding immediate steps for provision of water.

According to reports, there is a plan for renovation of Bada bandh dam at Khireitangiri village. Before starting its renovation work estimated at Rs 5 lakh (special fund), its water was drained out. But renovation has not begun as yet, locals alleged. People in its peripheral area use its water in summer. "As the dam is left with little water, local residents have to suffer a lot. In coming days, situation will worsen in the area," locals lamented.

Secretary of Pani Panchayat, Ashok Kumar Mohant, said sarpanch has been apprised of the need for water in summer.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, ROURKELA
E.Mail - rw_rourkela@yahoo.co.in
SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE**

Bid Identification No. ONLINE-EERKL-01 of 2021-22

No. O-114:-

1. Name of the Work	:- Road (Periodical Maintenance)
2. Total No. of works	:- 6 Nos
3. Estimated cost	:- Rs. 45.00 to 98.52 Lakhs
4. Class of contractor	:- "B" & "A" Class
5. Period of completion	:- Three Months
6. Type of Tender	:- Double cover
6. Other Details	

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding	
		From	To
1	2	3	4
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Rourkela	Online-EERKL-01 of 2021-22	10.05.2021 10.00 A.M.	19.05.2021 5.00 PM

Further details can be seen from website www.tendersorissa.gov.in
Sd./- Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division, Rourkela

OIPR-25067/11/0001/2122

Let us offer our work to the Divine; this is the sure means of progressing. Go and prepare yourself and the best preparation is to be useful to the Divine's work.

THE MOTHER



CVC losing patience over pending cases

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has run into a wall of bureaucratic denial. The anti-corruption watchdog regularly reviews pending cases and even called for a probe into pending corruption cases, but little has resulted from its efforts. Earlier this year in January, the commission set a timeline to finalise pending cases. It directed all chief executives and vigilance officers in various government organisations to finalise pending cases from the period between January 2011 and December 2018 by end of May this year.

With just about a month left for the deadline, Chief Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kothari has now upped the ante and advised Union ministries to sort out complaints against officers within three months of their receipt. Reminding them of the May 31 deadline, Kothari has now mandated that at the end of the third month from the date of receipt of the complaint and after deciding on a course of action, a copy of the complaint shall be made available to the concerned employee within 15 days. Once a decision is made to pursue the vigilance case, the concerned organisation shall send its inquiry report to the CVC or Chief Vigilance Officer seeking first stage advice within three months of registration of a case.

Key appointment hangs in balance

Away from the Covid-19 din, there is a tussle going on between the Punjab government and the Centre over the naming of 2002 batch IAS officer Vijay Namdeo Rao Zade as the Finance Secretary of the Chandigarh Administration. Zade was nominated by the UT administration for the post, which is reserved for Punjab cadre officers and is the third most important post after the UT Advisor and Home Secretary.

According to sources, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sought details about Zade's professional profile and other information in a 17-point proforma. It wanted to know about Zade's completion of service in the cadre, the reason for seeking deputation, vigilance status and details of annual property returns etc.

Sources say that this is the first time the ministry has asked for such details and there is no convention for this. Despite their reservations, the Punjab government has responded by providing all the information that was sought about the official. There has been no action from the MHA since then. It has to be remembered, sources say, that the recommendation of Zade was forwarded to the Centre last year but there is no sign of any movement on the issue.

Maharashtra political rivalries affecting babus

The churning in police circles in Maharashtra continues unabated even after the unsavoury Param Bir Singh episode. And, not surprisingly, politics seems to drive most of what is going around these days between the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and the opposition BJP.

The state government has now tasked Mumbai Police to investigate the leaking of a report on corruption in the state police to BJP leader Devendra Fadnis. The report, sources say, was prepared by former state intelligence chief Rashmi Shukla but landed into the hands of Fadnis. As part of the probe, the Mumbai Police has summoned Shukla, who is now ADG of CRPF, to Mumbai to join the investigation.

The back story is interesting. The FIR was filed at the behest of state Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte, who had reportedly alleged in a report to Chief Minister Udhav Thackeray that the "finger of suspicion" seemed to point at Shukla herself. The episode has split opinion within the babu corridors with many murmurs about the probe as more of a hatchet job than a fair inquiry into the truth. The political waters in Maharashtra are roiled as it is, and this is hardly going to make way for more clarity.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

WISDOM CORNER

I learned that we can do anything, but we can't do everything... at least not at the same time. So think of your priorities not in terms of what activities you do, but when you do them. Timing is everything. DAN MILLMAN

There is no royal road to anything. One thing at a time, all things in succession. That which grows fast, withers as rapidly. That which grows slowly, endures. JOSIAH GILBERT HOLLAND

Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact. WILLIAM JAMES

WORDSWORTH

Butterscotch

Nobody seems to know the origin of the word. Some argue that the second part is actually scorch, from the manner of its making. The Collins Dictionary says that it may have been called that because it was first made in Scotland. Neither suggestion is supported by evidence, though the Scottish link seems plausible because Keillers of Dundee was one firm that made butterscotch commercially. The Oxford English Dictionary's first citation (indeed, its only citation) is from 1865. It's not hard to take that back a while: the first example I can find is from The Boy's Autumn Book of 1847. Although that was published in New York it quotes a British itinerant seller of sweets. Wikipedia states that the first maker of butterscotch was Samuel Parkinson of Doncaster, in 1817. The firm did make it during the nineteenth century and Doncaster became famous for it. The Parkinson papers are deposited at the Doncaster Archives, from where Dr Charles Kelham tells me they begin only in 1848, although an article published in The Doncaster Review in September 1896 asserts that "It was on the 11th of May 1817, that the late Mr. Samuel Parkinson commenced the manufacture of butterscotch." If he did so, it may be unlikely, from the lack of written evidence before 1847, that he called it by that name. An advertisement found by subscriber Gemma Dearing in The Lady's Newspaper of London, dated 20 March 1847. The word "improved" certainly suggests that butterscotch was known by that name rather earlier. Other writers argue that the sweetmeat has no link with Scotland. Charles Earl Funk noted in Horsefeathers in 1958: "All directions for the preparation of this candy after it is properly cooked close with some such statement as: Pour upon oiled paper or well-buttered pan and when slightly cool score with a knife into squares."

LOL

WALKING ACROSS A RIVER

Two blondes were running from the cops as they had just been caught sneaking over the border into Mexico. They dashed up to a fence and climbed over it, lights and sirens running behind them.



As they arrived on the other side, they came face to face with a long river. One blonde said to the other, "Here I'll shine this flashlight over the water and you can walk across the beam of light." The other said, "What do you think I am, stupid!? I'll get halfway across and you'll turn it off!"

FOCUS PANDEMIC

MORALS AND VAX MARKET



Kaushik Basu

UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO, ACTIVISTS FOR ACCESS TO MEDICINES AND OPEN SCIENCE WERE HOPEFUL THAT THE ENORMITY OF THE PANDEMIC WOULD LEAD TO A REJECTION OF PROPRIETARY SCIENCE AND PATENT-BASED MARKET MONOPOLIES

As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic outstrips the severity of the first, a clear global bifurcation is emerging. The pandemic is abating, gradually and unevenly, across richer countries, but flaring up in several developing and emerging economies, most notably India, but also to varying degrees in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

There are many reasons for this divide, but uneven access to healthcare – particularly the glaring inequity in access to COVID-19 vaccines – is impossible to ignore. On January 18, the director-general of the World Health Organization, Tedros Ghebreyesus, noted that more than 39 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered in at least 49 higher-income countries. By contrast, he said, "Just 25 doses have been given in one lowest-income country. Not 25 million; not 25 thousand; just 25."

More than one billion vaccine doses have now been administered worldwide, but vast disparities remain. Seychelles tops the list, having fully vaccinated 59% of its citizens, while Israel (56%), Chile (34%), and the United States (30%) also rank high. Brazil, however, is 43rd globally, with just 5.9% of its population fully vaccinated, while India and Bangladesh are much lower, at 1.8% and 1.7%, respectively. And in some countries, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, virtually no one has been vaccinated.

Given that a COVID-19 vaccine is an essential good like food and shelter, we should be ashamed of such grave inequities. Making the problem worse, many rich countries are stockpiling vaccines beyond what they need, as a precautionary buffer.

Until a few months ago, activists for access to medicines and open science were hopeful that the enormity of the pandemic would lead to a rejection of proprietary science and patent-based market monopolies. In May 2020, for example,



As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic outstrips the severity of the first, a clear global bifurcation is emerging. The pandemic is abating, gradually and unevenly, across richer countries, but flaring up in several developing and emerging economies

the WHO launched the global COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) with the aim of encouraging the widespread voluntary sharing of pandemic-related intellectual property.

Similarly, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility, also established last year, was supposed to provide subsidized vaccines to poor countries, with financial support from the rich world. But even by then, as Alexander Zaitchik – echoing a common sentiment – recently wrote in The New Republic, "The optimism and sense of possibility that defined the early days were long gone."

If we reflect on the world's failure to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, we will at least be less likely to leave poor countries in the lurch in the future. The failure is both intellectual and moral. With the best of intentions, many activists' plans and proposals paid little attention to individual incentives. But while it is right to campaign for corporations to behave morally, it is folly to assume they are moral.

We can conceive of a future where people invest in knowledge creation and then contribute their findings to an open-access pool, instead of trying to make money. But we clearly are not there yet. For now, we must let private players acquire rights over the intellectual property they create to ensure that they invest in costly research.

At the same time, there is scope for cutting the profits of pharmaceutical firms considerably – by compelling them to sell products more cheaply and enable generic producers to sell in certain regions – without killing the pharmaceutical industry's incentives to spend on research.

To do this properly, we need to understand the structure of markets for knowledge-based products like new vaccines. Currently, we do not: the "market" is a mish-mash of competition and side deals. According to a recent paper from the Institute for New Economic Thinking, governments and pharmaceutical companies last year concluded 44 bilateral COVID-19 vaccine deals, many of which have undisclosed details

and poorly understood escape clauses. Poor countries were, by and large, left out.

We sorely need a theoretical framework to understand this market. Currently, it resembles what oligopoly must have looked like before Augustin Cournot captured its essentials in 1838. Cournot's breakthrough later enabled the development of the first antitrust laws, like the US Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, which allowed firms to set prices but prohibited secret multilateral deals to prop up prices. These laws gradually became sharper.

Today, we are making vaccine-market rules while trapped in a fog of uncertainty. From the little we know, it is clear that intellectual-property rights must continue to play a role, at least for now. On the other hand, pharmaceutical firms are arguably making vastly larger profits than needed to sustain their incentive to innovate (especially given how much of their IP has resulted from publicly funded research). In large pandemics such as the current one, we should compensate drug companies with lump-sum payments to cover costs, revoke some of their patents, and allow generic firms to mass-produce essential vaccines.

In the long run, we can go further; by emphasizing that a society's success does not depend on profit alone. The popular slogan, "None of us will be safe until everyone is safe," amounts to urging the rich to be more selfish, because helping others is in their self-interest. But the pandemic is a clarion call to start thinking beyond the narrow confines of economic rationality and identify others' interests as part of our own.

The writer, a former chief economist of the World Bank and chief economic adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM VACCINE HESITANCY

Cure for misinformation



Dr. Guru Prasad Mohanta

A SURVEY CONDUCTED JUST BEFORE THE LAUNCH OF INDIA'S VACCINATION PROGRAMME SHOWED THAT ABOUT 59% OF INDIANS WERE SCEPTICAL ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

People spreading rumours and gossip against COVID-19 vaccination would face legal action," warned a City Corporation. The case can be registered under Public Health Act. A clear message has been sent for spreaders of infodemic and scare mongers. We are in the midst of second wave of COVID-19, adversely affecting everyone's life. Everyone is looking for a miracle to happen to end the pandemic. True, miracles happened but in Israel and America. Both the countries relaxed their COVID guard and the citizens can now move around without mask. They could convince their citizens to take the vaccines and it worked and developed herd immunity.

