



## EARNEST APPEAL

Actor Deepika Padukone asks fans not to forget the emotional security of people amid surging Covid pandemic

LEISURE P2



## N KOREA WARNS US

N Korea says the US will face "a very grave situation" for Biden calling them a security threat during a recent speech

INTERNATIONAL P10



## BUTTLER FASHIONS TRIUMPH

Jos Buttler's brilliant century helps RR beat SRH by 55 runs in their IPL encounter played Sunday

SPORTS P12

# MAMATA DEFEATS MODI

## BUT SHE LOSES HER OWN SEAT IN NANDIGRAM TO FORMER AIDE SUVENDU!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

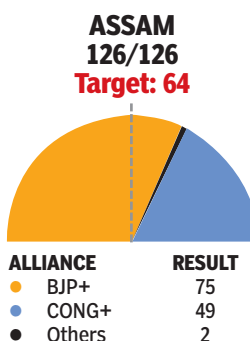
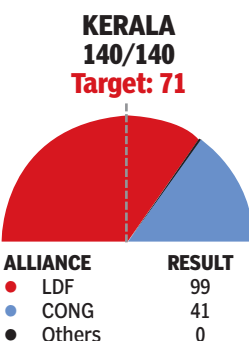
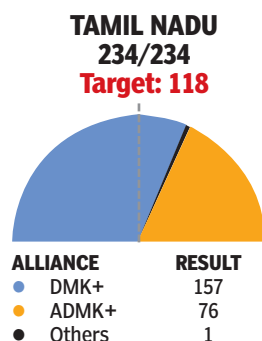
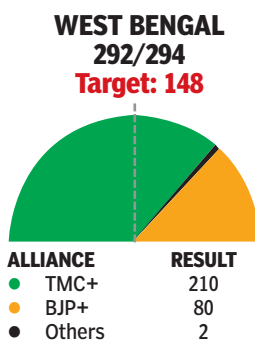
New Delhi, May 2: Mamata Banerjee rode the BJP challenge to take her Trinamool Congress to triumph for a third consecutive term in West Bengal Sunday, while the DMK in Kerala and BJP in Assam, signature victories for ruling parties which decisively beat the anti-incumbency syndrome.

However, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry voted against the incumbents - AIADMK prepared to cede space to the opposition DMK-led alliance in the former and the AINRC-led NDA headed toward power in the latter.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered his congratulations to Mamata Banerjee, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and DMK's MK Stalin.

The cynosure of the elections, held over March and April as the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic picked up pace to finally ravage large parts of the country, was the high-stakes, acrimonious TMC-BJP contest in West Bengal that dominated headlines, drawing room conversations and political discourse.

It was a victory that had Mamata Banerjee imprinted all over with the



**Congratulations to Mamata Didi for win in West Bengal. The Centre will continue to extend all**

**possible support to the West Bengal Government to fulfil people's aspirations and also to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic**

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER



**I respect the verdict of the people of Nandigram, but have got landslide victory in Bengal. For us, combating the COVID-19 situation will be the top most priority. This is victory of Bengal and only Bengal can do it**

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

TMC winning 210 seats in the 294-member House - comfortably over the winning mark of 147. But her own

seat in Nandigram was in jeopardy. The tantalising has-she-won-has-she-not game played out for much of the day

its all, was far behind with just 80 seats.

The BJP had reason to smile in Assam where the ruling NDA was ahead of the Congress-led Grand Alliance winning 75 of the 126 seats. The BJP won 58 seats while its ally AGP bagged 11 seats and the UPPL in six. The Grand Alliance won 49 seats.

In Kerala, Left-led alliance LDF readied for another term, the first time in four decades that the same grouping could form government for the second consecutive time.

The two main constituents of the LDF, the CPI(M) and the CPI, together bagged 99 seats, comfortably over the magic number for power in the 140-member Assembly. Among the prominent losers was 'Metroman' E Sreedharan, who had joined the BJP with much fanfare ahead of the elections.

The DMK and its allies won 157 seats in Tamil Nadu, a feather in its president Stalin's cap. Its partner Congress won 16, while ruling AIADMK and its ally BJP was ended up with just 76 seats in the 234-member Assembly. Victory in 118 ensured a simple majority. Both the Dravidian parties went into the election without their stalwarts - J Jayalitha and M Karunanidhi.

MORE P8

## BHOPAL COVID-19 DEATHS

### Government claims 104, crematoriums say 2,557

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, May 2: Crematoriums here claim that the last rites of as many as 2,557 coronavirus victims from Bhopal district were performed in April, sharply contradicting the BJP-led state government's data which puts the COVID-19 deaths in the district last month at 104.

The mammoth mismatch has given credence to claims of massive under-reporting of COVID-19 fatalities in the city. Managers of two crematoriums and a cemetery in Bhopal told PTI that the last rites of 3811 people, including 2557 coronavirus patients from Bhopal dis-

trict, were performed in the city last month.

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra recently rubbished allegations about the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led government underreporting COVID-19 deaths in the state.

"Altogether 2,052 people were cremated at our facility last month. As many as 1,654 of them had died of coronavirus," Bhabhadra Vishram Ghat crematorium secretary Mamtesh Sharma said.

The Bhabhadra crematorium and the Zada cemetery in Bhopal were initially authorised to perform the last rites of COVID-19 patients in the district, an official said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Their victories are superficial. Truth is we won the polls... lock, stock, and barrel!

## Covid patient kills self

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, May 2: A Covid positive man allegedly committed suicide by jumping into a dam after losing his mental balance over the disease at Rajjharan village under Chhendipada Block in Angul district, Sunday.

The matter came to fore after police recovered his body from a dam under an irrigation project in Rajjharan village, Sunday. The deceased was identified as Santosh Kumar Gochhayat (43) of Rajjharan village. He was detected Covid positive and has been missing from home since Saturday, according to a complaint lodged by the family members in the police station.

Police said that Gochhayat was working as a contractual labourer at the Jindal Plant in Angul. Two days ago, he had tested positive for Covid-19 and was advised to undergo home quarantine. This pushed him into distress and he left home Saturday without informing anyone.

However, his body was found floating by the villagers at around 10.00 am Sunday in a dam of an irrigation project area at Rajjharan following which they informed the police and his family.

On being informed, Nisa Industrial Police Station IIC Priti Manjari Mendholi and police officials recovered the body from the waterbody.

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
MAX	39.0°C	38.2°C	
MIN	26.5°C	26.0°C	
Humidity	84%	83%	Forecast
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Light rain likely

## Govt declares 14-day lockdown from May 5

Along with the lockdown, the weekend shutdown in urban areas will be in force till May 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 2: The Odisha government Sunday declared a 14-day lockdown from May 5 to contain the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the state, an official order said.

In a video message, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said the lockdown will be imposed in the entire state from May 5 (5 am) till May 19 (5 am).

Along with the lockdown, the weekend shutdown in urban areas will also be in force till May 15, he said.

Under weekend shutdown, except for medical outlets and hospitals, everything else is completely prohibited.

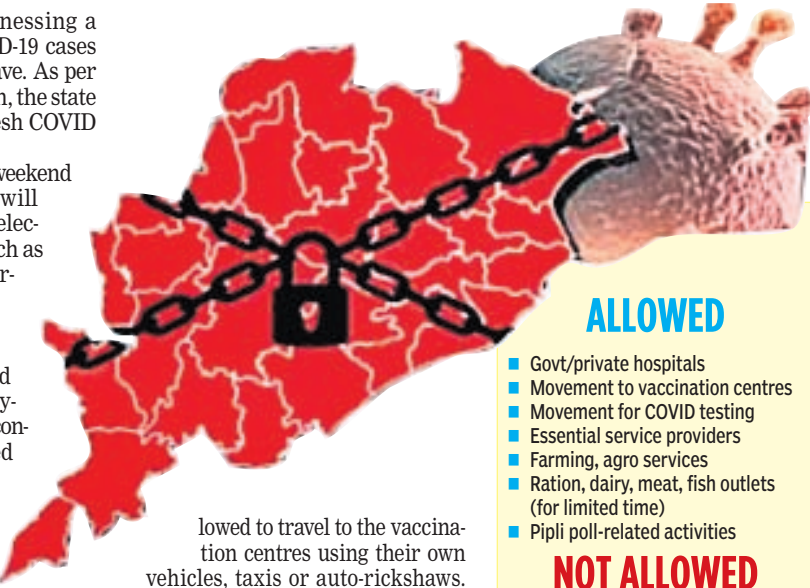
"Even though nobody wanted this strict enforcement, the government has imposed lockdown to protect people and their lives from the pandemic," Mahapatra said.

Like other parts of the country,

the state is also witnessing a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases during the second wave. As per the last health bulletin, the state had reported 8,015 fresh COVID cases Saturday.

The lockdown and weekend shutdown, however, will not be applicable to election-related works such as movement of poll personnel from their place of residence to place of training, disbursement of materials and polling stations. The by-poll to Pipli Assembly constituency is scheduled to be held May 16.

The order issued by Mahapatra further read that the vaccination drive would continue during the lockdown period. Everyone who is eligible for taking the anti-COVID vaccines have been al-



### ALLOWED

- Govt/private hospitals
- Movement to vaccination centres
- Movement for COVID testing
- Essential service providers
- Farming, agro services
- Ration, dairy, meat, fish outlets (for limited time)
- Pipli poll-related activities

### NOT ALLOWED

- Inter & intra-state bus service
- Cinema halls, theatres, gyms
- Educational institutions
- Dining outside, shops after noon
- Non-essential shops
- Religious, social, cultural gatherings
- Taxi, auto rickshaw, cab aggregators

lowed to travel to the vaccination centres using their own vehicles, taxis or auto-rickshaws. Moreover, people who want to go for COVID-19 testing would also be allowed to travel to the government and private COVID-19 testing. However, all intra-state and inter-state movement of public and private buses has been suspended.

Educational institutions, coaching centres, exhibitions, jatra, cinema halls, theatres, market complexes, gyms and all gatherings have been banned. Marriages have been allowed with a gathering of maximum 50 persons and funeral activities with 20 people. However, the government has allowed certain activities during the lockdown period. As per the orders of the SRC, the health sector, financial sector, public utilities and

certain identified private institutions would be allowed to operate. Shops, including ration shops (under PDS), and neighbourhood/roadside/street corner shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booth, meat and fish will be allowed to transact business from 6 am to 12 noon everyday from Monday to Friday but in compliance with social distancing.

## JOURNALISTS NOW FRONTLINE COVID WARRIORS

BHUBANESWAR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday declared journalists as 'frontline Covid warriors' and appreciated the work done by the media during the pandemic. While approving a proposal to this effect, the Chief Minister said, journalists are doing a great service to the state by providing seamless news feed and making people aware of coronavirus-related issues. "They are a great support in our war against COVID-19," a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said. The decision would benefit over 6,500 journalists. "As many as 6,944 working journalists of the state have been covered under the Gopabandhu Sambadika Swasthya Bima Yojana. They are getting health insurance cover of ₹2 lakh each," the statement said. The state government has also announced an ex gratia of ₹15 lakh for the next of kin of journalists who die of COVID-19 while performing their duty, it said. After being declared as frontline warriors, journalists will now also get priority in the vaccination programme, sources said.

REUTERS

New Delhi, May 2: A forum of scientific advisers set up by the government warned officials in early March of a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus taking hold in the country, five scientists who are part of the forum told Reuters.

Despite the warning, four of the scientists said the Centre did not seek to impose major restrictions to stop the spread of the virus. Millions of largely unmasked people attended religious festivals and political rallies that were held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and Opposition politicians.

Tens of thousands of farmers, meanwhile, continued to camp on the edge of New Delhi protesting Modi's agricultural policy changes.

The world's second-most populous country is now struggling to contain a second wave of infections much more severe than its first last year, which some scientists say is being accelerated by the new variant and another variant first detected in Britain.

The spike in infections is India's biggest crisis since Modi took office in 2014. It remains to be seen how his handling of it might affect Modi or his party politically. The next general election is due in 2024. Voting in the most recent local elections was largely completed before



the scale of the new surge in infections became apparent. The warning about the new variant in early March was issued by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genetics Consortium, or INSACOG. It was

conveyed to a top official who reports directly to the Prime Minister, according to one of the scientists, the director of a research centre in northern India who spoke on condition of anonymity.

## CBSE releases Class X board marking policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 2: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Saturday announced a policy for tabulation of marks for Class X board exams which have been cancelled in view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country.

According to the policy, while 20 marks for each subject will be for internal assessment as every year, 80 marks will be calculated on the basis of the students' performance in various tests or exams throughout the year.

"The students will be assessed out of maximum 100 marks for each subject. As per the policy of the board, 20 marks are for internal assessment and 80 marks are for year-end board examinations."

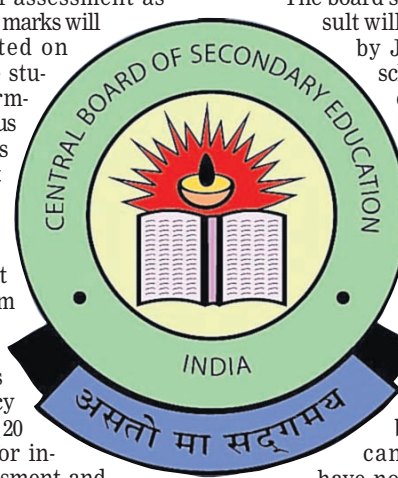
"The weightage in terms of maximum marks for schools which have conducted the tests and exams through the year will be - periodic test/unit test (10 marks), Haly year exam (30 marks) and pre-board exams (40 marks)," CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam

Bhardwaj said.