A survey conducted just before the launch of India's vaccination programme showed that about 59% of Indians were sceptical about COVID-19 vaccines. They expressed that they won't rush to take vaccines. Scepticism is common perhaps due to the speed at which the vaccines were developed and received emergency approval. People started perceiving the clinical study conducted in the development of vaccine as superficial one. This misunderstanding is further fu-

elled by some anti-vaccination and other generic disinformation. The minimum study required for assessing safety and efficacy is done and the vaccines were approved for emergency use just because sufficient period of follow up was not done owing to the urgent need in pandemic. The choice is simple: we need vaccine or corona? In addition to the doubt on safety and efficacy of vaccines; widespread rumours, false information and misinformed campaigns further confused people.

Let's look at some of the misinformation spreading around us leading to vaccine hesitancy among the public. Some mongers spread that the vaccines contain aluminium which is harmful. It can cause brain damage. The truth is: none of the COVID-19 vaccines approved has aluminium as component. In some other vaccines, often very small quantity of aluminium is used to build stronger immunity. Some people believe that the COVID vaccine contains cow blood, meat, or fat; aborted foetus, pigs, and chimpanzee feces; and could cause infertility and so on. The list is endless. None of the information is true. Even professionals too have their own reservation. In one lead-

ing hospital, when the vaccination was intended for only frontline health workers, the doctors and other hospital staff kept away from the vaccination booth. In another incident, one medical officer instructed the nurse to hold a cotton ball to his arm to make it look like he took the injection. In another city, many of the hospital staff went on sudden leave just to skip vaccine doses. All the incidents were reported in the media. The irresponsible behaviour of these professionals cannot be justified but it definitely influenced the attitude of general public towards corona vaccines.

The misinformation around COVID-19 vaccine is massive. In order to counter this COVID-19 vaccine misinformation, Google has launched a \$3 million fund to support journalistic efforts to effectively fact check misinformation about COVID-19 immunisation process. Fake news spreaders use the strategy to develop negative empathy towards pro-vaccine opponents with sinister or mercenary motives. The same empathy can be used to counter misinformation and help communicate corrective information to the public. Opinions of the harmed persons

due to misinformation can be used to help spread responsible information.

The control of COVID-19 is now our first priority to save lives and resources. The most effective and proven weapon: universal immunisation till we achieve herd immunity is available with us. In spite of having two indigenously available vaccines and launching countrywide immunisation, the immunisation coverage is not encouraging. Though many reasons can be cited for this, misinformation spreading against vaccines and vaccination through social and other unregulated media is a major contributor for vaccine hesitancy among the general population. In an attempt to safe guard public health and promote vaccination, the Prime Minister in his 76th edition of "Mann Ki Baat" called upon the countrymen to get information from the right sources.

The writer is a former Professor and Head, Department of Pharmacy, Annamalai University. He can be reached at gpmohanta@hotmail.com / gpmohanta@gmail.com

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, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Lockdown needed

Sir, The Government of Orissa must take a prudent decision by announcing a 10-day lockdown in the vulnerable districts, beginning May 1. COVID numbers in the state are rapidly rising and the government can no longer take chances and allow a "business as usual" atmosphere to continue. The fact is that even today people move around without masks and for some reasons are not convinced that social distancing is imperative to defeat the coronavirus. In this situation only a compulsory lockdown and staggered attendance at government and other important establishments can break the cycle of infection. Medical experts opine that one person with the virus can infect around 2.5 people. If each of those people go about their day as normal, and infect another 2.5 people, within a month, 406 people would be infected just from the first infection. The biggest challenge is that individuals who are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms can still spread the disease. Hence the need for social distancing and limiting contact with others are so critical. Unfortunately, social influencers like politicians themselves break this important protocol. This slackening of guard by the Centre and the states has brought India back to a gasping point where oxygen is the only saving grace. In such a situation a lockdown alone can slow the infection rate and hopefully give the healthcare system a breather.

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Vaccines for the youth

Sir, It is trying times for the youth of this country to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and the struggle will continue. We are facing trying times, and the second wave lockdown is worse than the first one. By turn, the seniors and those above 45 years got the first dose of vaccination, but the second dose and the one for 18+ is in suspense. Despite the crash down of the website, over one crore registrations have taken place on the first day itself. Now non-availability of vaccines is being cited as the reason for the delay. Lots of vaccines were wasted in the first and second phase and now there is a shortage in every state. Hoarding of medicines, oxygen cylinders and vaccines is reported. Black marketing is thriving and patients' relatives are running from pillar to post for medical facilities. The doctors and health workers are doing their duties tirelessly, while politics is giving the COVID-19 patients a torrid time. Waving the hands for vaccination is the ultimate solution to the pressing problem.

Akhil Shanthi, MUMBAI

Bengal announces partial lockdown

Govt shuts down malls, restaurants, gyms; bazaars to remain open for limited hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 30: The West Bengal government Friday ordered shut-down of all shopping malls, beauty parlours, restaurants, bars, sports complexes, gyms, spas and swimming pools in the state with immediate effect until further orders, amid the surge in COVID-19 cases.

According to the order, all forms of social, cultural, academic, entertainment-related gatherings and congregations have been prohibited in the state for the time being.

Bazaars, market places will be allowed to operate twice every day - from 7 am-10 am and 3 pm-5 pm. Activities related to the electoral counting processes and victory rallies will be guided by the Election Commission protocols, the order said.

Medical shops, medical equipment outlets, grocery stores, along



with home delivery services, have been kept out of the order's purview. "The restrictions will be in place till the administration reviews the situation again," a senior official told this news agency.

Any person violating these measures will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides action under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code and other legal provisions as applicable.

BJP confident of winning 200+ seats in Bengal

THE SAFFRON PARTY SAYS IT IS CONFIDENT OF FORMING THE NEXT GOVERNMENT IN THE STATE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 30: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has claimed that the party would form the next government in West Bengal by winning more than 200 seats, even as all exit polls except two suggested a win and hat-trick for the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government.

BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya, the West Bengal co-in-charge, told this news agency: "The BJP is going to win more than 200 seats regardless of whatever the figures of the exit polls suggest. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections nobody said that the BJP may win 18 seats. However, the party stunned everyone. Let's wait for the results on May 2...everything will become clear."

Meanwhile, BJP national spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal told this news agency: "Exit polls cannot be treated as exit polls. West Bengal is amid the air of change. The way Mamata Banerjee has created a confrontation with the Central government;



kept the people deprived of the Central benefits, indulged in appeasement politics... she is going to lose elections badly. In West Bengal, BJP government is going to be formed with an absolute majority."

Apart from the Axis My India-India Today and the Republic-CNX exit polls, which gave the BJP an

edge in the battleground state, all other surveys, including the CVoter Exit Poll for Times Now/ABP News, forecast a third victory for the Trinamool, putting it ahead in the 294-member Assembly.

However, the survey of Axis My India-India Today, whose predictions in the 2019 Assembly elec-

tions had shown the immense BJP gains in the state, again gave the party its first-ever victory in the state polls. According to it, the BJP could end with 134-160 seats, the Trinamool with 130-156, and the Left with a mere 0-2.

On the other hand, the P-MARQ survey gave the Trinamool 152-172

Apart from the Axis My India-India Today and the Republic-CNX exit polls, which gave the BJP an edge in the battleground state, all other surveys forecast a third victory for the Trinamool

seats, the BJP 112-132, and the Left 10-20. The NewsX-Polstrat gave the Trinamool 152-162 and the BJP 111-125 seats.

The ETG Research poll gave Banerjee's party 164-176, the BJP 105-115 and the Left 10-15 seats. CVoter gave Trinamool 152-164, the BJP 109-121 and the Left 14-25.

The Republic-CNX poll, however, showed a BJP victory, giving it 138-148 seats, with 128-132 for the Trinamool and 11-21 for the Left.

Legal luminary Soli Sorabjee passes away



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: Distinguished jurist and former Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, who appeared in several historic cases like Kesavananda Bharti and SR Bommai, passed away due to COVID-19 at a hospital here Friday. The 91-year-old is survived by wife, a daughter and two sons.

A recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award of the country, the renowned human rights lawyer served as the Attorney General for India from 1989-90 and then from 1998-2004 during the tenure of VP Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee respectively.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among a host of leaders who condoled the passing away of the eminent jurist.

The Prime Minister described him as an outstanding lawyer who was at the forefront of helping the poor and downtrodden through law. Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana also condoled the demise of Sorabjee. "I am deeply saddened to learn about the passing of Shri Soli Jehangir Sorabjee, former Attorney General of India. In his nearly 68 year long association with the judicial world, he made immeasurable contribution in enriching the global jurisprudence of Human Rights and Fundamental Right," he said.

Considered one of the best Constitutional law experts, Sorabjee wrote several books on laws and justice, press censorship and the Emergency, and vehemently fought against human and fundamental rights violations.

One of his recent court battles pertaining to fundamental right violations was the Shreya Singhal case in which the Supreme Court in 2015 agreed to his submissions and struck down a provision in the Information Technology Act relating to restrictions on online freedom of speech and expression.



Workers build new platforms to cremate COVID-19 bodies, as coronavirus cases surge in record numbers, outside Sarai Kale Khan Crematorium in New Delhi, Friday

SC fines commerce person for prescribing COVID medicine

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 30: The Supreme Court has imposed a fine of ₹1,000 on a man who wanted to prescribe medicines for COVID-19. The man, who has a post graduate degree in commerce, had approached the court after his petition was dismissed by the Calcutta High Court.

Calling the petition frivolous, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana asked Suresh Shaw, "Are you a doctor or a scientist? What's your qualification?"

The man said he is not a doctor but postgraduate in commerce and that research is his natural activity. The country's top judge pulled up Shaw and said, "You want to prescribe medicines to the whole world and doctors do not know the medicine? A commerce person teaching doctors and scientists about COVID!"

When Chief Justice Ramana asked if the court can impose a fine of ₹10 lakh on him, the man said he is an unemployed teacher and cannot pay ₹10 lakh. He said he can pay ₹1,000.

"What is your knowledge in science and treating Covid? Not satisfied with Calcutta High Court and you came all the way. Can we impose ₹10 lakh fine?"



Chief Justice Ramana asked the petitioner.

Dismissing the petition, Supreme Court said the man has to pay the fine to the Calcutta High Court Legal Services Authority.

The Supreme Court had taken up the issue of the shortage of oxygen, beds, essential drugs like Remdesivir and Favipirivir and vaccines, and asked for the Centre's response. Many High Courts too are hearing petitions related to the shortage of critical supplies.

Coronavirus has infected over 3.86 lakh more people in India in yet another worrying daily high and killed 3,498 in the last 24 hours. India's tally of more than 1.87 crore COVID cases is the second-highest globally, behind the United States and ahead of Brazil.

Delhi yet to receive vaccines for 18-44 age group: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: Delhi will not join the national level rollout of COVID-19 vaccination for people aged 18-44 years on May 1, with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday saying that required vaccine doses have not been received yet for the drive.

He appealed to people in the targeted age group not to line up at vaccination centres in the city on May 1. In the next one-two days, around three lakh Covishield vaccines will be received and the drive for vaccinating people in the age group 18-44 years will commence, Kejriwal said in an online briefing.

The third phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive to inoculate people aged 18 years and above will roll out in the country on May 1. However, some states have said they would be unable to start the drive on day one due to the shortage of vaccines. Kejriwal said his government has placed orders for supply of 67 lakh doses each of Covishield and Covaxin from manufacturers in three months.

Kejriwal, who had earlier appealed to the manufacturers to bring down prices of their vaccines, said the "Delhi government



In the next one-two days, around three lakh Covishield vaccines will be received and the drive for vaccinating people in the age group 18-44 years will commence

ARVIND KEJRIWAL I
DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

is prepared to bear the financial costs of the doses it has ordered".

Delhi government has also demanded a schedule from both the companies, specifying the days when they supply the vaccines within three months' period.

"We are trying our best that within the next three months the entire population of Delhi gets vaccinated. We have formulated a plan and even the infrastructure needed for this is in place. Now it will depend on the two companies as to how swiftly they provide us with the vaccine." "We aim to vaccinate everyone in the next three months if a sufficient quantity of vaccines is supplied by the companies," he said.

The Chief Minister assured Delhi residents that everyone will be vaccinated, appealing to them not to crowd outside vaccination centres

for a few days.

"I appeal to all citizens to not queue up at vaccination centres before our announcement as this might lead to violation of social distancing and create a law and order situation," Kejriwal said.

The government is in constant touch with the companies. As soon as the vaccine doses are received, Delhi government will make an official announcement for starting vaccination covering those aged 18 years and above, he added.

"We have not yet received the vaccine, and are in constant touch with the companies and hope the vaccines will be delivered in a day or two. We've been assured of this."

The Delhi Chief Minister assured that everyone is to be inoculated and required infrastructure has been readied for it.

ROSE VALLEY CASE

ED takes possession of assets worth ₹304cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday said it has taken "possession" of assets worth ₹304 crore in connection with its money laundering case in the alleged Rose Valley ponzi scam that took place in West Bengal and Odisha.

"Possession has been taken of properties of the Rose Valley group of companies throughout West Bengal, Tripura and Odisha under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)," the central probe agency said in a statement.



"This includes 412 movable properties amounting to ₹47 crore and 426 immovable properties worth ₹257 crore," it said.

The Rose Valley group of companies "had collected huge amount of money from gullible public by floating various fake and fictitious schemes and defaulted the repayments."

Probe found that several properties in West Bengal, Odisha, Tripura, Assam, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and others states were "acquired in the name of various companies of group, by illegally diverting the funds collected from the common public", the central agency said. These assets were earlier provisionally attached by the ED under the anti-money laundering law and after getting approval from the Adjudicating Authority (under the PMLA), the agency is empowered to take possession of such properties.

The ED had filed a criminal case of money laundering against the firm, its Chairman Gautam Kundu and others in 2014 and later arrested him in Kolkata.

Multiple charge sheets have been filed by it in this case till now even as the probe continues.

India's O2 crisis to ease by mid-May, output to jump 25%: Report

MEDICAL OXYGEN CONSUMPTION IN INDIA HAS SHOT UP MORE THAN EIGHT-FOLD FROM USUAL LEVELS TO ABOUT 7,200 TONNES PER DAY

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 30: India's severe medical oxygen supply crisis is expected to ease by mid-May, a top industry executive told Reuters, with output rising by 25 per cent



and transport infrastructure ready to cope with a surge in demand caused by a dramatic rise in coronavirus cases.

Dozens of hospitals in cities such as New Delhi and Mumbai have run short of the gas this month, sending relatives of patients scrambling for oxygen cylinders, sometimes in vain. Medical oxygen consumption in India has shot up more than eight-fold from usual levels to about 7,200 tonnes per day this month, said Moloy Banerjee of Linde Plc, the country's biggest producer.

"This is what is causing the crisis because no one was prepared for it, particularly the steep curve up," Banerjee, who heads the company's South Asia gas business, told Reuters Thursday. Linde - whose two affiliates

in the country are Linde India and Praxair India - and other suppliers are ramping up production to a total of more than 9,000 tonnes per day by the middle of next month, he said.

A logistics crisis impeding the speedy movement of oxygen from surplus regions in eastern India to hard-hit northern and western areas would also be resolved in the coming weeks as more distribution assets are deployed, Banerjee said. "My expectation is that by the middle of May we will definitely have the transport infrastructure in place that allows us to service this demand across the country," he said.

Banerjee said India was importing around 100 cryogenic containers to transport large quanti-

ties of liquid medical oxygen, with Linde providing 60 of those. Some are being flown in by Indian Air Force aircraft.

Many of these containers will be placed on dedicated trains that would cut across the country, each carrying between 80-160 tonnes of liquid oxygen and delivering to multiple cities. The company is also looking to double the number of oxygen cylinders in its distribution network to at least 10,000, which would improve supply to rural areas with weak infrastructure.

"We are trying to create a hub-and-spoke type of system so that we make a lot of liquid oxygen available at the local area, from where the local dealers can pick it up," Banerjee said.

national

of the day quote

I would like to request all the stakeholders to remain strong. Although the difficulties seem to be many, we must remember that it is the darkest before dawn. Together, we will emerge victorious



P S SREEDHARAN PILLAI | MIZORAM GOVERNOR

Maharashtra Govt ready to tackle coronavirus third wave; second wave was expected but nobody knew it would be so ferocious



UDDHAV THACKERAY | CHIEF MINISTER OF MAHARASHTRA

SpiceXpress flight carrying 600 oxygen concentrators from Miami USA has landed at Delhi Airport.



These will further strengthen & reinforce our fight against COVID. I wish speedy recovery to every ailing citizen. May God grant good health & long life to everyone

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Delhi LG tests Covid positive

New Delhi: Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal said Friday that he had tested positive for coronavirus with mild symptoms. Baijal had taken both doses of the vaccine. He took the first dose of COVID vaccine at the Tirath Ram Shah Hospital in New Delhi last month, an official said. "I have tested positive for COVID with mild symptoms," he tweeted. "Have isolated myself since the onset of symptoms and all those who were in contact with me have been tested."

AIADMK rejects exit poll forecast

Chennai: The AIADMK Friday rejected the exit polls forecasting a victory for the DMK-led opposition in Tamil Nadu, saying the party would maintain its winning streak and repeat the success of the 2016 assembly elections. Party coordinator and deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and co-coordinator and Chief Minister K Palaniswami, in a joint statement, recalled a similar situation in 2016 when exit polls had been proved wrong.

Telangana extends night curfew

Hyderabad: The Telangana government Friday extended the night curfew (from 9 PM to 5 AM the next day) till May 8 (5 AM), an official order said. The state government had earlier imposed the restrictions from April 20 to May 1 (5 AM) to curb the spread of COVID-19. The government also issued an order imposing restriction on screening of movies in view of the night curfew.

Kumbh Mela ends

Dehradun/Rishikesh: Seventy lakh devotees participated in Haridwar's Kumbh Mela, the mammoth religious congregation which ended Friday after triggering a scare that it might have acted as a coronavirus "super-spreader". Despite the huge number of people gathering around Haridwar to take a dip in the holy Ganga, the 2021 event was a comparatively modest event - reduced to just one month and scaled down midway due to the raging pandemic. Held over three months in normal circumstances, the Kumbh Mela this time formally begun as late as April 1 due to concerns over COVID-19.



Saddened at the passing of one of India's most eminent jurists, and former Attorney General of India, Padma Vibhushan Soli Sorabjee. He dedicated his life towards the defence of the freedom of expression and protection of human rights. My condolences to his family and colleagues

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

NO LAST RITE CHARGES OF COVID VICTIMS IN WB

The West Bengal government Friday issued an order stating that last rites of all COVID-19 victims will be carried out free of cost amid complaints of fleeing by middlemen at crematoriums and burial grounds



'Covid cases may peak next week'

THE SURGE HAS LED TO A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN THE COUNTRY, FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO SEEK OXYGEN, MEDICINES AND OTHER ESSENTIALS FROM COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 30: India's Coronavirus cases may peak between May 3 and 5, according to a mathematical model of a team of scientists advising the government, a few days earlier than a previous estimate as the virus has spread faster than expected.

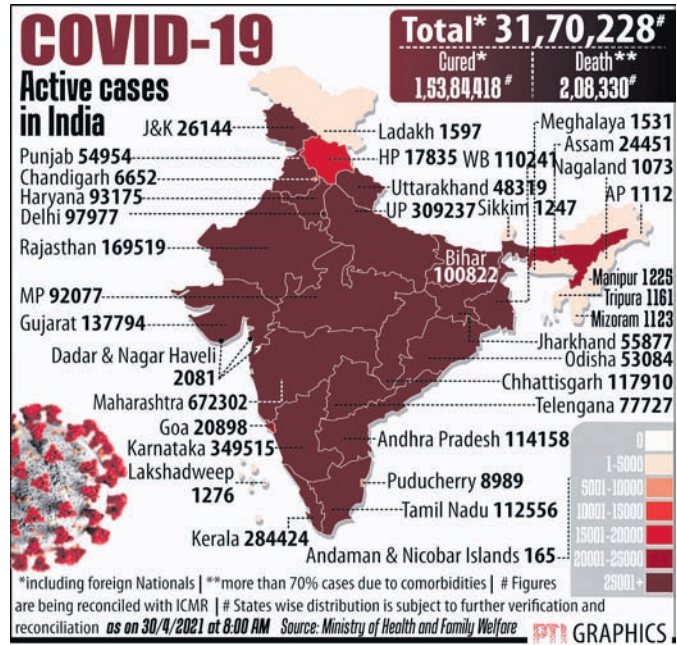
The country has reported more than 3 lakh new infections daily for nine consecutive days, hitting another global record of 3.86 lakh today.

The surge has led to a public health crisis in the country, forcing the government to seek oxygen, medicines and other essentials from countries around the world.

"Our belief is that by next week, the daily new cases nationwide would have peaked," M Vidyasagar, head of a government-appointed group of scientists modelling the trajectory of infections, told Reuters.

The group previously told senior government officials in a presentation April 2 that cases would peak between May 5 and 10, said Mr Vidyasagar.

"We said (at that presentation) that it was not a matter of putting up some structures that would come up in July or August, because by then



the wave will have ended," he said. "Try to figure out how we're going to fight the fight for the next four to six weeks, that was the message. Don't waste a lot of time putting up long-term solutions because your problem is right now," he said. "India's first wave of the pandemic peaked in mid-September with 97,894 cases. The country is now reporting more than three times as many infections daily, taking the total number of cases to 18.8 million with 2,08,000 deaths. The real number of infections is believed to be 50 times more," said Mr Vidyasagar, as many people who contract the disease show no symp-

Over 66 lakh cases in April

India reported more than 66 lakh coronavirus cases in April, making it the worst month of the pandemic, and the total number of new cases recorded during the month is equivalent to what was earlier witnessed in over six months, showing the enormity of the second wave of COVID-19. Earlier, it had taken more than six months since September 22, 2020 for the caseload to increase by over 66 lakh. The health ministry said since April, there has been a steep rise in the number of cases. From April 5 onwards, the country saw over one lakh cases being reported in a day, while from April 15, the single-day rise in the number of cases went past two lakh and from April 22, it started recording over three lakh daily cases.

Keeping in mind the welfare of the people, several States have decided to vaccinate their population against the surging Covid-19 pandemic free. The drive to inoculate those between 18 and 44 years, is to start from tomorrow, May 1.