The board has asked schools to form a result committee consisting of principal and seven teachers for finalising the results. Five teachers from the school should be from Mathematics, Social Science, Science and two languages, and two teachers from neighbouring schools should be co-opted by the school as the external members of the committee.

The board said that the result will be announced by June 20. "The schools will form eight-member result committees by May 5. The provision for school-wise distribution of marks as well as finalisation of rationale document will happen by May 10. For candidates who have not appeared in enough tests through the year, the schools will conduct online or telephonic assessment for them by May 15 and will have to finalise the result by May 25," Bhardwaj said.

The controller said that the marks will have to be submitted to the CBSE by June 11 and the result will be declared by June 20.



## Scientists say Centre ignored warnings amid nCoV surge

INSACOG was set up as a forum of scientific advisers by the government in late December specifically to detect genomic variants of the coronavirus that might threaten public health. INSACOG brings together 10 national laboratories capable of studying virus variants.

INSACOG researchers first detected B.1.617, which is now known as the Indian variant of the virus, as early as February, Ajay Parida, director of the state-run Institute of Life Sciences and a member of INSACOG, told Reuters.

INSACOG shared its findings with the Health Ministry's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) before March 10, warning that infections could quickly increase in

parts of the country, Parida said. The findings were then passed on to the Health Ministry, this person said.

Around that date, INSACOG began to prepare a draft media statement for the health ministry. A version of that draft, set out the forum's findings: the new Indian variant had two significant mutations to the portion of the virus that attaches to human cells, and it had been traced in 15% to 20% of samples from Maharashtra, the worst-affected state.

The draft statement said that the mutations, called E484Q and L452R, were of "high concern." It said "there is data of E484Q mutant viruses escaping highly neutralising antibodies in cultures.

# leisure



## KNIGHTLEY TO EMBRACE HUSBAND'S LAST NAME

Keira Knightley will adopt her husband and musician James Righton's surname. The two have been married for eight years. The actress has submitted documents to the UK's Companies House registering the name change.

## CABELLO URGES ALL TO DONATE FOR INDIA

International pop star Camila Cabello, through a video message, has urged everyone to help India by making donations to help the country which is dealing with the devastating second wave of Covid-19.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
Logic and reasoning will hold court, while creativity takes a backseat today. There are challenges at work, but you are a dynamo and will meet them upfront. All tensions will be relieved by the loving touch of your near and dear. Such is life, sums up Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
This is a great day for expressions your ideas and feelings. Ganesh urges you to open up and share hopes and concerns, dreams and aspirations with your others. Romance is in the air. You could be flying deliciously high on the wings of love, in the company of your sweetheart.

**GEMINI**  
A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesh. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do.

**CANCER**  
Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

**LEO**  
Some promises are like whispers in the wind — never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser.

**VIRGO**  
The extraordinary way in which you do things will earn you many admirers. Superiors at work will laud you for your commitment. Evenings will be fun-filled and entertaining. Look to relax with some meditation or music... or both.

**LIBRA**  
If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening.

**SCORPIO**  
Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The horizons of your thoughts are open and serene. Forgive and forget will be your mood today — even for the most serious mistakes. Generosity was never your Achilles' heel, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
It is your lucky day today! Whatever you will wish for, it will fall into your lap, be it name, fame, money or love. During the second half of the day, you will keep yourself occupied with your hobbies like reading, writing, playing active role in discussion groups or research, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a important winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesh.

# Deepika's unique initiative to deal with Covid crisis

**Mumbai:** Actress Deepika Padukone Sunday shared a list of verified mental health helpline numbers on Instagram, highlighting the significance of strong mental and emotional health in the time of surging Covid pandemic.

"As millions of us (me and my family included) strive to stay afloat, let us not forget that our emotional well-being in this current crisis, is equally important! Remember, You Are Not Alone. We are in this together. And most importantly, there is HOPE! #YouAreNotAlone @tllfoundation," she wrote, along with 12 slides in varied shades of pink that contain the essential numbers.



Several stars have been using their social media platforms to pitch in with assistance for the Covid-affected over the past few days. These include Alia Bhatt, John Abraham, Katrina Kaif, Vicky Kaushal, Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar among others. Almost every B-Town celebrity has also been appealing on social media to encourage fans to help in whatever way possible, not to pay heed to rumours and stay safe.



## This too shall pass, says Kunal

**Mumbai:** Actor Kunal Kemmu is all packed up but has nowhere to go this weekend. He urges everyone to stay at home. Kunal posted a string of pictures on Instagram, where he is seen posing besides a suitcase dressed in a night suit. In the image, the actor is seen surrounded by clothes and sneakers. "All packed up but nowhere to go this weekend? Clean up, tidy things around, hold tight and stay at home. This too shall pass. #StayHome #StaySafe," Kunal wrote as caption. Last year, Kunal was seen in the musical thriller *Malang* and the OTT-release heist comedy *Lootcase*, besides the web series *Abhay 2*.

# Virushka's move to support people in distress

**Mumbai:** Actress Anushka Sharma uploaded a video message Sunday to thank fans for their birthday wishes for her. Anushka, who had celebrated her birthday the day before, said she, along with husband Virat Kohli, plans to start a move-

ment to help people amidst the Covid crisis. "Hello everyone, I hope you all are safe. I just wanted to say a big thank you for all the lovely birthday wishes. You truly made my day special. But in the midst of all this pain and suffering, it did not feel right to celebrate my birthday. I would like to appeal to everyone to unite and support our country in this hour or crisis. Virat and I are coming together to do our bit. We will share the details soon so that you can also become part of this movement. Remember we are all in this together. Guys, please stay safe and take care of yourself," she said on Instagram.



# Film on KISS rugby players bags award at int'l film fest

**BHUBANESWAR:** *Jungle Cry*, a movie based on achievements of 12 students of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), has bagged the Best Film (Jury) award at the 11th Dada Saheb Phalke International Film Festival 2021. The movie narrates the triumphant journey of the students who had made it to the International Junior Rugby

Tournament held in the UK in 2007. Later, they went on to win the prestigious U-14 Rugby World Cup in England. *Jungle Cry* not only sends a message that nothing is impossible in this world, it also promotes education, sports and helps eradicate poverty. The film, helmed by Sagar Ballary of *Bheja Fry* fame and Prashant Shah of Bollywood Hollywood Productions chronicles the unprecedented success of the tribal students. KISS, a home to more than 30,000 tribal students, started giving

rugby training to its students in 2005. After the school team's phenomenal success in the U-14 Rugby World Cup, the institute has been promoting the game across India. Expressing happiness over film's success, KISS founder Achyuta Samanta said, "I am very glad that a movie on how KISSians, braving all geographical, cultural and strategic barriers, won the U-14 Rugby Championship in England in 2007, has bagged a major award at an international event."



A poster of the movie *Jungle Cry*

### PEANUTS



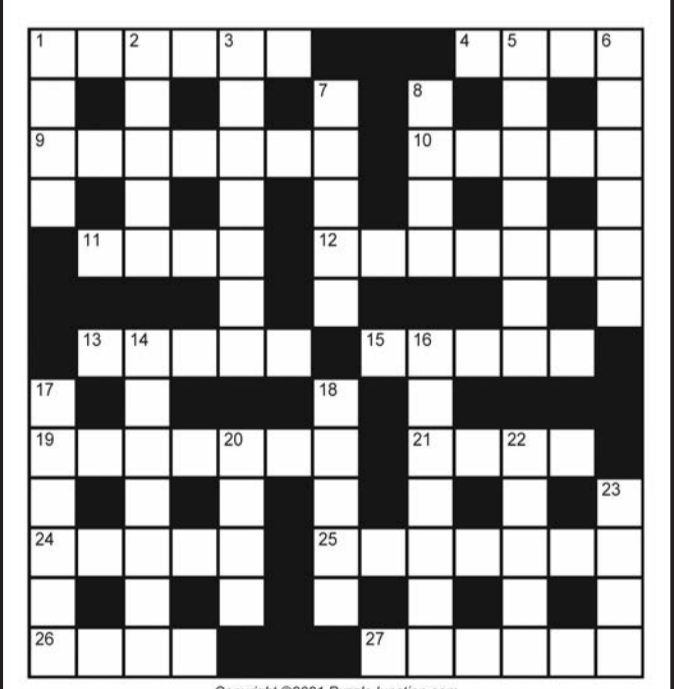
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



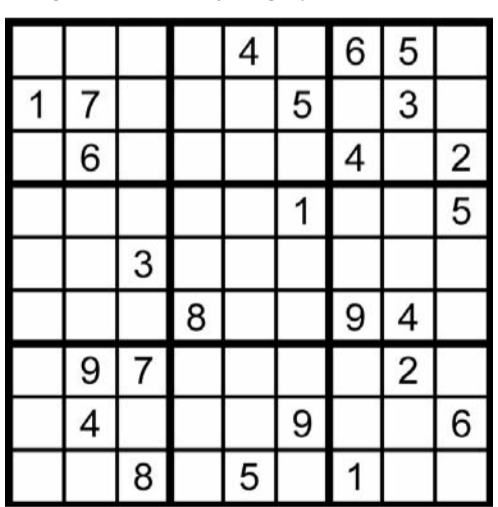
## FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Gibson, for one
  - 4 Samoan capital
  - 9 Not being there
  - 10 Rival of Paris
  - 11 Flightless bird
  - 12 Earnest
  - 13 Model wood
  - 15 Come out of denial
  - 19 Accomplish
  - 21 Baker's unit
  - 24 Leg part
  - 25 Heighten
  - 26 Fizzy drink
  - 27 Cuckoo
  - 5 Vesuvius destroyed it
  - 6 Homes
  - 7 Honkers
  - 8 Small songbird
  - 14 Red-faced attraction
  - 16 Sea World
  - 17 Flubs
  - 18 Fend off
  - 20 Light brown
  - 22 Sleep disorder
  - 23 Lavish party
- Down**
- 1 Heavy cart
  - 2 Raw fish wrapped in seaweed
  - 3 Expensive paintings

### 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



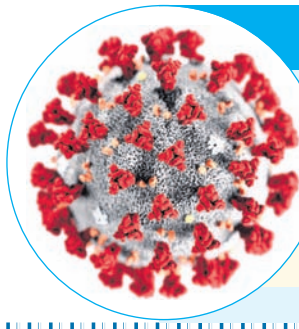
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## SIMIAN CARE

A volunteer from People for Animals feeds monkeys at Khandagiri-Udaygiri hills during the weekend shutdown, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	15,29,25,598	13,02,37,607	32,08,694
India	1,95,57,457	1,59,92,271	2,15,542
Odisha	4,62,622	3,97,575	2,068

# State loses 14 more lives to Covid

**ODISHA SUNDAY REGISTERED 8,015 FRESH CORONAVIRUS CASES, PUSHING THE TALLY IN THE COASTAL STATE TO 4,62,622**



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Odisha Sunday registered 8,015 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the tally in the coastal state to 4,62,622, while 14 fresh fatalities raised the toll to 2,068, a senior Health department official said.

Of the 8,015 new cases, 4,568 were reported from various quarantine centres and the rest were detected during contact tracing, said the official.

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the maximum number of fresh cases at 1,275, followed by Sundargarh at 735 and Angul at 525. Other districts which reported over 100 cases include Cuttack, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Puri. Taking to Twitter, the Health department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of fourteen COVID positive patients while under treatment in hospitals (sic)."

Four deaths were recorded in Rayagada district, two in Keonjhar and one each in Bhadrak, Bolangir, Boudh, Deogarh, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Sundargarh.

Odisha currently has 69,453 active cases, while 3,91,048 people have so far recovered from the infectious disease. The positivity rate stood at 4.50 per cent.

As many as 1,01,80,678 samples have been tested in the coastal state thus far, including 46,560 Saturday, the official pointed out.

On Saturday, the daily surge in Covid-19 cases hit a new record in Odisha when it breached 10,000-mark for the first time.

As many as 10,413 persons tested positive for the infection, taking the total tally to 4,54,607.

The test positivity rate (TPR) shot up to 21.93 per cent with 10,413 were found to be positive out of 47,462 samples tested during the day.

## DGP reviews enforcement drive in 4 districts

Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay Sunday visited four western districts of the state to review the ongoing Covid enforcement drive and plans for implementation of the lockdown from May 5.

The DGP also interacted with policemen engaged in enforcement duties and verified about their wellbeing and operational matters. He also reviewed the sealing arrangements on Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh borders.

Check posts connecting Jharkhand border are maintaining vigil at Mahipani and Sarda under Birsra police limits and Jhirpani bridge and Sankha bridge under Biramitrapur police limits, said an official, adding that border checks connecting Chhattisgarh

are active at Taparia, Lulkidih and Rajgangpur railway station.

Further, border check posts connecting Jharkhand at Old Octroi check post, Telijore, Gotitangar, Salangabahal are functioning round-the-clock in Sundargarh district, the official pointed out, adding that border check posts connecting Chhattisgarh at Kanakpura, Lara Chhak, Bikram Palli in Jharsuguda district are functioning to check the interstate movement.

At least three platoons of force have been deployed for Covid enforcement duty in Rourkela, four platoons each in Sundargarh and Jharsuguda as well as seven platoons in Sambalpur district, added the official.



## 1st Oxygen Exp from Odisha reaches Secunderabad

**Bhubaneswar/Hyderabad:** The first Oxygen Express carrying five tankers loaded with 124.26 tonne of liquid oxygen from Angul reached Secunderabad railway station Sunday, an official said.

The five empty tankers were sent from Secunderabad April 28 and after getting filled with liquid oxygen, the tankers commenced their journey back to Secunderabad Saturday.

According to the South Central Railway (SCR), the liquid oxygen being transported in these tanks is a cryogenic cargo which has many limitations like maximum speed at which it can be carried, maximum acceleration and deceleration and loading restrictions like availability of liquid oxygen tankers and loading ramps. The route mapping of the train along with green corridor is done taking into consideration of all these factors like ensuring adequate clearance along the route in terms of curves, RoBs and FOBs.

The Oxygen Express trains have been started by the Indian Railways to provide safe, secure, hassle-free and fast transportation of oxygen to different parts of the country during these critical times.

Under this initiative, the tankers (both empty as well as loaded) are transported by the railways through Ro-Ro (Roll on-Roll Off) service. The Oxygen Express trains are operated at the request of the state governments.

## INS Chilka to assist Khurda admin in fight against virus

As the country reels under a massive second wave of Covid-19 infection, the Indian Navy, through its training establishment at INS Chilka and under the aegis of Naval Officer-in-Charge (Odisha), has come forward to set up a Covid care facility for the patients of Khurda district, sources said.

The Indian Navy is coordinating with Khurda Collector SK Mohanty to assist the local administration in dealing with the pandemic.

In order to manage the recent surge in Covid cases, a 150-bed iso-



lation centre for mild symptomatic patients has been set up in the trainees' accommodation building at the Chilka Naval Station. Moreover, 15 beds with oxygen facility have also been made available at INHS Nivarni, the hospital at INS Chilka, sources added.

The district administration would arrange doctors and paramedical staff for round-the-clock functioning of the Covid care facility at INS Chilka. The Covid care centre would distribute easy to understand pamphlets among the patients to make them aware of the safety norms. INS Chilka would provide all basic facilities to the patients, sources said.

People infected with the deadly virus can admit themselves to the Covid care centre at INS Chilka through the Community Health Centre at Balugaon, sources added.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# ₹5Cr swindled from NHM account, EOW begins probe

**TRANSACTION DETAILS REVEALED THAT THE MISCREANTS FORGED THE SIGNATURE OF CDMO TO WITHDRAW THE AMOUNT**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of state police has started investigation into the illegal transfer of over Rs 5 crore from the account of National Health Mission of Subarnapur district. A case has been registered in this regard on the basis of a complaint lodged by the District Accounts Manager of NHM Subarnapur, Saroj Kumar Panda.

According to sources, the Chief District Medical Officer of Subarnapur, while going through the monthly bank statement of the account of NHM held at the State Bank of India's Sonapur branch, came across the unauthorized withdrawal of Rs 5,01,50,000 from the account April 7.

Subsequently, Panda met the officials of the concerned SBI branch. They urged the bank manager to supply the transaction details along with the copy of Public Finance Monitoring System. Later, it came to fore that the money was transferred to the account of one agency, M/s Naturals with account number 3123355704. The authorities suspect



The miscreants had also tried to transfer another ₹4.98 crore to an account registered in the name of Goel Steel but failed due to the lack of adequate funds in the account of NHM, Subarnapur.

that some unknown fraudsters hacked the account and took away the money.

The transaction details revealed that the miscreants forged the CDMO's signature to withdraw the amount. Meanwhile, the complainant raised suspicion over the role of bank officials who approved the transaction in contravention to the guidelines issued regarding the withdrawal of money from the official account. As per instructions issued to the bank in 2013, signatures of Collector and CDMO are mandatory before withdrawal of amount beyond Rs 10 lakh from the account. In this case, the transfer was approved considering the forged signature of CDMO. The miscreants also tried to transfer

another Rs 4.98 crore to an account registered in the name of Goel Steel but failed due to the lack of adequate funds in the account of NHM, Subarnapur.

Another such case was observed when Rs 3 crore was withdrawn from the official account of Panchayat Office at Balikuda in Jagatsinghpur in January. EOW has been probing the matter after registering a case.

The local authorities had earlier lodged a complaint in this regard with the Balikuda police January 9.

It was alleged that the fraudsters withdrew Rs 3 crore from the official account held at Arilo branch of Union Bank of India without the knowledge of the BDO.

# SHUTDOWN EFFECT IN TWIN CITIES

Residents of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack confined themselves to their houses as weekend shutdown was clamped in the urban areas of Odisha to check the spread of novel coronavirus. All the roads, traffic junctions and markets in the twin cities wore a deserted look due to the restrictions, Sunday



JANPATH IN BHUBANESWAR

OP PHOTOS



UNIT-1 VEGETABLE MARKET IN BHUBANESWAR



PURIGHAT RING ROAD IN THE SILVER CITY



KALINGA STADIUM ROAD IN THE CAPITAL



COLLEGE SQUARE IN CUTTACK

## CM congratulates state poll winners

POSTS NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik congratulated the leaders of different political parties who won the Assembly elections in their respective states Sunday.

Patnaik took to twitter and congratulated Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and DMK leader MK Stalin in Tamil Nadu for their triumph in polls. The results of the same were announced Sunday.

## Brown sugar worth ₹1Cr seized, 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** The Special Task Force (STF) of Commissionerate police has seized contraband brown sugar worth over Rs 1 crore during a raid at Sahadevkhunta of Balasore. The STF also arrested two drug peddlers while one of their aides managed to give the cops a slip.

The accused were identified as Manas Mukhi of Arad Bazar and Kamalakant Das of Haripur in Balasore district.

Following a tip off regarding deal of huge quantity of brown sugar, the STF sleuths rushed to Sahadevkhunta in Balasore. The sleuths carried out a raid at the spot and arrested both the accused holding plastic bags. Upon searching, cops recovered brown sugar weighing 1.360 Kg from their possession. A case (18/21) has been registered in this regard with the STF here.

Notably, the STF has been able to seize 30 Kg brown sugar and 64 quintals of Ganja since 2020. As many as 100 drug peddlers have been arrested so far.



# Elderly Covid patient's death exposes City hosp's apathy

# Routray demands single facility card for migrants

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Congress leader Suresh Routray Sunday demanded a single universal facility card for migrants of the state which would help them avail government facilities in any part of the country. "There are many migrants living in different parts of the country. If the government can take care of them, it would give them some relief. There needs to be a single universal facility for migrants through which they can get government facilities in any part of the country," he said.

He also said, "Many labourers could be taken care of with such an idea. The migrants otherwise suffer in silence. All the contributions made by the workers in farming as well as infrastructure sector are leading to the development of the state." The leader also said that putting their lives at risk, they had been working hard to ensure the welfare of their families. "Many of them are losing prospects during the pandemic. The government needs to take special care of them," he added.

The leader highlighted that in India, there are around 40 crore

**The leader highlighted that in India, there are around 40 crore workers engaged in different sectors of the economy. He also urged the govt to take special care of these people**

workers engaged in different sectors of the economy. The Congress leader also urged the government to take special care of these people and

make arrangements keeping in mind the alarming rise in Covid cases. In the second wave, the virus is affecting the lungs and people are becoming serious within a span of few days. I want the government to consider my request of increasing beds across the state. You can use stadiums and other areas to expand the treatment centres like other states," he said.

He also added, "You also need to keep oxygen in adequate measures. The government also needs to ensure adequate stock of medicines. The number of patients in the state is rising."

**The family members alleged that the head injury caused due to negligence of the hospital had resulted in Ray's death**

icated Covid-19 hospital of a private medical college in Bhubaneswar, April 25. The family's ordeal started after Ray managed to get admitted to the Covid-19 hospital. They alleged that the hospital staff neither asked for any past clinical details of Ray from the family nor gave them admission-related documents. The family is yet to get any treatment related document from hospital despite repeated desperate requests.

The help desk at the hospital also proved useless as none at the desk was able to inform the family about the actual health status of Ray inside the Covid hospital despite repeated calls during the next two days.

The family was kept in the dark till the intervention of Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) for Zone VI, Prakash Chandra Pal, two days after his admission. The ACP after enquiry informed the family that their patient had succumbed to Covid-19 in morning of April 27.

The family waited till night to get the dead body of Ray for cremation. Quite interestingly, the hospital staff while handing over the dead body informed the relatives that Ray had died during evening, alleged relative. The family also claimed spotting blood stains on back of Ray's head before the cremation at Satya Nagar crematorium here. They had photographs of the dead as proof for their claims.

The family members alleged that the head injury caused due to negligence of the hospital had resulted in Ray's death. However, police sources expressed their helplessness in this regard as, according to them, the family lodged the complaint after cremation of the body which the family members also admitted to.

The family lodged a complaint in this regard with the police, April 28. Speaking to Orissa POST, ACP Pal informed, "We have sought all the details of the patient from the hospital through CDMO. The CDMO will probe the allegations and submit a report to the police. We can take any action only after going through the report."

Meanwhile, Ray's family members told this media that they expect the police would be impartial so as to deliver justice.

## KEEPING VIRUS AT BAY



Srimandir in Puri being sanitised thoroughly, Sunday, to check the spread of novel coronavirus

OP PHOTO

## Cop promoted twice while on leave

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 2:** A police officer was reportedly promoted twice even though he has been on leave over health grounds since 2017.

According to sources, Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay has conducted a departmental probe into the incident and sent a report in this regard to the Home department. Sources revealed that a 1993-batch police inspector, who was posted in Berhampur, has been on leave since July, 2017. However, he had been promoted to DSP (in-charge) and transferred to Kandhamal in December 2017.

The official concerned was made a full-fledged DSP and shifted to the PCR cell of Kandhamal SP as per an order issued in February this year. It is learnt that the police officer was promoted without the recommendation of then Ganjam SP Ashis Singh. "The Ganjam SP did not recommend the officer's name for promotion. But, how did the departmental promotion committee clear the officer's name?" asked a source.

Interestingly, some police officials, who had faced Vigilance raids over certain irregularities, have been posted in the anti-corruption wing after getting promotion, sources said.

# NON-RESIDENT ODIAS PAY HOMAGE TO MANOJ DAS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** The Non-Resident Odias of United Arab Emirates (UAE) paid rich tributes to eminent Odia and English litterateur Manoj Das, who passed away in Pondicherry April 27.

Expatriate group Global Odias for Odisha's Development (GOOD) organised a meeting in this regard in Dubai recently.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting was a symbolic affair and it was organised with strict adherence to the social distancing norms, sources said.

A lamp was lit in front of the eminent writer's photograph and floral tributes were also paid to the departed soul. The attendees spoke about Das' life and his literary ac-



complishments. A special book reading session was also organised during the event.

Among others, Capt. Soumyaranjan Patnaik, president of a shipping company, Priyadarshini Panigrahi, general manager of a consumer goods company, Rajesh Tripathy, general manager of a

leading global business school and Prashant Meher, poet-writer and IT professional were present at the meeting.

The speakers eulogized Das' contribution to Odia and English literature. Das was a person who single handedly raised the profile of Odia language and literature. People

will always remember the eminent writer's down-to-earth demeanour and his magnetic personality, they opined. "Das was a towering personality in Odia literature. It is very important to remember him. That is why we organised the event to pay homage to the famous writer amid the pandemic," said Patnaik.

Paying tribute to Das, Panigrahi said, "Das was probably the most admired author in Odia and a significant writer in English too. Great writers like Graham Greene and Ruskin Bond had praised Das' literary works."

A specially-composed poem in the memory of Das was recited at the event. The poem, composed by Meher, talked about Das' departure and his immortal legacy, sources added.

# Control of hazardous chemicals requires utmost priority: OES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Orissa Environmental Society (OES) organised a webinar on 'Hazardous chemicals in environment and human health' here Sunday.

OES president Sundara Narayan Patro said, "Chemicals are integral parts of living organisms and all the inanimate things of the earth that we use. When industry-made products are governing the economic growth and human well-being, utilization of varieties of chemicals including heavy metals, many being hazardous in nature, exhibits an increasing trend."

Highlighting the issue, Patro said, "As management of hazardous chemicals, emanating from industrial and manufacturing units, automobiles, agro-chemicals, wastes and other sources, are not carried out appropriately very often; they make their entry into our environment, thus polluting the air, water and soil severely with significant adverse effects. These toxic substances subsequently enter into plants and animals, eventually affecting human beings through the air, water and food we consume. These chemicals remain deposited in our systems for long and frequently lead to acute and chronic health disorders."