Govt to import 4.5L Remdesivir vials



Demand for Remdesivir has gone up manifold in the country with a surge in COVID-19 cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: The government has placed orders for import of 4.5 lakh vials of antiviral drug Remdesivir with the first consignment of 75,000 vials expected to reach Indian shores Friday, Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry said in a statement.

The government has started importing the vital drug from other countries to ease its shortage in the country, it said. The first consignment of 75,000 vials will reach India Friday, it added.

Demand for Remdesivir has gone up manifold in the country with a surge in COVID-19 cases. The antiviral drug is being used in the treatment of infectious disease. HLL Lifecare Ltd, a Government of India owned company has ordered 4,50,000 vials of Remdesivir from M/s Gilead Sciences Inc USA and Egyptian Pharma Company, M/s Eva Pharma, the release said. It is expected that Gilead Sciences will dispatch 75,000 to 1,00,000 vials in the next one or two days, it noted.

Further one lakh vials will also be supplied before or by May 15, the release said. EVA Pharma will supply around 10,000 vials initially followed by 50,000 vials every 15 days or till July, it added. The Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry said it has also ramped up the production capacity of Remdesivir in the country. As April 27, the production capacity of the seven licensed domestic manufacturers has increased from 38 lakh vials per month to 1.03 crore vials per month, it said. Besides, a total 13.73 lakh vials

Mega scare

Raigad/Mumbai: Sparking a mega health scare, at least 90 Covid-19 patients in Maharashtra's Raigad district, who were administered Remdesivir doses of a particular brand, developed severe side-effects following which the state government has imposed a temporary suspension on its use here, FDA Minister Rajendra Shingane said. "The incident took place on Thursday in around three hospitals in the district. The patients who were administered Remdesivir manufactured by the company Hetero Drugs had complained of side-effects," Shingane told IANS. The shocking incident came to light when some patients developed chills, drop in blood pressure, fall in SPU count, varying degrees of fever or other health issues in various hospitals. Releasing a video-statement, Raigad Collector Nidhi Choudhari said that following complaints from patients in different hospitals, the district health authorities acted on them immediately.

have been supplied across the country by the drug companies in the last seven days (April 21-28). The daily supply has gone up from 67,900 vials April 11 to 2.09 lakh vials April 28, it added.

An advisory was also issued by Ministry of Home Affairs to states and union territories to facilitate smooth movement of Remdesivir supplies, the ministry noted. The government has also taken various steps, like ban on exports and customs duty waiver, to enhance the availability of Remdesivir in the country, it said.

DAILY GRIND



Labourers work at a brick factory on the eve of Labour Day in Patna

PPT PHOTO

FB to roll out vax finder tool

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 30: Social media giant Facebook Friday announced plans to help its users in India with access to authoritative information about Covid-19 symptoms and vaccines.

This is in addition to the recent announcement by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to donate \$10 million to emergency response efforts in India.

"As India grapples with the current wave of Covid-19, we are committed to doing our bit to support local communities in the country with medical supplies and other life saving equipment," the tech giant shared in post on Facebook. The social media platform will partner with the Centre

to roll out a Vaccine Finder tool on its mobile app in India, this week. The tool, available in 17 languages, will help people identify places nearby to get the vaccine. "In this tool, vaccine centre locations and their hours of operation have been provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The tool will also show walk-in options (for 46 years and above) and a link to register on the CoWin website and schedule your vaccination appointment," Facebook said. The tech giant will support NGOs and UN agencies in India with ad credits and insights to reach the majority of people on Facebook with Covid-19 vaccine and preventive health information, the post said.

MANY KERALA DISTRICTS HEADING FOR LOCKDOWN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 30: With daily Covid cases touching new highs and the total number of active cases reaching 3,03,733 Friday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said time has come for districts with a high number of cases being placed under lockdown with effect from the coming Tuesday.

"At the moment, no decision has been made as to which of the districts would come under lockdown. This would be decided at the appropriate time. The Chief Secretary will come out with the details about it. As and when it would be de-



clared, in these locked down districts, only the most needed government service offices will be open. Banking should be best done online," he said.

"Public transport will be banned. Hotels should do only home delivery. Religious institutions should see that they should be strictly re-

stricted and big institutions can see a maximum of 50 people. Marriages should see only just 50 guests while funerals should not have more than 20 people," Vijayan added.

On Friday, 37,199 people tested positive after 1,49,487 samples were tested in the past 24 hours and 17,500 people turned negative.

Of the state's 14 districts, Ernakulam district has the highest number of positive patients with 49,857 active cases, followed by Kozhikode with 43,166, Malappuram with 34,897, Thrissur with 31,706, Thiruvananthapuram with 24,919 and Wayanad district had the least with 9,320 cases.

'Ghant' on peepal tree - ghastly reminder of Covid deaths

WHILE HANGING A 'GHANT' IS A TRADITIONAL WAY OF KEEPING THE ASHES TILL THE IMMERSION IS DONE, SOME CREMATION GROUNDS HAVE ALSO GOT LOCKERS WHERE THE URN CAN BE KEPT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 30: Earthen pots hung on a Peepal tree, usually near the cremation grounds, is a rarity in normal times.

As per Hindu tradition, the ashes placed in the earthen pot, called 'Ghant' is hung on a Peepal tree until the ashes are immersed. Usually, a tree has two to three Ghant hanging on them at a time. These are usually of those whose children are abroad and cannot return immediately for cremation.

Today, however, with the pandemic raging on and the death toll mounting, the number of 'ghant' hanging on Peepal tree is growing by the day. "There are more than two dozen 'ghant' hanging here. People are not coming back to collect the ashes of



their family members and we cannot discard them. Maybe, after waiting for a few more days, we will immerse them in the river," said Krishna (name changed on request) a worker

at the Gulala cremation ghat in Lucknow.

He said that the Covid scare was so great that there have been at least three instances in the past one week

where the relatives have left the bodies at the cremation ground without cremating them because they were asked to wait for their turn.

"Our lockers are full and people now put a slip with the name of the deceased and hang the pot on the tree," said Alok, a worker at the Parmat Ghat in Kanpur.

Workers at the cremation grounds say that here is no time to perform pre-cremation rituals that include chanting of mantras.

"We now do the basics and the pyre is set on fire because there are bodies waiting in the queue. Even the cremation of non-Covid bodies is being rushed up. It is a sad situation but the fact is that no one - not even the closest relatives, want to stay at the cremation ground. Abhimanyu Tiwari, a priest at

Rasoolabad ghat in Prayagraj, said, "We are performing cremation for around 60-70 bodies every day and more than half of them are not able to perform the last rites. Still, there are so many Ghant tied on the tree that just a look makes a person shiver." Post death rituals are also being done away.

"When my father died last week, my mother-in-law, husband and sister-in-law had also tested positive. They are all in home isolation and there is no question of even holding a prayer meeting for my father-in-law," said Nalini Singh, a young homemaker.

Most of the people, in whose families deaths have taken place, are not holding the 'Tehraven' ritual that is held on the 13th day of the death.

national

of the day quote

Delhi is in grave crisis. The Arvind Kejriwal government has left people in a state of uncertainty, unsafe. The capital's condition sends out a message to the entire world. The Centre should take direct control of Delhi



I appeal to the people of the state, that all of you must get the vaccine and encourage the people around you to also get the vaccine



Goa Shipyard Limited, a Defence Ministry shipyard, will aid the state government in providing the oxygen for Covid-19 patients with the help of its 'Onsite Oxygen Generating Plant'



SHORT TAKES

TV journalist Rohit Sardana dead



Noida: Television journalist Rohit Sardana died here of cardiac arrest on Friday, days after he tested positive for COVID-19, according to his channel Aaj Tak. He was 41. Sardana, who was an executive editor and TV news anchor with Aaj Tak of the India Today Group, is survived by his wife, two daughters and parents. He was admitted to a private hospital here after he tested positive for coronavirus. His last rites will take place in his hometown of Kurukshetra in Haryana, according to his colleagues.

Weekend lockdown in Haryana

Chandigarh: The Haryana government Friday announced weekend lockdown in nine districts -- Panchkula, Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonapat, Rohtak, Karnal, Hisar, Sirsa and Fatehabad. The lockdown will be enforced from 10 p.m. Friday (April 30) till 5 a.m. Monday (May 3). "The residents must stay indoors during the lockdown period. No person shall leave their homes or shall move on foot or by vehicle or travel or stand or roam around on any road or public places during the above said hours," the order.

Kerala slashes Covid test rate

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government Friday slashed the price of RT-PCR tests to ₹500 from ₹1,700 at all private laboratories in the state, according to a government notification. It was in January that the Kerala government came out with an order that the rate of a RT-PCR test should be ₹1,500 and following the private laboratories approaching the Kerala High Court the rate was fixed at ₹1,700.

Lalu to stay at daughter's home

Patna: After the release order submitted by Superintendent of Hotwar jail at Ranchi, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) Supremo Lalu Prasad will be released any time from New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and will stay at the official residence of Rajya Sabha MP and his daughter Misa Bharti in the national capital. Lalu's family has taken the decision in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.



In this situation, as favourable results start coming in, (party supporters) should not start converging at counting centers (or elsewhere) to express joy and end up contracting the virus

M K STALIN | PRESIDENT OF DMK

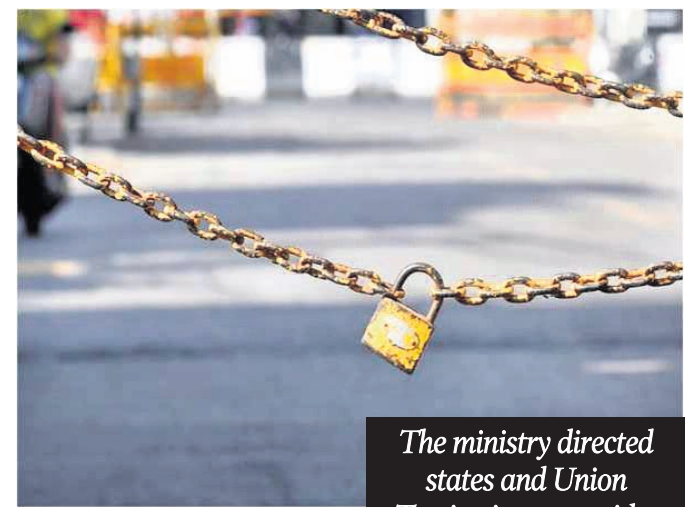
VAX DELIVERY VIA DRONES

After the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Telangana government Friday received permission for deployment of drones to conduct experimental delivery of Covid-19 vaccines within Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) Range



'NO NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN'

MHA asks states to go for local containment



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 30: There would be no lockdown across the states as the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has advised them to go in for 'containment' in districts and areas where the second wave surged. The ministry has suggested intensive, local and focused containment measures in districts and areas with test positivity of 10 per cent and more in the last one week and where more than 60 per cent of oxygen-supported or ICU beds are occupied.