"Though appropriate legal provisions and strategies are in place for dealing with this menace, their implementation still remains in the distant horizon. Hence, emphasis has to be laid on their minimal use, proper handling and regulation while giving priority to the health

**Emphasis has to be laid on minimal use, proper handling and regulation of chemicals while giving priority to the health and safety issues of both present and future generations**

SN PATRO | OES PRESIDENT

and safety issues of both present and future generations," he added.

On the occasion, Prof. of Chemistry, Trident Academy of Technology and Dean of Science, BPUT Manas Ranjan Senapati narrated various types and sources of hazardous chemicals i.e. food additives, pesticides, paints, batteries, e-wastes, biomedical wastes, fly ash and micro-plastics. They possess the potential for inciting a wide range of diseases including cancer; diseases of the respiratory, digestive, cardiovascular, endocrine, urinary, and nervous systems.

He opined that green chemistry is the ultimate way out that focuses on designing of such products and processes which minimize or eliminate the use and generation of hazardous substances. OES Secretary Jaya Krushna Panigrahi stated that chemicals obtained from natural sources are not detrimental to humans and other organisms. Thus, it is desirable that we make best use of the substances provided by nature to meet our needs, and make minimal use of hazardous substances from synthetic and industrial sources.

## Safeguard the interest of workers: Ranendra

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Workers are the backbone of economy as they play a key role in industrialisation and development of a country. So, efforts should be taken to safeguard their interests, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Swain said on the occasion of International Labour Day, organised by Hind Mazdoor Sabha here.

Swain pointed out the challenges faced by workers in the farm as well as in the industrial sector, especially during the pandemic.

## NGOs TO FEED DESTITUTE DURING 14-DAY LOCKDOWN

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** As the state braces for a 14-day lockdown beginning May 5 in order to curb spread of the Covid-19, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Sunday decided to rope in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for daily distribution of meals to the destitute.

According to sources, at least 500 destitute could be seen struggling to arrange food during the weekend shutdowns in the City. Nine NGOs have been permitted to distribute food to the needy.

"It has come to our notice that some destitute are facing hardship getting meals during the weekend shutdowns in the Capital city. The situation could become worse for them during the 14-day lockdown. A few NGOs have approached us ex-

pressing their willingness to provide food items to the needy during the lockdown. Hence, we've allowed them to distribute hygienic food to the destitute while ensuring strict adherence to Covid guidelines," a senior BMC official said.

The NGOs would distribute food at nine locations in the City including at the Leprosy Colony at Buddhanagar, Master Canteen Square and near Baramubnda bus stand, sources said.

"The ULB has allowed a few like-minded agencies who had requested the city authority for taking such a noble step during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. The initiative will start at the earliest with active cooperation of BMC, civil society organisations and the Commissionerate Police," BMC Deputy Commissioner (Welfare) Kamalakanta Behera said.



RPF personnel conduct an awareness drive on Covid-19 at Puri railway station, Sunday

OP PHOTO

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# Scams mar rural job scheme



FILE PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, May 2:** The implementation of rural job scheme MGNREGS is to create job opportunities for rural people through various labour-intensive projects. However, the scheme has miserably failed to achieve its objective in Nayagarh district due to alleged scams.

According to reports, ₹9.70 lakh has been swindled in the name of some projects in Ranpur block. However, in reality the works have not been executed at all. The issue has been raised in the Assembly twice amid allegations that those involved in the scams are being protected.

According to reports, ₹3.5 lakh was sanctioned for restoration of Champatipur-Shyamghanpur-Chandramadeipur canal road under MGNREGS in 2018-19. Another ₹3,00,000 was provided for construction of steps at Kunjanaban Nuapokhari (pond) and ₹3.20 lakh

for construction of a road from Brajrajpur panchayat office to the village by the same name.

However, these works were not done, but the money was misappropriated by contractors concerned. Works have been shown in pen and papers but not done at all, alleged sources.

Some local residents had taken up the issue with Union Minister of Rural Development and Agriculture, the minister of Panchayatiraj (Odisha government), the joint secretary of the Union Rural Development Ministry (MGNREGS) and the district Vigilance SP.

Moreover, Rayagada MLA Makaranda Muduli had raised the issue in the Assembly, for the first time in March, 2020.

Thereafter, the Odisha government sought an action taken report from the Nayagarh Collector.

Panchayatiraj Minister Pratap Jena said in the Assembly that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, investi-

gation into the matter has been held up and action will be taken only after the report is available.

The Rayagada MLA again raised the issue in the Assembly, February 2, 2021. In his reply, Jena said that the investigation report has been received. "In the report, disciplinary action has been recommended against sarpanch Sukant Chandra Samantary, ex-PEO Suryamani Swain, two GRSSs, Purnamasi Acharya and Laxmidhar Jena," the minister had said.

Reporter of this paper tried to contact District Collector Poma Tudu over phone on the issue, but the calls went unanswered.

Local residents like Sunil Kumar Paikray, Udaynath Samantary and Ranganath Behera said that funds of MGNREGS projects are misappropriated in most cases while work is not done in reality.

They alleged that in spite of the investigation finding some persons allegedly involved in misappropriation of funds, no action is being taken. They lamented that there is a bid to suppress the matter.



Kendu leaf pluckers stage protest in Sambalpur, demanding waiver of GST on the minor forest produce, Sunday

OP PHOTO

# 'Chaiti Parva' revellers attack cops; ASI critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Udala, May 2:** A police team that visited Dewanbahali village in Udala area in Mayurbhanj district to stop 'Chaiti Parva' celebrations was attacked and severely beaten up by the revellers. The incident occurred Saturday night. Three policemen including an assistant sub-inspector were injured in the attack.

According to a source, 'Chaiti Parva' was being celebrated at the village without following Covid-19 protocols. After getting information, a team from Sarat police station went to the village to enforce



the guidelines. There were around 5,000 people participating in the celebrations.

Upon reaching the spot, the cops

asked the people to disperse and stop the celebrations. At this development, a group of people got incensed and started hurling epithets

at the policemen.

When the men in khaki tried to reason with them, things got out of hand. Others also joined the group and started manhandling the cops. Some of the miscreants damaged the police vehicle and smashed the windshield. ASI Biswajit Das Mohapatra was injured critically in the attack while two other policemen also suffered bruises.

The policemen somehow managed to escape from the spot and rushed Biswajit to Udala Sub-Divisional hospital. Later he was shifted to Baripada DHH. Police are yet to make any arrests.

# Akhandalamani shut for devotees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Aradi, May 2:** With the Odisha government declaring a 14-day lockdown from Wednesday due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the state, the famous Shaivite shrine 'Baba Akhandalamani' temple at Aradi in Bhadrak district will remain out of bounds for devotees until further orders. However, devotees are not being permitted at the temple premises from Saturday evening.

Bhadrak district has registered 145 new Covid-19 infections in the last 24 hours. The rate of new infections has been going past the 100-mark for the last couple of days. So the district administration has decided to close down the temple for devotees to check the spread of the disease, officials said. According



to the officials, 'darshan' of the deity in the temple has been suspended from Saturday evening.

However, servitors of the shrine will be allowed entry to perform daily rituals as before, Bhadrak Sub-Collector and Managing Trustee of Akhandalamani temple Pitambar Samal stated.

# Farmers sore over insurance deprivation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Karlamunda, May 2:** Owing to scanty rainfall during the 2020 kharif season, scores of farmers were affected by drought in Karlamunda block of Kalahandi district. To compound their woes, most of them have not been able to avail of crop insurances as their names have not been included in the drought-affected list due to faulty survey.

According to a report, hectares of farmland in the block were not watered properly due to insufficient rainfall. As a result, the paddy wilted and crops were damaged. Farmers also informed that water of the Uteei canal was not available for them when the crop required it.

The crops were covered under insurance. Some areas were exempted from drought-affected places during the survey, they said.

"The result is that farmers in



those areas have been deprived of insurance," alleged Narottam Selma, president of Krushak Kalyan Manch.

Selma and Krushak Kalyan Manch's secretary Suresh Choudhary observed that there has been no clear-cut picture how the areas were identified as drought-hit ones.

They said affected farmers tried to get data about the drought survey

report from officials of Agriculture and Revenue departments. However, it was not provided.

Unofficial sources claimed that villages such as Rinjha, Sargul Malpada, Joradabra, Sapalahara and Teresingha panchayats were included in the list of drought-affected areas.

Farmers alleged that the

Farmer leaders alleged that there has been no clear-cut picture how the areas were identified as drought-hit ones while no step was taken to pay insurance claims to them

Pourakela panchayat, where crops also suffered much damage, was axed from the list of drought-affected areas.

Farmers of some villages in Rishida, Karlamunda and Gajabahal panchayats were hit by the drought, but they were deprived of insurance. There are some who have received the insurance amount, but it is peanuts compared to the amount promised. The affected farmers have urged the district administration to come to their help.

# Similipal Park closed for visitors

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, May 2:** Similipal National Park authorities Saturday announced the closure of the park with immediate effect due to rising cases of coronavirus in Odisha. Similipal Tiger Project director M. Jogamayananda informed of this development in a notice.

People are allowed to visit the park area between November 1 and June 30. The park then is closed down from July 1. However, this year due to the spread of Covid-19 cases, the national park has been shut down close to two months from its scheduled date of closure.

It is learnt that rising cases of Covid-19 have forced the authorities to implement such drastic measures.

Mayurbhanj district reported Sunday 199 new cases of Covid-19, pushing the district's tally to 17,485. The district's active cases and recovered cases stand at 1,872 and 15,519 respectively.

Similipal, best known as a tiger reserve, is located in Mayurbhanj district.

It is a treasure trove of natural flora and fauna. It has been a preferred spot for animal lovers, nature watchers and other visitors.

# WOES OF MIGRANTS



Migrant workers from Malkangiri district queue up to board a bus from Andhra Pradesh to return home, Sunday

# School Transformation programme launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, May 2:** The School Transformation Programme was recently launched by 5T Secretary VK Pandian in Keonjhar through video-conferencing. Nearly 100 government high schools in the district were included in the programme in the first phase.

Termining the programme as the brainchild of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the 5T secretary said it will bring about a complete overhaul of infrastructure at high schools and ensure quality education to rural students.

Under the programme, high schools will have aesthetically-designed classrooms, furniture, smart boards, staff rooms, laboratories, libraries and sports facilities. The students of Class IX and X will be given priority for e-learning. Collector Subham Saxena released the 'Vision Document' regarding the programme.

# 4 more Covid fatalities in Bargaon

**BARGAON:** The second wave of Covid-19 has been playing havoc in Bargaon block of Sundargarh district. The block has so far recorded 13 fatalities due to the pandemic. In the last two days, four persons have died, a report said. According to the report, as Covid-19 positive cases are on the rise, people in the block have been hit by panic. The block administration is equally worried, but has stepped up restrictive measures in several villages on entry and exit of people. Locals said that a 14-day lockdown will break the chain of the Covid infections in the area. It was as if their voices were heard as the Odisha government declared a 14-day lockdown across the state beginning Wednesday.

# Shutdown: Police stop cricket tourney

**BALASORE:** Police stopped late Saturday night a cricket tournament which was underway at Pathan Mohalla village under Soro municipal limits in Balasore district. More than 200 people were present at the venue flouting Covid-19 norms. Also matches were taking place when the weekend shutdown was being observed. Teams from various parts of the district had come to participate in the event. They had all gathered at one place even though they were not allowed to do during the shutdown. Soro police received confirmed information that the cricket tournament had been organised without obtaining prior permission from the authorities. Swinging into action, a team comprising civic officials and police soon raided the cricket ground. However, the participating teams and the organisers fled from the spot the moment police and other administrative officials arrived, a resident of Pathan Mohalla said. Officials, however, managed to catch hold of one of the organisers. He along with the head of the village and an owner of a tent-supplying shop were asked to appear at the civic body's office in Sunday morning without fail.

# Covid-19 hits malnourished kids, pregnant women hard

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, May 2:** A surge in Covid-19 cases is likely to hasten malnutrition among children and expectant mothers in Kendrapara district. This is because availability of nutritious food to the beneficiaries has been severely hit due to restrictions on travel and weekend shutdowns imposed in the district, a report said.

The Odisha government also announced Sunday a 14-day lockdown across the state beginning May 5 and ending May 19. This, many feel will also affect availability of nutritious food like sattu and medicines to the children and pregnant women.

The administration has imposed weekend shutdown in Kendrapara district and directed closure of all business establishment from 2.00 pm till 7.00 am of the next day.

Observers claimed that all these restrictions are likely to affect the health of pregnant women and children suffering from malnutrition. They added that the rise in prices of essentials will also affect the supply of nutritious food to the beneficiaries.

According to reports available from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) department Kendrapara district has 2,147 Anganwadi centres.

These centres supply nutritious

food to 9,952 pregnant women under the supplementary nutrition programme. Moreover, 10,367 pregnant women, 56,562 children in six months three years age group and 52,738 children in the three-six years age group also receive nutritious food.

This apart, the Anganwadi officials trace the expectant mothers and children suffering from malnutrition and enlist their names under the programme.

Reports said that health condition of 2,154 children out of 1,09,337 children in the district are satisfactory while 2,529 were suffering from malnutrition. Among them, 2,275 children were underweight which is indeed alarming. The report said



that 293 children have to beg for food.

Ramani Ranjan Routray, an office-bearer of Zilla Anganwadi Workers and Cooks Association and guardians Abhimanyu Samal and Sukhadananda Tripathy of Derabish, Kalpataru Routray and

Milan Kumar Dhal of Pattamundai, Dhaneswar Bhuyan of Rajnagar said that the Anganwadi centres were reopened after a restrictions were eased after the first wave of the pandemic. The children and pregnant women were given nutritious food and the Anganwadi centres undertook various programmes. However, these centres closed down again after the second wave started wreaking havoc. Many guardians are refusing to send their children to the centres. Also some workers are afraid to visit the centres. As a result, the door to door survey of the children and pregnant women has been severely hit, the report said.

Many migrant workers have returned home and are finding it difficult to provide food to their children due to funds crunch. Prices of essentials have also gone up compounding the woes of the malnourished. It is apprehended that the number of malnutrition-hit children will increase in coming days as the government is yet to make an assessment of the exact spread of the pandemic.

ICDS officer Chinmayee Rath said the Anganwadi workers are working despite closure of the centres. They visit the homes of malnourished children, pregnant women and returnees, providing them with food and medicines.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**CORRIGENDUM TO**  
E-Tender Notice No. ETCPMIVSKP2021019  
Dated : 12.04.2021  
The following modification has been made in the Tender Notice / Tender Document which may be noted.  
Tender Closing Date & Time :  
**MODIFIED AS AT 1200 Hrs. of 20.05.2021.**  
The "Similar Nature of Work" has been modified in the tender document. All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.  
Chief Administrative Officer (Con),  
PR-09/CE/21-22 | Bhubaneswar

**Shradhanjali**  
  
**MURALIDHAR NAYAK**  
Abirbhaha-30.04.1944  
Tirodhana- 23.04.2021  
**Tuma Smrutire...11<sup>th</sup> Day**  
May your departed soul rest in peace  
**Wife: RAJANI RANI**  
*Yours*  
Ashish, Rajesh, Sasmita, Mamata, Pradosh, Ajit, Smrutirekha, Rashmi, Khusbu, Guddu, Lucy & Omm.  
Plot No. 3792/2, GGP Enclave, Pandara, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar - 751006

FOCUS PRODUCT PATENTS

# WTO VS HUMANKIND?



The entire world cannot manufacture the vaccines developed by certain companies and is suffering because of the Product Patents incorporated in the WTO

pandemics. The first three arguments are not convincing for the reasons we need not go into here. It suffices to say that if the developing countries will not be able to manufacture the vaccines after cancelling the patents, then what is the harm in cancelling them? The fourth argument also does not stand because new drugs such as penicillin were developed without Product Patents. The task is to assist the companies across the world, the 'common man,' so to say, to pitch into the manufacture of vaccines by opening the patents.

We have to make our strategy also in the light of the fact that the coronavirus is mutating as is in the nature of all viruses to mutate. The virus of influenza mutates frequently and new vaccines are made to combat it nearly every year. It is certain that the coronavirus will mutate and new vaccines will have to be made in the future. In the light of this, our strategy must be as follows.

One, the government must make huge investments in the development of vaccines. The owner of Bharat Biotech lamented in a TV programme that MNCs developed the vaccines after millions of dollars came in as support from their governments. Bharat Biotech got a paltry Rs 65 crore, according to the information available on the internet. It was indeed given Rs 1500 crore recently but only after it had developed the vaccine on its own.

Two, the government must buy the patent from Bharat Biotech and open the process for the entire world so that various countries can make the vaccine and save themselves. This will hit hard at the market of the MNCs and teach them a lesson.

Three, we must help Bharat Biotech to ramp up the production of Covaxin, cancel the Product Patents and, if necessary, come out of the WTO.

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

The main two Covid vaccines available to us today are Covishield developed by AstraZeneca and produced under its license by Serum Institute of India (SII); and Covaxin developed by Bharat Biotech. SII has to pay one-half of the sale price to AstraZeneca as royalty; or it has to pay Rs 75 as royalty if it sells Covishield to the central government at Rs 150. SII says that it is not economic for it to produce Covishield at Rs 75. For this reason, they have offered to sell Covishield only at Rs 300 to the states and at a higher price to private buyers. In this way the states will be buying Covishield at Rs 300 and subsidising the purchase by Centre at Rs 150. The Centre should act as father of the states. Instead it is acting as their opponent. This is a minor problem, however.

SII is having to pay this huge amount of royalty because we have accepted Product Patents under the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Product Patents stipulate that another company will not produce a patented product even by using an alternate process. Say AstraZeneca has patented a technique of heating the iron rod in order to flatten it. Product Patents stipulate that another company cannot flatten the iron rod by any other method such as cold hammering. The Product Patents was accepted by us as a part of the WTO deal in 1995. Before that time we had Process Patents which allowed anyone to produce the same product by an alternate process. The result of Product Patents is that our companies cannot manufacture Covishield by alternate processes. This is limiting the manufacture of vaccines in India and the vaccines are not available to our people. Indeed, this problem applies to Covaxin also. We shall discuss this next. That be as it may, the entire world cannot manufacture the vaccines developed by

certain companies and is suffering because of the Product Patents incorporated in the WTO.

Bharat Biotech too has offered to sell Covaxin to the Centre at Rs 150 perhaps following the footprints of SII. The Patents rules under the WTO have a provision that the government can invoke the provision of 'Compulsory Licensing' and allow other companies to manufacture the same product under situations of national emergency such as at present. The WTO permits the countries to determine the grounds for granting compulsory licenses and to determine what constitutes a national emergency. However, the government has not invoked this provision. Perhaps the government fears an international backlash from the MNCs and Western countries if this provision is invoked. In that case the availability of foreign vaccines will be reduced and we may fall from the frying pan into the fire. This is a matter of assessment and it is best to leave it to the judgment of the government.

The question of WTO itself remains. We were told in 1995 at the time of signing of the WTO Treaty that the loss to us from the royalties paid due to Product Patents would be more than made up from the benefits from free trade—agriculture goods in particular. It will be a win-win propo-

sition for the developing countries. They will get technologies as well as export markets. Twenty five years later it is clear that the MNCs are charging prohibitive royalties as high as 50 per cent of the price and the developed countries have not opened their markets for our agricultural exports. Thus WTO has become a loss-loss proposition. We are neither getting the technologies nor access to their markets.

A number of arguments are being given to maintain the Product Patents even in the present pandemic. It is argued, one, that the developing countries do not have the capacity to manufacture the vaccines even if the patents were cancelled. The manufacturers have certain technological details that are not disclosed in the patent applications hence opening the patents will not enable new entities to manufacture the vaccines. Two, that the developing countries cannot complete the supply chain. They do not have the raw material and equipment to make the vaccines. Indeed the SII has said that the United States is obstructing the supply of raw material necessary for it to make Covishield. Three, the developing countries do not have the capacity to invest in these plants. Four, drug companies need to make profits to be able to invest in research for future



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

THE GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE HUGE INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VACCINES

Piate  
Tathagata Satpathy

## Losing Relevance

The results of the elections to four states and one Union Territory on May 2, as the seat figures demonstrate, are a resounding rejection of the BJP's brand of politics so aggressively championed by its sole leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The biggest takeaway of the polls is the spectacular victory of Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress which has restricted the BJP's score to a double digit figure. The lead secured by the Trinamool indicates it is a victor on its own right.

Unfortunately for the BJP, the Trinamool reached the mark Amit Shah had bragged during electioneering his party would confidently achieve. Opposition politicians across the country have hailed Mamata Banerjee for inflicting a crushing defeat on the BJP thereby breaking the wheels of the party's juggernaut. Bengal has rejected the politics of communal polarization so aggressively marketed by the Modi-Shah duo throughout the eight-phase polling. The BJP leadership sought to divide the people by repeatedly threatening that if voted to power it would implement NRC and CAA directed against the Moslem population. The results indicate the attempted polarization has not only led to a consolidation of minority votes for the ruling Trinamool, but the majority Hindus seem to have smelt danger in the BJP's pitch for dividing them into lower and upper castes. Bengal results also proved that Hindus across the country did not feel threatened about their existence and therefore did not require shelter under the Hindootva umbrella opened by the BJP. Although Modi and Shah put their complete armoury to use in Bengal, yet they came a cropper, a poor one at that.

The only glitch was the personal defeat of Mamata from Nandigram constituency against Suwendu Adhikari. While her former constituency, Bhawanipore, has elected a lesser known Trinamool candidate, the discredit of losing her own election should go to Mamata alone. She being the sole leader and campaigner for her party, should not have fallen into the trap of a challenge. Instead of leaving her safe seat and obviously getting trapped, she should have retained her old seat and sent some other TMC heavyweight to battle against Suwendu. An old saying that goes, 'choose your battles (in politics) carefully' seems absolutely befitting for her in this event.

The narrative that only Modi could lead India has now fallen by the roadside not only in Bengal but also in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The mauling of the leadership of the BJP in these three states opens a whole new chapter of Indian political narrative. When observed in the context of the BJP's weak victories in Assam and Pondicherry, it is clear Modi is appreciated in only those places where the doddering Indian National Congress (INC) is the sole contender. Both these places, one a state and the other an Union Territory, have had no alternatives. Pondicherry had a breakaway faction of the INC as a regional outfit, All India NR Congress, with which the BJP was forced to tie the knot. Assam on the other hand, has no regional party worth the name while the INC, after the death of its former CM Tarun Gogoi due to Covid, was faceless.

The Dravida politics of Tamil Nadu is far beyond the realms of Modi-Shah duo to comprehend and master. BJP tying up with a dying horse, the AIADMK, sunk their boat in deep water.

Similarly, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) under Pinarayi Vijayan's leadership in Kerala did what none of his predecessors had achieved. Kerala is historically known as a see saw state, changing between the LDF and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) every five years. This is the first time the LDF has won a second consecutive term and has added 8 more seats to its kitty. Here too, the BJP has become irrelevant without being able to win even a single seat. The INC has survived as only a cliff hanger.

The results of these state elections make it amply evident that there is a regional resurgence in India once again. The BJP is capable to handle only the INC. Both these national parties can be observed as losing their relevance very gradually but definitely.

### WISDOM CORNER

- I hear, I know. I see, I remember. I do, I understand. CONFUCIUS
- Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night. WILLIAM BLAKE
- Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting. WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

### WORDSWORTH

#### Muchness

Muchness is much plus -ness, so the quality of being much. It has been around since medieval times, but in Lewis Carroll's time it was no more common than it is today. It has never quite vanished from the language, but survives mainly in this set phrase much of a muchness. Much is a more tricky word than it seems: it often has a sense of "to a great extent; a great deal"; it can also introduce some comparison or relative quantity where the idea of large size is missing, as in adjective phrases like so much, how much, and that much. So you can say things like "The nights were so much longer than the days" or "We can't push the analogy much further". It's that relative sense that turns up in the saying, where there's no strong idea of large size, merely of comparison, so that much of a muchness means no more than "very similar" or "just about the same".

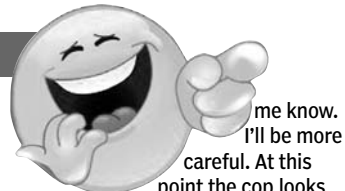
#### Mudlark

This word can have other meanings but it mostly refers to the riverside equivalent of the beachcomber, who searches in the mud at low tide for anything of value. These days they will probably be hobbyists armed with metal detectors, looking for items of historical interest. Their predecessors were of a quite different sort. The word came into use near the end of the eighteenth century to refer to destitute Londoners who picked over the Thames foreshore. They sought out lumps of coal, bits of old iron and other detritus that fell from ships in the port of London — anything which they could sell for a few pence. They were most vividly evoked by Henry Mayhew, in London Labour and the London Poor: They may be seen of all ages, from mere childhood to positive decrepitude, crawling among the barges at the various wharfs along the river; it cannot be said that they are clad in rags, for they are scarcely half covered by the tattered indescribable things that serve them for clothing; their bodies are grimed with the foul soil of the river, and their torn garments stiffened up like boards with dirt of every possible description.

### LOL

#### Confuse traffic signs

A cop pulls over a carload of non-cops. Cop: "Sister, this is a 65 MPH highway -- why are you going so slow?" Sister: "Sir, I saw a lot of signs that said 22, not 65." Cop: "Oh sister, that's not the speed limit, that's the name of the highway you're on!" Sister: Oh! Silly me! Thanks for letting



me know. I'll be more careful. At this point the cop looks in the backseat where the other nouns are shaking and trembling. Cop: Excuse me, Sister, what's wrong with your friends back there? They're shaking. Is something terrible? Sister: Oh, we just got off of highway 119.

### SPECTRUM SOCIETY

## Apartheid in the Holy Land

In a new, well-documented report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) asserts that the Israeli government is enforcing a systemic policy to maintain the 'domination by Jewish Israelis over Palestinians.' The nearly seven million Palestinians in the occupied territories and within Israel itself face collective persecution under an apartheid system.

Pointing to Israeli laws that enshrine extra-political rights for Jews over Arabs living in the same areas, HRW concludes that the Israeli government is 'privileging Jewish Israelis while repressing Palestinians, most severely in the occupied territory.' While several hundred thousand Israeli settlers live in the occupied territories as full Israeli citizens, the report notes, 2.7 million Palestinians are concentrated in dense population centers under military rule.