Despite the surge in Covid-positive cases and deaths in April, the MHA's fresh guidelines on Covid containment steered clear of imposing lockdowns and left it to states and UTs to devise their own containment strategies. The advisory asks states to encourage work from home. All District Magistrates are required to strictly enforce state-level directives on containment measures as well as the national guidelines. The Union Health Ministry had called for measures like night curfew, prohibiting public gatherings for political, social, religious, sports or entertainment purposes, cap-

The ministry directed states and Union Territories to consider containment measures such as restrictions on gatherings, operations of markets, offices, schools and universities, and intensified testing and tracking for immediate implementation based on their assessment of the situation until May 31

ping attendance at marriages to 50 and at funerals to 20, closing of shopping complexes, cinema halls, gyms, spas, restaurants, stadia, operating public transport at 50 per cent, and a cap of 50 per cent attendance in government and private offices. "However, these are indicative activities, and states and UTs should make a careful analysis of the local situation, areas to be covered, and probability of transmission and then take a decision," the Health Ministry had advised. The restrictions were prescribed for 14 days across the containment zones, which shall be declared such

PM chairs meeting of council of ministers

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers Friday, where they were briefed about the management of the pandemic and availability of oxygen and medicines, sources said. This was the first meeting of the council of ministers in the aftermath of the second wave of COVID-19 in the country. At the meeting that was held virtually, NITI Aayog member VK Paul gave a presentation on COVID-19 management. After him, Union ministers Piyush Goyal and Mansukh Mandaviya briefed their cabinet colleagues on the availability of oxygen and medicines respectively. The Prime Minister has held several rounds of meetings with chief ministers and top government officials to deliberate on the COVID-19 situation.

after a public announcement outlining the rationale and the nature of restrictions while asking for a test-track-treat-vaccine approach and ensure Covid-appropriate behaviour.

Apart from suggesting 100 per cent vaccination of eligible age groups, the Health Ministry had also said that details of hospital beds and vacancy status be made available online on a daily basis. It also said details on availability of oxygen, drugs, vaccines and vaccination centres, including the guidelines related to use of drugs like Remdesivir and Tocilizumab, should be widely publicised to generate public confidence. A similar advisory was issued on April 26 based on the Health Ministry guidelines where the states were asked to impose localised restrictions for at least 14 days to flatten the Covid-19 curve. The guidelines will be applicable till May 31. The previous guidelines issued March 23 are effective till April 30.

GATKA SKILL



Sikh religious warriors perform Gatka, an ancient form of Sikh martial arts, during a religious procession on the eve of 400th birth anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, near the Golden Temple in Amritsar

Treat available O2 as critical commodity: Centre

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 30: The Centre Friday said it has asked the states to treat the available oxygen as a critical commodity and undertake an oxygen-consumption audit at all hospitals, including private ones, amid a shortage of the life-saving gas in several parts of the country. Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Law Agrawal said from the start of the pandemic, the government had identified oxygen-supported beds as major clinical interventions. He said the government had procured 1,02,400 oxygen cylinders at the national level in April-May 2020 and distributed those among the states. "We have requested the states to treat the available oxygen as a critical commodity and also to ensure a rational use of oxygen," Agrawal

said. Listing out the steps taken by the Centre to augment the supply of oxygen, he said the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has issued instructions for fixing the price of liquid medical oxygen. Agrawal said 162 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants of 154-MT capacity each have been sanctioned across the country. Of these, 52 plants are already installed, 87 have been delivered and work to commission these plants at the earliest is on. The PSA plants can enable hospitals for in-situ generation of oxygen. Agrawal said the states have been allotted 8,593 MT of oxygen. "An order for 1,27,000 oxygen cylinders was placed on April 21 and the deliveries are expected to start in a couple of days. These include 54,000 jumbo cylinders (D type) and 73,000 regular cylinders (B type)." "Additionally, 551 PSA plants have been sanctioned to be imple-

OVER 1 CRORE VAX DOSES AVAILABLE

A day before the start of third phase of Covid vaccination in the country, the Union Ministry Health and Family Welfare Friday said that more than one crore doses are still available with the states and Union Territories (UTs) while nearly 20 lakh additional doses will reach them in the next three days.

mented by the Union health ministry. These plants will be installed in different public health facilities," he added. The states have been advised to ensure a rational use of oxygen, prohibit abnormal use by monitoring non-closure of valve during no-use, stop unnecessary oxygen administration to patients who may not require it clinically and for monitoring private health facilities that indulge in pushing oxygen cylinders as part of home-based COVID care packages, Agrawal said.

Emergency financial powers to armed forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Friday granted emergency financial powers to the three services to allow formation commanders to establish and operate hospitals as well as quarantine facilities for COVID-19 patients. The emergency powers have been granted initially for a period of three months from May 1 to July 31 and are in addition to the similar powers delegated to the medical officers of the armed forces last week, officials said. They said vice chiefs of the three services as well as General Officer Commanding-in-Chiefs (GOC-in-Cs) and holders of equivalent rank will be able to clear procurement proposals to deal with the coronavirus crisis. Singh's office said he invoked special provisions and granted emergency financial powers to the armed forces to empower them to speed up efforts in the nationwide fight against COVID-19. "These powers will help Formation Commanders to estab-

lish and operate quarantine facilities/ hospitals and to undertake procurement/ repair of eqpt/ items/ material/ stores, besides provisioning of various services and works required to support the ongoing effort against COVID," his office tweeted. The defence ministry said vice chiefs of armed forces including chief of integrated defence staff to the chairman chiefs of staff committee (CISC) and GOC-in-Cs and equivalent rank holders of all three services have been given full powers. It said the corps commanders and area commanders have been delegated powers up to ₹50 lakh per case while division commanders and sub area commanders and equivalents have been delegated powers up to ₹20 lakh per case. The emergency powers were sanctioned to the armed forces last year too when the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out. Last week, the ministry sanctioned emergency financial powers of ₹5 crore to the director general of medical services of the three services for COVID-19 related procurement.

'NOVEL SMELL TEST MAY HELP DIAGNOSE COVID'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: A new capsule-based smell test may help in the rapid diagnosis of various diseases linked to the loss of smell such as COVID-19, scientists say. The test has been found to be easy to use in patients with Parkinson's disease, and could also be helpful in diagnosing COVID-19 in the broader population, according to the study published in the journal Royal Society Interface. The researchers at Queen Mary University of London in the UK noted that smell tests have the potential to support the diagnosis of certain neurological conditions, including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. However, these tests are not widely available, expensive, and take too long to administer in routine healthcare settings, they said. To address this problem, the team developed a novel smell testing kit which uses capsules of aromatic oils placed between two



strips of single-sided tape. To take the smell test, the capsules are simply crushed between the fingers and the tape strip peeled to release the aroma contained within the capsules. Based on a person's ability to recognise these smells, a score would be generated that can be sent to their doctor if they are experiencing a loss of smell. "Our capsule-based smell test can assist in the rapid diagnostic of various diseases linked to the loss

of smell," said lead researcher Ahmed Ismail from Queen Mary's School of Engineering and Materials Science. "These include chronic neurological conditions such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, as well as COVID-19, which is known to affect the sense of smell," Ismail said. Being non-invasive and less stressful, the capsule-based smell test has benefits over the nose swab in diagnosing COVID-19, according to the researchers.

GOA GOES INTO LOCKDOWN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, April 30: Amid an extremely high test positivity rate of over 50 per cent, Goa went into a four-day-long "lockdown" to curb COVID-19 cases as people stayed indoors, while streets were largely bereft of vehicles in the tourist state Friday. The tiny coastal state, with a population of around 16 lakh, has been witnessing an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 cases during the second wave of the infection. In a development that will worry the administration in Goa, the state reported over 50 per cent test positivity rate Thursday when out of 5,910 samples tested for coronavirus, 3,019 returned positive, health department data showed. Also, 36 patients succumbed to the viral infection during the day. The test positivity rate (TPR) is defined as the percentage of samples that return positive among the total tested. The COVID-19-related restrictions on movement of people and non-essential activities came into force at 9 pm Thursday and will remain applicable till 6 am Monday (May 3). The state government has said all essential services would be allowed to function during the period.

Myanmar drug surge worry for neighbours including India

THE 'GOLDEN TRIANGLE', LOCATED IN NORTHEASTERN MYANMAR BORDERING LAOS, THAILAND AND CHINA, IS ONE OF THE TWO BIGGEST GLOBAL SOURCES OF NARCOTIC DRUGS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, April 30: A spike in illegal narcotics from the 'Golden Triangle' to South and Southeast Asian countries as a result of pandemic-related supply gluts and a likely increase in production is worrying Myanmar's neighbours, including India. Anti-narcotics authorities in neighboring Thailand have seized more than 80 million methamphetamine pills, or yaba, in the past six months, a record haul that they blame partly on a supply glut caused by the Covid-19.



The Assam Rifles that guards India's borders with Myanmar has also reported a significant rise in drug seizures in northeastern states like Manipur and Mizoram but many feel the "seizures are mere tips of the iceberg". Assam Rifles DG Lt Gen Sukhdeep Sangwan said during a recent seminar that his traditional counter-insurgency force is "fully geared to meet the drug threat from Myanmar." 2020 was boom year for Myanmar's drug trafficking syndicates, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reporting a sharp drop in

the price of methamphetamines in East and Southeast Asia to its lowest level in 10 years. That was because the market was overwhelmed with supply. This boost owes to cartels in 'Golden Triangle', like the United Wa State Army (UWSA), developing the ability to produce the ingredients to manufacture various synthetic drugs, including amphetamine-type stimulants like crystal meth and yaba, as well as synthetic opioids. The UNODC has warned that the region should brace for a larger flow of illegal drugs as the crisis in Myanmar deepens, and

the formal economy all but collapses amid strikes, protests, and increasingly violent crackdowns by the security forces. The International Crisis Group puts the total value of the Golden Triangle drug trade at around \$40 billion per year. The worry for India and Bangladesh emerges from a dynamic shift in the Burmese illicit drug industry. Smaller cartels like the Wei Brothers, Zhang Ming group and Lo Hsin Nian group have moved their production facilities to Western Myanmar on borders with India and Bangladesh.

international



Japan stands with India, our friend and partner, in her efforts to fight against COVID-19 pandemic through this additional emergency assistance. Japan will continue to extend further support promptly in order to contain the COVID-19 situation

PFIZER-BIOTECH SEEK VAX OK FOR CHILDREN

Pfizer and BioNTech have submitted a request for EU drug regulators to extend the approval of the corona vaccine to include children ages 12 to 15, a move that could offer younger and less at-risk populations in Europe access to the shots for the first time



of the day quote

So the challenge is how we avoid the mass unemployment of the 1980s. It's really important to have the same ambition that our forefathers and foremothers had after the Second World War, because that's scale of the challenge

SADIQ KHAN | MAYOR, LONDON

Our assistance, we hope, will have a catalytic effect on society more broadly here and around the world to come to the aid of the Indian people

NEED PRICE | STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON, US

The challenge is not over and infant is continuing to increase. The need for precautions and following sop's is vital at this point in time. Next few weeks are critical. No system can cope if we allow the disease to spread rapidly

ASAD UMAR | PLANNING MINISTER, PAKISTAN

UN ready to boost support to India

As per data by the World Health Organization, confirmed COVID-19 cases in India stand at over 18.37 million and more than 204,000 people have died due to the virus



much to ensure #Vaccines4All in vulnerable countries. It's time for the world to extend aid & support to India. No one's safe until we're all safe. He had added that his thoughts are with the people of India at this time. The United Nations team in India is supporting the response of the country's authorities to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing critical supplies and UN agencies are procuring thousands of oxygen concentrators, oxygen generating plants and other essential equipment as well as helping set up mobile hospital units.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 30: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said the world organisation stands ready to step up its support to India to combat the "horrific" COVID-19 wave in the country that has infected more than 18 million people and killed over 200,000. "With the entire @UN family, I stand in solidarity with the people of India as they face a horrific #COVID19 outbreak. The UN stands ready to step up our support," Guterres tweeted. India's Permanent Representative

Prez Xi writes to PM Modi, offers help to fight Covid



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 30: Chinese President Xi Jinping Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed willingness to strengthen anti-pandemic cooperation with India and provide support and help to deal with the current surge of COVID-19 cases in the country.