Even more ominous are Israel's emerging population-control measures. "The authorities have adopted policies to mitigate what they have openly described as a demographic 'threat' from Palestinians," the report avers. The report's central point is that, after decades of HRW (and others) warning that Israel's control of Palestinian life might lead to apartheid, the 'threshold' has now been crossed. Indeed, one of the more startling new findings in the report is that even the Palestinians living in Israel are subjected to a form of apartheid rule.

Apartheid and collective persecution are both crimes against humanity under the 1948 Rome Statute. There, apartheid is defined as an "institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other," while persecution describes "the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights" of a group of people. After the collapse of South Africa's apartheid regime three decades ago, the world must not tolerate another, and particularly not one located at the heart of a volatile region, where it will serve as a catalyst for extremism and conflict.

In this context, Western inaction would undermine peace as well as Israel's own long-term security. Given the special US-Israel relationship, it will be incumbent on President Joe Biden's administration to remind Israeli officials of just how grave the accusation of apartheid is. Far from acting on a "longstanding anti-Israeli agenda," as Israel's foreign minister claims, HRW is echoing similar findings by Israeli human-rights organisations. B'Tselem, for example, released a report in January titled: "A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This Is Apartheid." It based that conclusion on more than 30 years of reporting by human-rights groups documenting abuses in occupied Palestinian territories and within Israel.

HRW's damning report also in-

directly implicates US and Western leaders who have been complicit in Israel's illegal actions and persecution of the Palestinian people. Having repeatedly affirmed that human rights is a pillar of its foreign policy, the Biden administration now faces an important early test of its commitment to these norms.

Unlike its predecessors, the Biden administration cannot bury its head in the sand and give Israel another free pass. Failure to act would call into question all of Biden's recent criticism of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Russia, China, and others for human-rights and rule-of-law violations. It would reinforce a widespread belief among Arabs and Muslims that the US and Europe practice a double standard in the Middle East, rewarding friends and punishing foes. If Biden ignores Israel's systemic discrimination against Palestinians, the US will be open to accusations of hypocrisy and cynicism.

Equally important, Biden has committed his administration to eradicating systemic racism at home — a daunting and worthy challenge. Americans of all colours, including many African-Americans and American Jews, already see a direct connection between promoting human rights abroad and upholding them at home.

Moreover, if Biden and other Western leaders turn a blind eye to state-sanctioned "systematic discrimination," they risk encourag-

ing the Israeli right to commit even more abuses, from annexation of Palestinian land to expulsion of Palestinians from their homes.

The HRW report is a clarion call for Israel's patrons to wake up to the dangers they have encouraged. Biden must not cede the moral high ground that he currently occupies relative to his predecessor. Donald Trump did Israel no favours by giving Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu everything he wanted. By empowering the most anti-democratic and xenophobic forces in Israeli society, the Trump administration brought Israel to its current crossroads. The world is watching to see if America and the West will find Israeli apartheid as repugnant as they found South African apartheid. If they do, their support for Israel will have to be contingent on Israel's respect for Palestinians' dignity and humanity.

Biden's current prestige gives him leverage. But the time to use it is now. The US must pressure Israel to end its apartheid policies and its occupation of Palestinian lands. A change in US policy is a crucial first step toward creating a Palestinian state that can live in peace alongside its Israeli neighbour.

The writer is a Professor of International Relations and Middle Eastern Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Fawaz A. Gerges

THE WORLD IS WATCHING TO SEE IF AMERICA AND THE WEST WILL FIND ISRAELI APARTHEID AS REPUGNANT AS THEY FOUND SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID

## 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

Orissa POST  
B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

#### Covid complacency

Sir, The government's complacency during the fall in the number of Covid cases earlier this year was unwarranted. When the country was witnessing a decline in the cases after the first wave, the government, instead of ramping up its healthcare infrastructure, was busy in elections. The second wave of the pandemic showed how unprepared the government was. In the second wave, people were dying due to unavailability of oxygen supply and lack of beds forced the infected people to get treatment in cars and on roadsides. The logistics for supply of oxygen was so poor that the government had to import oxygen concentrators and cryogenic containers. This also showed how 'self-reliant' India was in the healthcare system. Still, hope the government learns a lesson or two.

Sambit Palei, BHUBANESWAR

#### Top court's sane advice

Sir, A sane advice has been given by the Supreme Court to the High Courts to avoid unnecessary off-the-cuff remarks. At the same time the apex court has also clarified that "sometimes judges make some observations to elicit proper response from lawyers, which should not be considered as those remarks against anyone." Observations by judges while hearing the cases can never be construed as anything favouring any particular party. The SC has taken note of the HCs of Madras and Delhi for being very critical against the Centre and various authorities. The top court advise comes in the wake of hearings on COVID-19 related pleas after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and a senior advocate Ranjit Kumar appearing for Centre and Bihar expressed their views that off-the-cuff remarks by judges give the impression that the authorities concerned are doing nothing. The Madras High Court has asked the Centre "what were you doing for last 14 months without a plan to fight COVID-19 second wave?" The scientists have been working round the clock and have succeeded to a large extent in inventing vaccine for the disease. COVID-19 is not just confined to India. It is global. While deaths are tragic, a large number of patients have been discharged from hospitals after testing positive. These achievements cannot be brushed aside as of no consequence. Courts are supreme and it is the duty of every citizen to respect the courts in letter and spirit. But when harsh questions like "what were you doing?" are hurled, people generally think of courts as to what the courts are doing when they take decades to dispose of a case.

KV Seetharamaiah, HASSAN (KARNATAKA)

# 3.19L CANDIDATES ELECTED UNOPPOSED: SEC

7 members of zila panchayat, 2,005 members of kshetra panchayat and 178 candidates for the post of pradhan of gram panchayats are among those elected unopposed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, May 2:** A total of 3.19 lakh candidates have been elected unopposed in the Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections, the State Election Commission said Sunday. As many as 3,19,317 candidates have been elected unopposed in the panchayat elections. This includes seven members of zila panchayat, 2,005 members of kshetra panchayat and over 3.17 lakh members who have been elected unopposed in this panchayat election. As many as 178 candidates for the post of pradhan of gram panchayats were also elected unopposed, the SEC said in a statement.

In Ballia, Shailesh Singh (45), a candidate for the post of pradhan of Rampur village panchayat under Maniyar block, died Sunday morning. Family sources said Singh's condition deteriorated suddenly and he was taken to a doctor who declared him dead.

Counting of votes for the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh began Sunday morning, an official said.

The counting of votes will continue till all the ballots are counted. The entire process may take two days, a senior SEC official told PTI.

The State Election Commission (SEC) had said the candidates and their agents will be allowed to enter the counting centres only if they have tested negative for COVID-19 in the 48 hours prior to the commencement of the counting process or taken both doses of the vaccine.

## UP PANCHAYAT POLLS



## Covid norms flouted at counting centres

Despite assurances of the Uttar Pradesh government that Covid rules will be strictly followed, scenes from the counting centres Sunday showed social distancing and mask-wearing rules being violated in several districts. The Supreme Court was assured by the State Election Commission, which also said that senior officials will ensure that Covid protocol is being strictly followed. However, as counting for the

crucial Panchayat polls progressed, all safety protocols were demolished in the UP districts. Clashes with the police were witnessed when attempts were made to ensure social distancing. Shocking visuals surfaced on social media showing Covid-19 norms go for a toss at counting centres in UP. Halfway through the counting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, once again, directed the district

Magistrates and police chiefs to ensure social distancing during counting of votes. In Kanpur, 14 agents tested positive for Covid in the antigen test outside the counting centre at Ghatampur, while 17 tested positive in Rampur. Two agents tested positive in Hamirpur and eight in Balrampur. Four agents tested positive in Hathras. All of them were removed from the counting centres.

The Supreme Court Saturday had refused to stay the counting process. In a special urgent hearing on a holiday (Saturday), a bench of Justice A M Khanwilkar and

Justice Hrishikesh Roy passed the order after taking note of several notifications and assurances of the SEC that the COVID-19 protocols will be followed at all the 829 counting

centres. The court directed that there will be a strict curfew in the entire state till Tuesday morning and no victory rallies will be permitted.

It also asked the SEC to fix the responsibility for observance of COVID-19 protocols at the counting centres on gazetted officers.

The bench directed the poll panel to preserve the CCTV footage of the counting centres till the Allahabad High Court concludes its hearings on the related petitions before it. It also ordered that the government officials, candidates and their agents will have to produce RT-PCR test reports to show that they are COVID-19 negative before entering the counting centres.

The SEC official said generally counting of votes takes place in eight-hour shifts.

The SEC said at every counting centre, a health desk will be established where a doctor will be present with medicines.

Those showing symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cold and cough will not be allowed at the counting centres. Everyone entering the counting centre has to undergo thermal scanning, the SEC said. It categorically stated that there will be a complete ban on victory processions.

Voting for the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh ended April 29 with a 75-per cent voter turnout in the fourth and final phase.

Lakhs of candidates were in the fray for over 7.32 lakh seats in the gram panchayat wards, 58,176 in the gram panchayats, 75,852 in the kshetra panchayats and 3,050 in the zila panchayats in the statewide elections held over four phases.

# Srinagar in red-zone as fresh guidelines issued

Srinagar has been the worst affected district of Jammu and Kashmir by the COVID-19 pandemic, recording 546 deaths and over 35,000 cases



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, May 2:** The Jammu and Kashmir State Executive Committee Sunday put Srinagar district in the red category as it issued revised guidelines for effective containment of Covid-19 in the union territory.

According to the new guidelines, all educational institutions, public parks and coaching centres would continue to remain closed till May 31, while public transport is allowed to ply with 50 per cent seating capacity and only 50 per cent shops allowed to open in markets and malls, Chief Secretary and Chairperson SEC B V R Subrahmanyam said in an order here. Jammu and Kashmir, which is presently under lockdown since Thursday evening, recorded its highest single-day spike of 3,832 fresh Covid-19 cases Saturday, taking the tally to 1,79,915, while a record 47 deaths raised the toll to 2,330. Srinagar has been the worst affected district of Jammu and Kashmir by the Covid-19 pandemic, recording 546 deaths and over 35,000 cases.

Monday, the four districts of Srinagar, Jammu, Budgam and Baramulla would remain under lockdown till Thursday morning.

In another order along with 20-page guidelines, the chief secretary said any violation of the guidelines would attract penal action under the Disaster Management Act.

"These instructions are being issued for regulating activities that are to be permitted during the extended period of Covid related restrictions... these instructions shall remain in force till further orders, unless modified or withdrawn earlier," the order said.

It said no permissions or passes are required for activities which were already permitted under earlier orders.

With regard to educational institutions, the order said all universities, colleges and technical or skill development institutions would remain closed for imparting on-campus or in-person education to students till May 31, except for courses or programmes that require physical presence of students on account of laboratory or research or thesis work and internship.

It said all paid public parks would remain closed for visitors for the same period, while public transport would be permitted to ply only at 50 per cent of its authorised seating capacity.

Only 50 per cent shops in major market complexes or malls within the municipal limits or urban local body limits would be open on alternate basis through a rotation system, the order said.

It said the ceiling on the number of people permitted to attend gatherings/functions shall be 20 in case of funerals and 50 for all other kinds of gatherings, whether indoors or at outdoor venues.

The order said there shall be no restrictions on entry of passengers, returnees or travellers coming to Jammu and Kashmir, whether by road, rail or air.

However, they will have to compulsorily undergo a Covid-19 antigen test through any of the prescribed methods as per the protocol of the government, it said.

# CMG constituted to tackle J&K Covid crisis

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, May 2:** The Jammu and Kashmir government Sunday constituted a Crisis Management Group (CMG) to deal with Covid situation in the union territory.

An official statement said, "The government of J&K has constituted a Crisis Management Group (CMG) to monitor the rapidly evolving Covid-19 situation and to take preventive, controlling and mitigating measures."

"The 5-member CMG will consist of Chief Secretary as Chairman, and Financial Commissioner (Finance), Financial Commissioner (Health), Principal Secretary (Home) and Principal Secretary (PWD) as members. The Principal Secretary to the Lt. Governor will be a special invitee. The group will interact with other officers and medical specialists

as necessary," said the statement.

Elaborating the action plan of the body, the official statement informed that the CMG will meet daily and more often if necessary to review the rapidly evolving Covid-19 in terms of cases, testing rates, positivity, mortality, recovery, hospital occupancy and other parameters. The CMG will also review the oxygen and medicine requirement and availability at all health institutions. It will take immediate measures for preventing the spread, control the infection and manage the availability of resources, monitor the vaccine rollout and fine tune vaccination strategies to ensure speedy and complete coverage at the earliest.

Lastly, the body will take other steps with the overall goal of controlling the spread of the disease.

## FRONTLINE FIGHTERS



Workers sanitize Lok Bhavan area during second wave of coronavirus pandemic, in Lucknow, Sunday

# Probe ordered into alleged death due to oxygen shortage

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jammu, May 2:** The Jammu and Kashmir government ordered a magisterial probe Sunday into reported deaths at a local hospital May 1 which occurred allegedly due to oxygen shortage.