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

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

President Xi sent a message of condolence to Prime Minister Modi over the COVID-19 pandemic in India, the Xinhua news agency reported. In his message, Xi said China is willing to strengthen anti-pandemic cooperation with India, and provide support and help to the country, it said.

On Thursday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi promised to do the utmost in supporting India's fight against the COVID-19 surge and said that anti-pandemic materials produced in China were entering India at a faster pace.

In his letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Wang said that the Chinese side "shares empathy for the challenges facing India and expresses sincere sympathy."

"The coronavirus is the common enemy of mankind, and the international community needs solidarity and coordination for a concerted response. The Chinese side firmly supports the Indian Government and people in fighting

the pandemic," he wrote in the letter. Wang said that anti-pandemic materials produced in China are entering India at a faster pace to help India fight the epidemic.

"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," he added.

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told media briefing Friday that China has exported 26,000 ventilators and oxygen generators to India this month.

Since April, China has exported more than 26,000 ventilators and oxygen generators, more than 15,000 medical monitors, and nearly 3,800 tonnes of medical materials and medicines to India, he said in response to a question.

Dozens killed in stampede at Jewish religious festival

REUTERS

Jerusalem, April 30: At least 45 people were crushed to death overnight Friday at an overcrowded religious festival in Israel, with some asphyxiated or trampled victims going unnoticed until the PA system sounded an appeal to disperse.

Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews had thronged to the Galilee tomb of 2nd-century sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai for annual Lag B'Omer commemorations that include all-night prayer, mystical songs and dance.

Witnesses said many of the dead were caught in a tightly packed passageway around 3 meters (yards) wide after crowds packed the slopes of Mount Meron in northern Israel in defiance of warnings to maintain social distancing against COVID-19.

Many of the dead had yet to be identified and police asked family members to provide pictures and personal information of those who attended the festival and were still



A worker paints over a large mural depicting jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny after it appeared overnight on a building in Saint Petersburg, Russia

125 Europe-bound children rescued off Libyan coast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, April 30: A total of 125 Europe-bound children were rescued at sea this week by Libyan authorities off the Mediterranean coast, the United Nations child welfare agency said Friday, adding that most were brought to detention centres.

The children, fleeing war and poverty across the perilous maritime route to Europe, included 114 unaccompanied minors, UNICEF added in a statement. "The majority of those rescued are sent to overcrowded detention centres in Libya under extremely difficult conditions and with no or limited access to water and health services. Nearly 1,100 children are in these centres," read the statement.

UNICEF urged the Libyan authorities to release all children and to put an end to immigration detention.

"The Central Mediterranean continues to be one of the deadliest and most dangerous migration routes in the world," UNICEF said.



missing to help with the process. Videos posted on social media showed ultra-Orthodox men clambering desperately through gaps in sheets of torn corrugated iron to escape the crush. Bodies lay on stretchers in a corridor, covered in foil blankets.

"There was some kind of mess, police, screaming, a big mess, and after half an hour it looked like a scene of a suicide bombing attack, numerous people coming out from there on stretchers," said 19-year-old festival-goer Hayim Cohen. "We were going to go inside for

the dancing and stuff and all of a sudden we saw paramedics from (ambulance service) MDA running by, like mid-CPR on kids," said 36-year-old pilgrim Shlomo Katz. As rescue workers tried to extricate the casualties, police shut down the site and ordered revelers out.

The Mount Meron tomb is considered one of the holiest sites in the Jewish world and is an annual pilgrimage site. The event was one of the largest gatherings in Israel since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic more than a year ago.

Pope facilitates Vatican prosecutions for cardinals, bishops

The new law makes clear that Vatican city-state prosecutors have jurisdiction over cardinals, bishops and need only the pope's consent to proceed with investigations against them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rome, April 30: Pope Francis has sent another message to Vatican-based cardinals and bishops about his intent to hold them accountable for criminal misconduct. He removed the procedural obstacles that had spared them from being prosecuted by the Vatican's criminal tribunal.

A new law published Friday makes clear that Vatican city-state prosecutors have jurisdiction over cardinals, bishops and need only the

pope's consent to proceed with investigations against them.

The law abrogated a regulation, upheld as recently as last year, that said only the tribunal's highest appeals court, which is composed of three cardinal judges, could assess the actions of cardinals and bishops accused of criminal offenses.

The reform is the latest sign that after eight years of preaching about ending corruption and other criminal activity in the Holy See, Francis is taking concrete steps to hold his own cardinals and bish-



ops accountable. Thursday, he passed a different law forcing Vatican superiors to declare their finances are clean, and set a 40-euro (USD 48) cap on

work-related personal gifts received by any Vatican employee.

The new procedural law Friday would presumably make unnecessary any move to strip any other cardinal of his privileges before an indictment is even handed down.

Within the church's in-house canon law system for church crimes, cardinals and bishops are judged only by the pope. That privilege extended also to the criminal code of the city-state's tribunal in ways that led to some anomalies in recent years.

Counting the costs of America's 20-year war in Afghan

BIDEN'S DECISION TO PULL ALL AMERICAN TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN BY THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS, HAS PROMPTED A RECKONING OVER THE WAR'S LOST LIVES AND COLOSSAL EXPENDITURE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 30: America's longest war, the two-decade-long conflict in Afghanistan that started in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, killed tens of thousands of people, dogged four US Presidents and ultimately proved unwinnable despite its staggering cost in blood and treasure.

This final chapter, with President Joe Biden's decision to pull all American troops from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, has prompted a reckoning over the war's lost lives and colossal expenditure.

Here's a look at the spiraling cost of America's campaign — the bloodshed, wasted funds and future consequences for the war-battered nation teetering on the brink of chaos.

price. Since 2001, at least 47,245 civilians have been killed in the war as of mid-April, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University, which documents the hidden costs of the post-9/11 wars.

Gun and bomb attacks targeting civilians surged to previously unseen heights since the intra-Afghan peace negotiations opened in Qatar last fall, according to UN watchdogs who say the conflict has killed a total of 72 journalists and 444 aid workers.

The Afghan government keeps the toll among its soldiers secret to avoid undermining morale, but Costs of War estimates the war has killed 66,000 to 69,000 Afghan troops.

Meanwhile, 2,442 US troops have been killed and 20,666 wounded in the war since 2001, according to the Defense Department. It's estimated that over 3,800 US private security contractors have been killed. The



Pentagon does not track their deaths.

THE COST IN DOLLARS

The US has spent a stunning total of \$2.26 trillion on a dizzying array of expenses, according to the Costs of War project. The Defense Department's lat-

est 2020 report said war-fighting costs totaled \$815.7 billion over the years. That covers the operating costs of the US military in Afghanistan, everything from fuel and food to Humvees, weapons and ammunition, from tanks and armored vehicles to aircraft carriers

and airstrikes. Washington has poured over \$143 billion into that goal since 2002, according to the latest figures from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

Of that, \$88 billion went to training, equipping and funding Afghan military and police forces. Another \$36 billion was spent on reconstruction projects, education and infrastructure like dams and highways, the SIGAR report said. Another \$4.1 billion has gone to humanitarian aid for refugees and disasters.

It has also paid \$296 billion in medical and other care for veterans, according to Costs of War. It will continue to pay both those expenses for years to come.

THE COST OF LEAVING

Although few want to prolong

the war interminably, many fear its end may jeopardise Afghanistan's modest gains in health, education and women's rights, made in the early years as the US expanded the economy and toppled the Taliban, which had imposed tough strictures on women.

Since 2001, life expectancy has increased to 64 years from 56, the World Bank says. Maternal mortality has more than halved. Opportunities for education have grown, with the literacy rate rising 8% to roughly 43%. Life in cities has improved, with 89% of residents having access to clean water, compared to 16% before the war.

Child marriage has declined by 17%, according to UN data. Girls' enrollment in primary school has nearly doubled, and more women have entered college and served in Parliament. These figures are still pale compared with global standards.

business

of the day quote

There is never a good time to cut aid for lifesaving water and sanitation but the middle of the worst pandemic for 100 years must be one of the worst

TIM WAINWRIGHT | CEO, WATERAID, UK

2021 will be another challenging year for us, but it's also the year that our future development strategy will begin to take shape. No matter what challenges come our way, we will continue to maintain our business resilience; not just to survive, but also to sustain

ERIC XU | ROTATING CHAIRMAN, HUAWEI

Mass vaccination is key to tackling the Covid crisis, and this is the best way to ensure that drivers, riders and the broader community can get protected at the earliest. During 2020, our drivers showed, they are essential in keeping India moving and connected, so we want to support them getting vaccinated

PAVAN VAISH | HEAD OF SUPPLY AND DRIVER OPERATIONS, UBER INDIA & SOUTH ASIA

SHORT TAKES

New TikTok CEO is ByteDance CFO

Singapore: Video app TikTok said Friday that its new CEO is Shouzi Chew, the new CFO of its Chinese parent company, ByteDance. He is based in Singapore, where TikTok has an office. Vanessa Pappas, based in Los Angeles, has been the interim head of TikTok since Kevin Mayer, a former top Disney executive who lasted just a few months in the role as head of TikTok, resigned in August 2020. Pappas will become COO. Chew became ByteDance CFO in March.

Twitter logs 20% user growth

San Francisco: Twitter now has 199 million average monetisable daily active users (mDAU), a 20% growth (y-o-y), driven by ongoing product improvements and global conversation around the pandemic. The micro-blogging platform reported \$1.04 billion in revenue for the Q1 2021, up 28% (y-o-y), and a net income of \$68 million. The advertising revenue reached \$899 million, an increase of 32%. "People turn to Twitter to see and talk about what's happening, and we are helping them find their interests more quickly," CEO Jack Dorsey said.

Retail inflation rises to 5.64%

New Delhi: Retail inflation for industrial workers rose to 5.64% in March, mainly due to higher prices of certain food items and fuel including petrol and cooking gas. "Y-o-y inflation for March stood at 5.64% compared to 4.48% for February and 5.50% during the corresponding month of the previous year," the labour ministry said in a statement. Food inflation stood at 5.36% against 4.64% of the previous month and 6.67% during the corresponding month a year ago.

'Non-food credit grows 4.9% in Mar'

Mumbai: Non-food credit grew 4.9% in March 2021 as against a growth of 6.7% in the year-ago month, RBI data showed. Credit growth to agriculture and allied activities accelerated 12.3% in March this year from 4.2% in March 2020, the data on Sectoral Deployment of Bank Credit, March 2021 released by the RBI, showed Friday.



In a year when many businesses have had to shut temporarily or permanently or significantly alter their operations, the effects of the disruption and uncertainty on the workforce have been profound

PETER HADLEY | PRESIDENT (ASIA PACIFIC), ADP

APPLE CAPTURES 42% MARKET SHARE GLOBALLY

Riding on the success of its iPhone 12 series, Apple captured 42% market share in the global smartphone market that posted a record \$113bn in sales for the first time in Q1 2021. Samsung regained its top spot as the biggest OEM manufacturer



Core sectors' output up 6.8% in March, hits 32-month high



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 30: The output of eight core sectors grew by 6.8% in March, the highest in 32 months, driven by base effect-led uptick in production of natural gas, steel, cement and electricity, official data showed Friday.

The growth rate of the eight infrastructure sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity; stood at (-) 8.6% in March 2020.

According to the commerce and industry ministry data, production of natural gas, steel, cement and electricity jumped 12.3%, 23%, 32.5% and 21.6% in March, as against (-) 15.1%, (-) 21.9%, (-) 25.1% and (-) 8.2% in March 2020, respectively.