An order issued by Raghav Langer, divisional commissioner Jammu, said that the Financial Commissioner (Health and Medical Education) has appointed Divisional Commissioner of Jammu as the enquiry officer to look into the circumstances leading to the incident at

# Cong calls for white paper on UP Covid Care Fund



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, May 2:** The Congress Sunday demanded the Uttar Pradesh government government release a white paper on the state's Covid Care Fund amid a massive surge in coronavirus cases.

In a statement issued here, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu said the Covid Care Fund was created in April 2020 through which people from different sections of society deposited money. The MLA funds were suspended for a year, and 30 per cent salary of the ministers and legislators cut, and deposited in the Covid Care Fund. It was said that the money would be used to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lallu said no one knows as to where this fund is in the second wave of Covid-19. "Where is the fund being spent now? People in the state are facing shortage of oxygen, medicines and basic facilities. In this scenario, where is the Covid fund being spent? Nothing is known," Lallu said adding that the govern-

ment should release a white paper on this issue.

The UP Congress chief also claimed that the money meant for being used to provide medical treatment to the people was diverted. As a result in the second wave of Covid-19, the government has left the people to die. Today because of the laxity and insensitivity of the Yogi Adityanath government, every citizen is fighting the Covid pandemic at their own level and in their own capacity, Lallu said.

He also said the UP Chief Minister in a written reply to the UP Legislative Assembly had said that till July 2020, Rs 412 crore was deposited from various sources, of which Rs 252 crore was used to buy medical equipment and to help the migrant labourers. "Where the rest of the Rs 160 crore has gone is not known. Any information about money being deposited in the COVID Care Fund has not been made public. Why is it so?" Lallu questioned in the statement.

# IIT-Kanpur to analyse Covid curve

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, May 2:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to engage the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K) for rigorous analysis of the Covid curve in all the 75 districts of the state.

He said that such analysis would help in pandemic management.

In view of the Covid peak, experts all over the country have been coming up with analysis. We should coordinate with IIT-K for district-wise rigorous analysis of UP, he said during a review meeting of the Covid situation in the state.

A senior state government official said that various experts had been doing analysis using technology and mathematics to indicate how and when the Covid infection or recovery graph would rise and fall.



Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

The IIT-K already has been doing such analysis and has made them public. It would do more, as and when, the state government asked it to do so.

Professor Abhay Karandikar, director of IIT-K, said, this is a part of a national super model where along with leading experts, doctors, and IIT-K Prof Manindra Agrawal have been working on predicting the peak. The prediction of peak done district wise has shown remarkable fit with observed data and hence reliable estimates can be

done. This will help plan the medical emergencies. However, this is just a model and we need to be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Official sources said that of the 159 deaths in April, 95 persons were above 60 years of age, while 46 persons were between 46-60. Of the total cases, 95 per cent (18,572) cases came from urban areas, while 834 cases were from rural areas.

Yogi Adityanath further said the state was now also getting oxygen from Jammagar (Gujarat), Durgapur and Barjora (West Bengal) and

Rourkela (Odisha) to augment supply. Retired doctors, retired army personnel, experienced paramedics, and final year students of medical and paramedical courses should be engaged as there would be the need for trained human resource in hospitals in view of the fast-changing scenario, he said.

It would be better if we have a manpower bank in the state so that we can deploy people as and when they are needed, he said.

He asked the medical education minister to work on the idea.

In the last 24 hours, the number of recoveries (38,826) was higher than the number of fresh Covid-19 cases (30,317), the Chief Minister said. The Chief Minister also asked for creating a system for ensuring medical attention to pregnant women in the state. They should get ambulance and medical help immediately when required, he said.

# Compliance of guidelines being ensured: Srinagar airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, May 2:** As pictures of people flouting Covid-19 guidelines at Srinagar airport went viral on social media, officials Sunday said that strict compliance of social distancing norms by passengers and staff to minimise human contact is being ensured.

"We are ensuring strict compliance of social distancing norms by passengers and staff to minimise human contact. We urge all passengers to maintain

a social distance and wear masks. We are continuously striving towards improving the passenger experience," an official of the airport said.

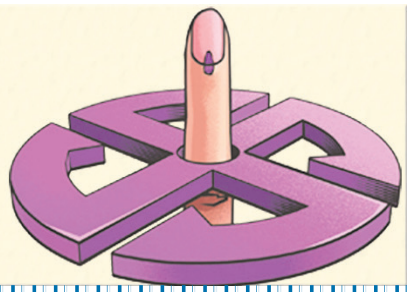
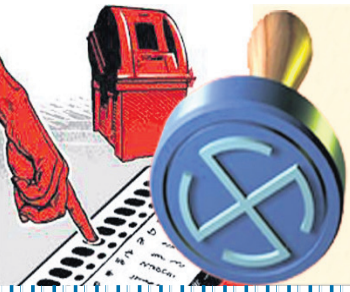
The remarks came after pictures of passengers, flouting Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines by defying social distancing at the airport, went viral on social media. The official said that airport authorities are taking all precautionary measures against the spread of the virus by regularly sanitising the terminal buildings and



high contact surfaces. He, however, appealed to the passengers to cooperate. "We need a little

bit of help from you. Please follow the guidelines. We all know the present pandemic situation, we advise passengers to follow social distancing guidelines and personal hygiene to keep everyone around safe and healthy while our teams are making sure to keep the airport safe for them," he urged.

The official said some flights were cancelled due to low passenger load and the announcement by airlines created panic among them and they rushed towards airline counters which led to commotion for a few minutes.



# MAMATA'S HAT-TRICK

**Congratulations to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on her victory in the Assembly Elections. My best wishes for her next term**

**RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER**

**We humbly accept the people's mandate. Sincere gratitude to our workers and the millions of people who supported us on the ground. We will continue to fight for our values and ideals.**

**Jai Hind**

**RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER**

**Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Congress candidate Gayatri Devi from Sahada (Bhilwara) and Manoj Meghwal from Sujangarh (Churu). The Rajsamand by-election was also fought unitedly and the BJP's victory margin here has been quite normal**

**ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER**

**All credit goes to the Bengal tigers for the win**

**UDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM**

**This verdict is for protecting the culture and civilisation of Assam. The hopes and promises we made during the election campaign will be fulfilled in the next five years**

**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | BJP LEADER**

**W**est Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday said described her party Trinamool Congress' "landslide victory" in the state assembly poll as a vindication of its fight to protect communal harmony. Belying all expectations, the TMC was headed Sunday for a landslide victory in as-

Modi had staked his prestige in declaring his party was set to win over 200 seats after the first few phases of the unprecedented eight-phase election. Modi and his home minister Amit Shah campaigned extensively throughout the state spending almost every other day of a one-and-a-half month long bruising campaign trying to breach the Trinamool Congress' fortress Bengal. Countering the high voltage cam-

## Quitting this space, says Prashant

**KOLKATA:** Election strategist Prashant Kishor, who guided the TMC to what is likely to be a spectacular victory, announced Sunday he is "quitting this space", after firing a parting shot at the Election Commission, accusing it of being an "extension of BJP". "I am quitting this space," he said during an interview with a TV channel after trends showed a landslide victory for the TMC, the party whose election strategy he helped craft for the assembly elections. "I have never seen a more partial Election Commission, it did everything to help BJP. From allowing use of religion to scheduling poll and bending rules, EC did everything to help the BJP," he said, calling the poll panel an "extension" of the saffron party. Talking to the channel, Kishor stuck to his stand that the BJP was a formidable force in West Bengal. He said he was confident about the TMC's victory despite the BJP's attempt to "build a massive propaganda" that it was winning. "The result may look like one-sided but it was a tough fight. BJP is a formidable force and will be," he said. "If BJP does any better, I must quit this space!", he had said.



sembly elections, overcoming the might of the BJP after a bitter campaign that had turned into a virtual duel between Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "It's a victory for Bengal's people it's Banglar joy (Bengal's victory)," Banerjee told her party workers. The actual results were a bitter let down for the BJP as Prime Minister

paing where, besides Modi and Shah, the saffron party fielded half a dozen Chief Ministers and Union Cabinet ministers, the TMC presented just Banerjee with the slogan 'Bangla nijer meyekel chay' (Bengal wants her daughter) and a promise to expand its popular 'Duare Sarkar' (government at your doorsteps) programme. In the run up to the elections,



the BJP had Banerjee on the defensive by campaigning against corruption involving TMC leaders and the 'cut money' (bribery) culture affecting citizens' everyday life. It also gained traction by playing the caste and religious cards. However, Banerjee's appeal to 'Bangaliana' (Bengaliness), a cultural identity

which defies divisions of caste and religion, seem to have worked with the electorate. As did the image of a lone woman combatting a galaxy of leaders from the Hindi hinterland trying to breach her fortress. The prime minister's repeated taunts of "Didi, O Didi" in his speeches too did not go down well in a state

where women traditionally enjoyed a high social and economic status and where women remained a major vote bank for the TMC. The repeated use of Hindi too was not liked in a state where linguistic identity politics had in recent years gained ground. However, the clincher for Banerjee came when she

changed tracks ahead of the last three phases of polling by attacking Prime Minister Modi for leaving India unprepared for the second COVID wave. She has also blamed an influx of 'outsiders brought by the BJP' for the spread of coronavirus in the state.

## CELEBRATION AMID RESTRICTIONS



DMK workers celebrating at their party head quarters, in Chennai. Considering inputs of victory celebrations at some locations during counting of votes for 822 Assembly seats in four states and one Union Territory, the Election Commission Sunday directed heads of political parties to prohibit these celebrations

## Lotus fails to bloom in Kerala, 'Metro man' misses train too

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 2:** Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's statement that the Bharatiya Janata Party, which had won one seat in Kerala in the 2016 Assembly polls, would see its account getting closed this time, has come true with the Centre's ruling party failing to secure any victory despite fighting hard in three constituencies. In the 2016 Assembly polls, veteran BJP leader and former Union Minister O Rajagopal had won the Nedom Assembly constituency in the Thiruvananthapuram district, getting the BJP its first-ever seat in the state. As counting started Sunday, the BJP was leading in three seats - Nedom, Palakkad and Thrissur. At Nedom, former BJP state President Kummanam Rajasekheran was maintaining a lead till the last few rounds when former CPI-M legislator VSivankutty, who lost to Rajagopal the last time, breezed past him. In the process, Congress MP from Badagara K



Muraleedharan, who was asked to take on the responsibility to prevent the BJP repeating its victory, came a poor third. Sivankutty won with a margin of over 5,000 votes. But the major upset was the loss of 'Metroman' E. Sreedharan in Palakkad. Leading right from the time counting started, he, however, lost steam in the last few rounds and eventually his Congress rival and

## BJP RETAINS ASSAM

**GUWAHATI:** The BJP had reason to smile in Assam where the ruling NDA was ahead of the Congress-led Grand Alliance with leads and results in 80 of 126 seats. The BJP won eight seats and was ahead in 53 while its ally AGP was poised to bag 11 seats and the UPPL in eight. The Grand Alliance was ahead in about 40 seats and its spearhead Congress in 27 of that. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the people had blessed them. "We can say for sure that the BJP will form government in Assam. We are coming back to power with our partners AGP and UPPL," Sonowal told reporters.



## NDA SET TO FORM GOVT IN PONDY

**T**he National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will be forming a government in Pondicherry, a senior BJP leader said Sunday. According to party national General Secretary CT Ravi, the BJP has been successful in retaining power in Assam, and further, "is on its way to form a NDA Government in Pondicherry". "This is no mean feat by our party. I congratulate our Karyakartas and leaders for these victories," he said. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Pondicherry consists of the All India N.R. Congress, which contested in 16 of the Union Territory's 30 seats, the BJP nine and the AIADMK five. According to Election Commission, the All India N.R. Congress has won 10 seats, followed by the BJP winning four and leading in two. On the other hand, the rival front member DMK has won three seats and leading in three while the Congress has won two. Four Independents have won their seats and two are in the lead. The BJP has been finding it difficult to make a mark in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry all these years.

# STALIN'S LONG WAIT ENDS

**A**ssured of electoral victory in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, DMK President MK Stalin Sunday said "a new chapter is set to begin in the organisation's history". Interestingly, it is not only DMK's history that a new chapter is being added. The death of two tall leaders of the state - AAIADMK's J Jayalalithaa in 2016 and DMK's M. Karunanidhi in 2018 - resulted in new chapters being written in the state's politics. On its part, the DMK



Stalin will take up the issues

of the people. "Stalin has the administrative experience as he has been a former Deputy Chief Minister, minister in Karunanidhi's cabinet and was also the Mayor of Chennai," Elangovan said. Continuing further, he said Stalin also knows to run the party and has been successfully doing that for the past several years. Further, Stalin and Karunanidhi cannot be compared as the latter's experience and the initial days were different, he said.