Coal, crude oil, refinery products and fertiliser segments recorded negative growth during the month under review. During 2020-21 (April-March), output of the eight sectors contracted by 7% as against a positive growth of 0.4% in 2019-20.

Commenting on the numbers, ICRA Ltd Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the 6.8% growth in March, a "32-month high", is due to the base effect.

The low base of the lockdown-hit April 2020 would push up the y-o-y expansion of the index of eight

PATH TO RECOVERY

The growth rate of the eight infrastructure sectors stood at (-) 8.6% in March 2020

According to the commerce and industry ministry data, production of natural gas, steel, cement and electricity jumped 12.3%, 23%, 32.5% and 21.6% last month

The low base of the lockdown-hit April 2020 would push up the y-o-y expansion of the index of eight core industries to a sharp 50-70% in April 2021, with exceptionally high growth expected in cement and steel

core industries to a sharp 50-70% in April 2021, with exceptionally high growth expected in cement and steel, she added.

"However, we have observed a slackening in the sequential momentum in April 2021 in electricity demand, vehicle registrations, and generation of GST e-way bills, revealing the impact of the recent surge in COVID infections and localised restrictions.

"Based on the available data, we project the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) to record a sharp growth of 17.5-25% in March 2021," she added. In February, output of these sectors dipped by 3.8%.

FALCON GROUP DONATES BLS AMBULANCE TO BMC



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: With the objective of supporting the fight against deadly virus in the backdrop of second wave, leading export house of Odisha Falcon Group donated a basic life support ambulance to the Bhubaneswar Municipal

Corporation (BMC).

Falcon Group also donated an electric crematorium machine to BMC with an estimated cost of about ₹1.2 crore.

A flag off ceremony on this occasion has held in the premises of BMC. Parthajet Patnaik, Director, Falcon Marine Exports Limited

'Demand for MGNREGS jobs doubles in April'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 30: Indicating massive reverse migration to villages amid the second wave of Covid-19, a SBI Research report Friday said the demand for work by households under rural employment scheme or MGNREGS has almost doubled to 2.57 crore in April.

There is no official data on internal migration or reverse migration at the national level with a single source information centre. The country has been topping the list of daily coronavirus infection caseload and death toll for more than two weeks now.

The latest numbers released by the Union health ministry this morning said the country recorded a new daily caseload with as many as 3,86,452 new infections in the past 24 hours, pushing the tally to 1,87,62,976, while active cases crossed the 31-lakh mark.

The death toll increased to 2,08,330 with 3,498 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am on Friday showed. The active cases have also jumped to 31,70,228, comprising 16.90 per cent of the total infections.

As cases continue to soar every

REVERSE MIGRATION ON RISE



day, the nation has been snapping at the seams as hospitals are overcrowded with patients gasping for breath as they don't have enough oxygen supplies, and so are crematoriums and burial grounds across the major cities. More than 100 people have died for want of oxygen, while tens of hundreds are dying every day for want of drugs.

"The demand for work by households under rural employment scheme (MGNREGS) has increased

by 92 per cent to 2.57 crore households in April 2021 -- the highest in any April since compilation of the data started in 2013 -- so far, as against 1.34 crore in April 2020.

"This indicates the extent of reverse migration from the lockdown states to their native states," SBI Chief Economic Adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh said in a short note.

Last year's lockdown had all modes of movement fully snapped, forcing tens of thou-

There is no official data on internal migration or reverse migration at the national level with a single source information centre

sands to leave the cities for their home villages on their foot. This had hundreds of them dying on their way under the scorching April-May summer heatwave.

The SBI Research report also said the GST collections, the barometer of economic activity, have likely crossed the ₹1 lakh crore-mark for the past seventh months in a row in April, after breaking into the league last October. Last month, the collections clocked record ₹1.24 lakh crore.

"Our internal simulation model indicates that April GST collections will be in the range of ₹1.15-1.20 lakh crore. This will be quite impressive given the fact that in April, most of the states were under partial lockdowns," he said.

Covid disruption unlikely to impact April GST collections, says report

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 30: Even with the new wave of Covid-19 resulting in 'lockdowns' in 15 parts of the country and impacting business all across, the country's GST collections, the barometer of economic activity in India, is likely to cross the ₹1 lakh crore mark for the sixth time in as many months in April, a SBI Ecowrap report said Friday.

According to the internal simulation model adopted by SBI Ecowrap, the April GST collection is expected to be in the range of ₹1.15-1.20 lakh crore. This is marginally short of the record high GST collection in March of ₹1.24 lakh crore. The optimism about possible GST collection in April, the report says, is from a healthy growth in E-way bill generation.

"This will be quite impressive given the fact that during April, most of the states imposed partial



lockdowns. Also, it is heartening to note that despite the curbs due to the second wave, the All India GST E-way bills till April have reached 4.89 crore and we estimate it to cross 5.5 crore comfortably given the past trends," the report said.

"We believe that any disruption in GST collections will be transient and the states will have comfortable SGST collections."

The present optimism is also on account of 'trend shown last year,

given the SGST collection, allocation of IGST to states and Cess amount, it is around 89% of the budgeted numbers of ₹6.5 lakh crore. There is a substantial portion of IGST which is unallocated.

"If the 50:50 distribution takes place, then states will be only short by around ₹6,000 crore, which is quite impressive given the fact that we were amidst a pandemic and stricter lockdown measures were imposed last year," it said.

Inoculate onsite workers: CREDAI urges state govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 30: CREDAI Bhubaneswar Foundation Friday sought state government's support to arrange group vaccination facility for the on-site workers, engaged in the real estate industry. In this connection, CREDAI Bhubaneswar requested N Thirumala Naik, Labour Commissioner for his guidance in initiating this drive, in a letter.

"Real estate is a key sector in India contributing a lion's share of the GDP and also is one of the largest recruiters of manpower. There are thousands of workers presently employed under different construction projects within the state capital. We are trying for group vaccination of the onsite workers at the earliest to prevent these workers from leaving work and rushing home in panic as seen in major cities like New Delhi and Mumbai," said, Kanitilal Patel,



President, CREDAI Bhubaneswar Foundation.

"India is now facing the second wave of Covid pandemic. The vaccination processes have also started in a phased manner. From May 1, all citizens above 18 will be vaccinated.

Recently Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, announced free Covid vaccination for all within the state. We urged our state government to kindly take necessary action and support in this regard," he added.

'Affordable housing accounts for 45% of sales in Jan-March'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: Affordable housing segment, apartments priced up to ₹45 lakh, is contributing nearly half of the total demand in the primary residential market across eight major cities, real estate brokerage firm PropTiger.Com said Friday.

Addressing a webinar, PropTiger COO Mani Rangarajan said the April-June quarter may witness demand slowdown because of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic but sales should pick up in the second half of this year.

He ruled out price correction in the primary housing market, saying that builders have been operating at a thin profit margin.

In its Real Insight report for

January-March 2021 quarter, PropTiger found out that around 45% of sales in January-March 2021 were contributed by the affordable housing segment.

The consultant further said that around 26% of the sales were in ₹45-75 lakh price bracket, 10% in ₹75 lakh to ₹1 crore and 19 per cent above ₹1 crore. Out of the total sales, 44% contribution came from two-bedroom apartments.

Earlier this month, PropTiger reported that housing sales across eight major cities declined by 5% y-o-y at 66,176 units. Mumbai, Pune, and Bangalore witnessed a fall in sales, while the other five cities -- Delhi-NCR, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad -- saw growth in demand.

"Affordable housing segment



has been a top performer since the last few years. The government is providing tax incentives and interest subsidies to boost demand in this segment and achieve its target of Housing for All," said Mani

Rangarajan, who is also COO of Housing.Com and Makaan.Com. After a huge setback during the April-June quarter of 2020, he said India's resi-

dential property market has been recovering month-on-month on pent-up demand, festival sales, and the rising importance of having homeownership.

Low interest on home loans and stamp duty cut by the Maharashtra government has also helped in the recovery process.

However, Rangarajan said the recent outbreak of the second wave of Covid-19 and semi-lockdown in many states may put a brake on the revival of the housing demand seen during

the last nine months. "Though it is too early to assess the impact, we need to keep in mind that the real estate industry is more prepared this time to handle the situation. The sector has taken a giant leap in the adoption of digital tools for marketing and sales during the last year," he observed.

On the supply side, PropTiger and Housing.Com Research Head Ankit Sood said the new supply grew 49% y-o-y to 53,087 units across these eight cities during January-March 2021. New supply continues to be concentrated in less than ₹45 lakh category, with 45% share from the overall pie, she added.

The mid-segment (Rs 45-75 lakh price bracket) recorded a share of 27% of the total supply in the first quarter.

Affordable housing segment has been a top performer since the last few years. The government is providing tax incentives and interest subsidies to boost demand in this segment and achieve its target of Housing for All

MANI RANGARAJAN | COO, HOUSING.COM

RAHUL, BRAR SHINE



KL RAHUL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 30: Skipper KL Rahul scored a combative unbeaten 91 (57b, 7x4, 5x6) while Harpreet Brar (3/19) accounted for three key batsmen as Punjab Kings thumped Royal Challengers Bangalore by 34 runs in an IPL match here, Friday.

Put into bat, Punjab were in a spot of bother at one stage but Rahul's perseverance, power-hitting of Chris Gayle (46, 24b, 6x4, 2x6) and energy of Brar (25 n o, 17b, 1x4, 2x6) ensured they had a competitive 179/5 on board.

Rahul and Gayle shared a 80-run stand but Punjab's middle order collapsed as Brar, batting at No.7, was the only other batsman to manage a double-digit score. Rahul and Brar then added 61 runs for the unbeaten eighth wicket to rescue the

side after the RCB bowlers had seized the initiative following Gayle's dismissal in the 11th over.

Brar then returned with ball in his hand to dismiss key rival batsmen - Virat Kohli (35, 34b, 3x4, 1x6), Glenn Maxwell (0) and AB de Villiers (3) - as RCB managed 145/8.

The win took Punjab to fifth place behind Mumbai Indians (both teams with 6 points) in the points table from the sixth place, while RCB (10) remained at No.3.

The fiery spells from Riley Meredith (1/29) and Mohammed Shami (1/28) meant that RCB were off to a sedate start as they could score only 36 runs from the Powerplay overs.

The 24-year-old Australian pacer consistently tested the RCB openers and eventually uprooted the stumps of Devdutt Padikkal (7).

Kohli and Rajat Patidar (31) kept the scoreboard ticking.

At half-way mark, RCB were just 62/1 and to make matter worse, left-arm spinner Brar clean bowled Kohli and Maxwell off successive deliveries in the 11th over. The Punjab bowler returned and sent back dangerous De Villiers to leave RCB gasping at 69/4 in 12.1 overs.

From there onwards, it stopped being a contest as the required run-rate kept soaring. Harshal Patel (31, 13b, 3x4, 2x6) played a cameo, but it wasn't enough.

Earlier, the pace duo of Daniel Sams (1/24) and Mohammed Siraj (0/24) bowled tight spells initially to keep the Punjab batsmen on a tight leash, not letting them open their arms.

Rahul looked in good touch, driving the ball elegantly but runs did not

come at a good pace for the side until Gayle exploded. The West Indian creamed five fours, including four in a row, in the last over of the Powerplay, bowled by Kyle Jamieson (2/32).

Runs came thick and fast, boosting the run rate but Gayle could not convert that into a big knock. Jamieson got rid of the Caribbean marauder. The tall Kiwi bowler also got rid of Nicholas Pooran (0) while Deepak Hooda (5) and Shikhar Dhawan (0) also made their way back to pavilion in a jiffy.

The last over fetched Punjab 22 runs with Rahul hitting Patel for two fours and a six before Brar closed the innings with another six.

BRIEF SCORES

Punjab Kings 179/5 (KL Rahul 91 n o, Chris Gayle 46, Harpreet Brar 25 n o; Kyle Jamieson 2/32) beat **Royal Challengers Bangalore 145/8** (Virat Kohli 35, Harshal Patel 31, Rajat Patidar 31; Harpreet Brar 3/19, Ravi Bishnoi 2/17) by 34 runs.



HARPREET BRAR



CSK FACE FIERCE RIVALS MI

30 No. of face-offs between these two sides in IPL where MI came on top 18 times compared to CSK's 12 wins

730 Runs scored by CSK's Suresh Raina - the most by any batsman from these two teams, and he is followed by Rohit Sharma (MI; 658) and MS Dhoni (CSK; 643)

32 Wickets taken by Dwayne Bravo - most among the players from both teams, followed by CSK's Ravindra Jadeja (17)



The last time they faced in IPL 2020, Mumbai Indians came out on top with a 10-wicket win after losing their first face-off by five wickets in the UAE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 30: Rohit Sharma's elegance and Suryakumar Yadav's flamboyance will be pitted against the brute power of Faf du Plessis and grace of Rituraj Gaikwad when heavyweights Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings cross swords in the IPL here, Saturday.

MI and CSK head into the match after identical seven-wicket wins over Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad respectively and both teams would be keen to continue their winning streak.

The biggest positive for Mumbai has been the return to form of opener Quinton de Kock (117 runs), who made a blistering, unbeaten 70 against Rajasthan here.

The faltering Mumbai middle order also clicked in the previous game, on a comparatively easy batting track compared to the one at the Chepauk.

Suryakumar (170 runs) would need to convert his starts while Krunal Pandya (68 runs) played a useful cameo, which would have bolstered his confidence. He would be keen to take it forward from where he left.

Kieron Pollard (81 runs) also dis-

played his hard-hitting skills on Thursday and would be raring to go once again, and so would fellow all-rounder Hardik Pandya (36 runs).

Pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult have been exceptional, particularly at the death, and would need to perform again to contain the in-form CSK batters.

Leggie Rahul Chahar, with 11 scalps, has been MI's leading wicket-taker. He would, however, need support from Krunal and the seasoned off-spinner Jayant Yadav, who was a tad expensive in the last game.

It remains to be seen whether Mumbai persists with Nathan Coulter-Nile or get Ishan Kishan back in the playing XI, which could mean that Pollard would have to chip in with the ball if needed.

Meanwhile, table-toppers CSK have been a force to reckon with this season, having won five of their six games.

Openers Du Plessis (270 runs) and Rituraj (192 runs) have been in top form and would be keen to provide the team with another strong start.

Their middle order has also been among runs. Moeen Ali (148 runs) has adjusted well to the role of pinch-hitter, while the presence of the ever-reliable Suresh Raina (121

runs) gives the team a huge cushion.

Then there are Ambati Rayadu (64 runs) and Ravindra Jadeja (109 runs), who has improved as a batsman and can plunder sixes at will, apart from skipper MS Dhoni (37 runs), who appears content to playing second fiddle these days. Add Englishman Sam Curran and CSK can take any attack apart when in form.

CSK bowlers led by Deepak Chahar (8 wickets) and Curran (6 wickets) have done a splendid job, while Shardul Thakur, with four scalps, could be decisive in breaking partnerships.

Jadeja has also shone with the ball, taking five wickets while Moeen has four and all of them would be hoping to be at their best against Mumbai.

TODAY'S MATCH

CSK

V S

MI

TIME 7.30 PM

Telecast: Star Sports channels

Man United thrash Roma

EUROPA LEAGUE: RED DEVILS ON COURSE FOR FINAL WITH 4-GOAL ADVANTAGE AHEAD OF SEMIFINAL SECOND LEG; ARSENAL LOSE 1-2 AT VILLARREAL IN OTHER LAST FOUR FIRST LEG



MEMORABLE OUTINGS: Edinson Cavani and Bruno Fernandes (inset) celebrates one of their two goals each, Thursday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, April 30: Manchester United handed Roma another heavy beating at Old Trafford, winning 6-2 thanks to doubles from Edinson Cavani and Bruno Fernandes to move in sight of the Europa League final.

Fourteen years after getting thrashed 7-1 in the Champions League quarterfinals, Roma imploded again at the home of the English team after leading 2-1 at halftime in the first leg of the semifinals.

Cavani scored two of United's five second-half goals, with Fernandes adding a penalty to his brilliantly taken first-half opener before Paul Pogba and substitute Mason Greenwood also netted.

United now look set to end their struggles in the semifinals of major competitions under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, having lost at this stage on four occasions in the past 16 months alone - including to Sevilla in last season's Europa League.

The other semifinal is more finely poised, with Villarreal leading Arsenal 2-1 heading into next week's

Villarreal take lead

VILLARREAL (SPAIN): Unai Emery won the first battle against his former club as Villarreal defeated Arsenal 2-1 in the first leg of the Europa League semifinals. Manu Trigueros and Raul Albiol scored first-half goals to give the Spanish club the edge ahead of next week's second leg in London. The English side pulled one closer with a penalty kick converted by Nicolas Pepe in the 73rd, Thursday. Arsenal got the important away goal while playing with 10 men as Dani Ceballos was sent off with a second yellow card in the 57th. Villarreal then had midfielder Etienne Capoue sent off with a second booking in the 80th.

second leg. Both teams finished the game with 10 men.

As a former striker, he can't fail to have been impressed with the performance of Cavani, the 34-year-old Uruguayan who gave a clinic in how to lead the line - albeit against an obliging defense featuring former United player Chris Smalling.

It was Cavani who slipped in Fernandes to lift a finish over Lopez for United's first goal in the ninth minute. And the striker produced an even better pass - with the outside of his right foot - to set free Greenwood for the sixth goal in the 86th.

In between, Cavani steered a shot into the top corner for the equalizer at 22 soon after halftime and tapped in from close range in the 64th to give United the lead after Lopez's replacement, 37-year-old Antonio Mirante, fumbled a shot from Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

It was Cavani, too, who was fouled from behind by Smalling, after the striker had attempted a shot from Marcus Rashford's cross, to allow Fernandes an opportunity for the spot for 4-2. The Portugal playmaker made no mistake, and now has scored 20 of 21 penalties he has taken for United.

Indeed, Roma did well to fight back from conceding early, with Lorenzo Pellegrini converting a penalty of his own after a handball from Pogba before assisting Edin Dzeko for his customary goal at Old Trafford.

MESSI & CO MISS CHANCE TO GO TO TOP OF LA LIGA STANDINGS

Sloppy Barca stunned at home

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 30: Barcelona missed a chance to take over the Spanish league lead, losing 1-2 to Granada at home to squander an opportunity to take control of the title race.

Lionel Messi put the Catalan club ahead in the first half but Granada rallied for a surprise victory with two second-half goals at the Camp Nou Stadium.

The match was postponed from two weeks ago because of Barcelona's participation in the Copa del Rey final, which they won over Athletic Bilbao.

A home win would have given Barcelona a one-point lead over Atletico Madrid with five rounds to go. Atletico, seeking their first league title since 2014, has led the league for most of the season but struggled recently. They had lost 1-2 at Athletic, Sunday.

Barcelona, seeking their fifth league title since 2014, stayed two points back in third place, tied on points with defending champion Real Madrid, who are coming off a home draw against Real Betis last



A NIGHT TO FORGET: Lionel Messi looks dejected after Jorge Molina's (inset) winner help Granada their first win at Camp Nou, Thursday

weekend.

Barcelona host Atletico in a crucial match at the Camp Nou May 8. The Catalan club visit Valencia Sunday, while Atletico visit Elche and Madrid host Osasuna, Saturday

Sevilla also remain in contention, sitting three points off the lead. It's been nearly 15 years since four teams have entered the final stretch in contention for the Spanish league title.

Messi scored his fifth goal in his

last four matches with a low cross shot from inside the area after a pass by Antoine Griezmann in the 23rd minute.

It was Messi's 26th league goal to increase his lead at the top of the scoring chart. He has five more than Madrid's Karim Benzema and six more than Villarreal's Gerard Moreno.

The Argentine playmaker had a great chance to add to the lead shortly after the first goal, but he couldn't find the net from close range in a one-on-one situation with Granada goalkeeper Aaron Escandell inside the area.

Granada, sitting in eighth place, scored with their only two shots on target at the Camp Nou. They equalized through Venezuelan forward Darwin Machis on a break-away in the 63rd, then got the winner with a 79th-minute header by Jorge Molina. The club from southern Spain was missing some of its regular starters because of injuries.

Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman was sent off shortly after Granada's first goal for complaining to the officiating crew.

WT20 venues likely to be curtailed from 9 to 5: BCCI

NEW DELHI: The BCCI is confident that India will host the World T20 in October as per schedule despite a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country but the marquee ICC event could be held in five cities instead of originally nine short-listed venues. As per convention, ICC keeps a back-up country ready and it's been the UAE for the past one year. The IPL is currently on in separate bio-secure environments but BCCI will face perhaps its biggest test of managing a big-ticket ICC tournament in adverse circumstances. "We are still hopeful that with five months left and significant population being vaccinated, we will be in a position to host World T20. Yes, one of the options could be curtailing the nine venues to a maximum four or five," a senior BCCI office bearer told PTI, Friday.

'Shooter Dadi' Chandro Tomar succumbs to COVID-19

NEW DELHI: Shooter Chandro Tomar, nicknamed 'Shooter Dadi', died Friday after battling COVID-19. She was 89. "Mera saath chhoth gaya, Chandro kaha chali gayi (She has left me, Chandro where have you gone?)," her sister-in-law Prakash Tomar, who is also one of the oldest female sharpshooters in the world like Chandro, wrote on her Twitter page. Earlier this week, Tomar was admitted to a hospital after complaining of difficulty in breathing. Tests revealed she had contracted the highly contagious virus that is leading to over 3,000 deaths daily in the country. Hailing from the Baghpatt village in Uttar Pradesh, Tomar was already 60-plus when she picked up the gun for the first time but went on to win many national competitions, even inspiring a Bollywood movie (Saand Ki Aankh) on her life.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chhetri hands over Twitter account

NEW DELHI: Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri has given access of his Twitter account to 'real-life captains' in order to share critical information of COVID-19 patients. In a video message, the talismanic footballer said, "There are some real-life captains who are doing some extraordinary and phenomenal work (in the battle against COVID-19). They give me hope and a lot of motivation, and I want to join them. I want to give the access of my Twitter account to a few of these captains, so that important information can be amplified and reach as many people as possible. I am on your team." Chhetri also urged fellow Indians to contribute and help those in need in whichever way possible.



Wrestlers reach Sofia for Olympic qualifiers

NEW DELHI: A final chance to make the Olympic cut at stake, India's wrestlers have finally landed in Sofia, Bulgaria for the World Qualifiers starting May 6 after missing an earlier scheduled flight because of the travel ban on the country. A group of 10 wrestlers were to leave for Sofia via Amsterdam Wednesday but their tickets were cancelled at the last minute by a Dutch airline. The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) then swung into action and arranged for fresh flight tickets via Paris. The World Qualifiers will be held, May 6-9. India have so far earned qualification in six categories. They are three men's free-style wrestlers - Ravi Dahiya (57kg), Bajrang Punia (65kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg) and three women's wrestlers - Vinesh Phogat (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg) and Sonam Malik (62kg).