# Cong 'lost' polls but not its morale to be people's voice

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**New Delhi, May 2:** The Congress Sunday said it has "lost" elections in Assam, Kerala, Pondicherry and West Bengal but has not "lost its morale or resolve" to continue to be people's voice in these tough times. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the party would deliberate on its failures and do course correction after internal deliberations. "We have lost the election in Assam, Kerala, Pondicherry and West Bengal but we have neither lost our morale nor our resolve or determination to continuously become people's voice in these times of unprecedented calamity. "The Congress Party will definitely study the results and all the reasons diligently and we are committed to correct our mistakes and



File photo

do appropriate course correction," he told reporters at a virtual press conference. His remarks come after the Congress failed to make its mark in the states of Assam, Kerala and West Bengal, but its alliance with DMK won in Tamil Nadu. Surjewala said the party has accepted the verdict with humility and a sense of responsibility. "People's mandate is the final word in democracy. People of West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have given their democratic mandate for next five years. We accept the verdict with humility and a sense of responsibility. We recognise that the election results are not as per our expectations, particularly those of Assam and Kerala," he said in a statement. He also said the party recognises that its workers and leaders worked unitedly on the ground and gave

their best, yet the people's verdict was not in their favour. Congress Party and its workers have a deep rooted personal connect with the people of the country particularly in the five states where elections were held, he said, and added that they will work harder to build greater faith and affinity between the party and the people. "We shall fulfill our commitment of a responsible opposition in both the states of Assam and Kerala to raise people's issues, inside and outside the Assembly," he said. He also congratulated the people of West Bengal, and claimed that they have "decimated the vicious divisive agenda as also money and muscle power of the Bhartiya Janata Party. They have chosen peace and brotherhood over division and hatred." The Congress said while the Bengal results are a matter of con-

cern, discussion and deliberation for the party, it "congratulates Mamata Banerjee on her resounding victory and for her determination in defeating the BJP". It also congratulated BJP and Sarbananda Sonowal for their victory in Assam as also the LDF and Pinarayi Vijayan for their victory in Kerala. "We sincerely hope that they will work to fulfill all their electoral promises as also do their best to protect lives in times of pandemic," he said. The party also thanked the people of Tamil Nadu for their "wisdom and faith" and congratulated M K Stalin for leading the DMK-Congress alliance to victory. "We are committed to work together, fulfill the election promises and ensure the State's development," it said.



## of the day quote

Adityanath is seeing peace and success of government schemes. If he removes his glasses, then he will see the ground reality -- hue and cry everywhere, pain on the faces of the public



**AKHILESH YADAV** | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

The people in the country want change in the central leadership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah should resign. Also Kailash Vijayvargiya and Dilip Ghosh



**YASHWANT SINHA** | TMC VICE-PRESIDENT

Congratulations @MamataOfficial on your stupendous victory! Let us continue our work towards the welfare of people and tackling the Pandemic collectively



**SHARAD PAWAR** | NCP PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### Lockdown for one week in Haryana

**Chandigarh:** Amid a sharp surge in coronavirus cases, the Haryana government Sunday announced imposition of a week-long lockdown in the entire state beginning May 3. Earlier, a weekend curfew was enforced in nine districts -- Gurugram, Faridabad, Panchkula, Sonapat, Rohtak, Karnal, Hisar, Sirsa and Fatehabad -- from 10 pm on Friday till 5 am Monday.

### Man held with 58 vials of Remdesivir

**Ahmedabad:** A man has been arrested with 58 vials of Remdesivir he was trying to sell at exorbitant rates in Ahmedabad given the high demand of the drug in the treatment of COVID-19 patients, police said Sunday. The accused, Rahul Patel, had procured these injections from Hyderabad, a Chandkheda police station official said. After arresting Patel on Saturday, a case was registered under sections 420 (cheating) and 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code and under the Essential Commodities Act and the Disaster Management Act, he added.

### Covid -ve must to enter Punjab

**Chandigarh:** The Punjab government Sunday announced not more than two persons can travel in a car, 50 per cent staff strength at government offices and a negative coronavirus test report must for those entering the state as part of added curbs amid rising COVID-19 cases and fatalities. These restrictions, in addition to the earlier ones, will remain in effect till May 15, according to the Punjab Home Department's directive to all deputy commissioners and district police chiefs.

### ₹14k to ferry nCoV victim's body

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Police has arrested an ambulance driver for allegedly charging Rs 14,000 to ferry the body of a person who died of COVID-19 to the crematorium, officials said Sunday. Kandhi Lal was charging the exorbitant amount for a distance of six km, they said. Saturday, after receiving a tip-off about the driver, the police laid a trap and arrested the driver.



This is the time to rise above politics and work for the state. It is our endeavour that the Centre and state governments work together to fight against COVID-19

**ASHOK GEHLOT** | RAJASTHAN CM

## RAINWATER HARVESTING

Himachal Pradesh is constructing forest ponds to check the depletion of groundwater and to harvest rainwater. Under the Parvat Dhara scheme, the government has initiated rejuvenation of water sources and recharging aquifers through the forest department with an outlay of ₹20 crore



# 'Lives at risk': Delhi hospitals raise O<sub>2</sub> SOS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** At least two hospitals in Delhi sent out desperate SOS calls to authorities Sunday to replenish their dwindling oxygen stocks as smaller facilities continued to battle an acute shortage of the live-saving gas amid spiralling coronavirus cases.

Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Mayiya Sunday sounded an alarm about their depleting stocks around afternoon, saying 50 people, including four newborns, were "at risk".

An official of the hospital said in the afternoon there are around 80 patients, including those suffering from Covid-19, at the hospital. It also has 15 newborns, he said.

"There are 50 people, including four newborns, on oxygen support. They are at risk," he said.

The hospital does not have a liquid oxygen storage tank and depends on oxygen cylinders from a private vendor. "It has become a daily fire-fight in the absence of a continuous supply. We require around 125 oxygen cylinders a day,"



A COVID-19 patient on oxygen support being taken in an auto rickshaw to a hospital for treatment, as coronavirus cases surge in Ajmer, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

the official said. The hospital also took to Twitter seeking help from authorities. AAP MLA Raghav Chadha tweeted in reply: "We have arranged five D Type oxygen cylinders for Rainbow Children's Hospital, from our Rajghat Response Point. The Govt's oxygen reserves are extremely limited due to reduced oxygen supply to Delhi, but

we are doing everything possible to avert any untoward incident."

Dr Deepali Gupta from Triton Hospital in Kalkaji said they have been struggling to arrange oxygen for their neonatal intensive care unit. "We have been scrambling for oxygen for over a week. A major tragedy may occur if a continuous supply is not ensured soon," she

said. AAP leader Chadha also said the government has issued 5 D-type cylinders to the hospital from Rajghat Response Point. "Hospital officials are on their way to collect it. Sincerely hope that oxygen supply chains of hospitals get restored quickly for this fire-fighting is unsustainable," he tweeted.

Saturday, 12 Covid-19 patients, including a senior doctor, had died at south Delhi's Batra Hospital after the facility ran out of medical oxygen for around 80 minutes in the afternoon. The tragic incident occurred in less than two weeks of twenty coronavirus patients dying at Jaipur Golden Hospital and 25 at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital amid oxygen crises in the national capital.

Several hospitals in Delhi continue to grapple with a shortage of oxygen, as coronavirus cases continue to spike every passing day.

The Delhi government has been demanding 976 metric tonnes of oxygen from the Centre against the existing allotted 490 MT quota.

Friday, the city administration received just 312 MT, an official said.

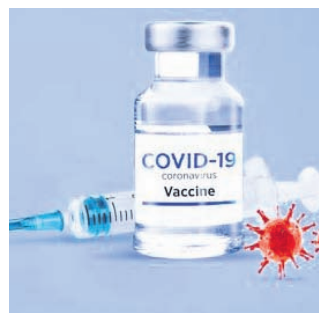
# Launch free mass vaccinations, appeal 13 Opposition leaders

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 2:** Thirteen top Opposition leaders Sunday jointly called on the Narendra Modi government to launch free mass vaccinations to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, as well as ensure oxygen supplies to hospitals across the country.

"In times of the uncontrollable surge of the pandemic across our country, we call upon the Central government to focus all attention on ensuring the uninterrupted flow of oxygen supplies to all hospitals and health centres across the country."

"We call upon the Central government to immediately launch a free mass vaccination programme across the country," said Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, former Prime Minister and Janata Dal-Secular supremo H. D. Deve Gowda, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool



Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Hemant Soren, DMK chief M.K. Stalin, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav, Communist Party of India-Marxist chief Sitaram Yechury and Communist Party of India's D. Raja, in the joint statement.

"The budgetary allocation of Rs 35,000 crore for the vaccination programme must be utilised for this," they added.

# Will return to India in a few days, says Poonawalla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla, who has been in the UK on extended stay to evade alleged threats in India over ever-increasing demand for COVID-19 vaccines, has said he will return in a few days.

In an interview to 'The Times', Poonawalla had alleged that he had been receiving threats in India and that he and his family had left the country for London after unprecedented "pressure and aggression" over the demand of COVID-19 vaccines.

In a late night tweet Saturday, he said the production of Covishield -- the Oxford/AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine that is being produced by Serum Institute in India -- was in full swing at SII's facility in Pune. "Pleased to state that COVISHIELD's production is in full swing in Pune. I look forward to reviewing operations upon my return in a few days,"



Poonawalla said.

He, however, did not give a timeline for his return to India.

On his stay in the UK, the Serum Institute of India (SII) head said that he "had an excellent meeting" with all partners and stakeholders in that country.

Indian authorities are scrambling for vaccines, medicines and oxygen as the nation faces its worst health crisis. The number of daily coronavirus cases in India slipped slightly, a day after becoming the first in the world to cross the 4 lakh mark.

India's new coronavirus cases rose by 3,92,488, while deaths from the infection jumped by 3,689 over the past 24 hours, according to health ministry data released Sunday. Total case load now stands at 1.95 crore with 2,15,542 deaths.

"I'm staying here for an extended period because I don't want to go back to that situation," The Times cited Poonawalla as saying in an interview published Saturday.

"I don't want to be in a situation where you are trying to do your job and just because you can't supply the needs of X, Y or Z, you really don't want to guess what they are going to do," he had said, adding, "Everything falls on my shoulders, but I can't do it alone."

In the interview, when asked about the impact of the 'Kumbh Mela' and the Assembly elections on the second wave in India, Poonawalla had said his "head would be chopped off" if he answered on such a "sensitive" matter.

# Govt may incentivise medics, nurses for joining Covid duty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday reviewed various measures to augment human resources for effective management of the COVID-19 situation and possible steps discussed include incentivising students and pass-outs of medical and nursing courses to join the pandemic duty, sources said.

The final details are likely to be announced Monday, they added. "Decisions may include delaying NEET and incentivizing MBBS pass-outs studying for it to join the COVID-19 duty. The decisions may also include utilising services of final-year MBBS and nursing students," a government source added.

The medical personnel doing the COVID-19 duty may be given preference in the government recruitment and financial incentives



as well, the source said.

The review meeting took place amid reports of healthcare personnel feeling overwhelmed in some parts of the country due to the surge in the COVID-19 cases, with testing facilities also being under a strain.

In an earlier review meeting with Modi, institutions like Army had highlighted that they had opened temporary hospitals and their medical staff is also treating civilians wherever they can.

# Temporary hosps near industrial units soon

GOVT EXPLORES FEASIBILITY OF CONVERTING EXISTING NITROGEN PLANTS TO PRODUCE OXYGEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** The government expects to make 10,000 oxygenated beds available in a short period of time by making temporary hospitals near industrial units which produce oxygen of requisite purity to boost the supply of the life-saving gas to fight COVID-19.

Following multiple meetings held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday to review the COVID-19 situation, a statement said the government has also explored the feasibility of conversion of existing nitrogen plants to produce oxygen, and various such potential industries where the existing nitrogen plants may be spared for production of oxygen were identified.

After a meeting on the usage of gaseous oxygen, the government noted that many industries like steel plants, refineries with petro-

chemical units, industries using rich combustion processes and power plants among others have oxygen plants that produce gaseous oxygen. "This oxygen can be tapped for medical use," it said. The strategy being used is to identify industrial units which produce gaseous oxygen of requisite purity, shortlist those which are closer to cities, dense areas and demand centres and establish temporary COVID care establishments with oxygenated beds near that source.

A pilot for five such facilities had already been initiated, and there is good progress on this, the government said, adding that this is being accomplished through PSUs or private industries operating the plant and with the coordination of the central and state dispensations. "It is expected that around 10,000 oxygenated beds can be made available in a short pe-

riod of time by making temporary hospitals near such plants. State governments are being encouraged to set up more such facilities with oxygenated beds to deal with the pandemic," it added. Modi also reviewed progress on the setting up of pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants and was informed that around 1,500 PSA plants are in the process of being established through the contribution of PM Cares Fund, PSUs and others. He directed officials to ensure speedy completion of these plants, the government said.

Exploring the feasibility of conversion of existing nitrogen plants to produce oxygen, another meeting chaired by Modi discussed the process of converting the existing PSA nitrogen plants for the production of oxygen.

In the nitrogen plants, carbon molecular sieve (CMS) is used whereas zeolite molecular sieve

(ZMS) is required for producing oxygen, the government noted, adding that by replacing CMS with ZMS and carrying out a few other changes such as oxygen analyzer, control panel system and flow valves among others, existing nitrogen plants can be modified to produce oxygen.

"On deliberation with industries, so far 14 such industries have been identified where conversion of plants is under progress. Further 37 nitrogen plants have been also identified with the help of industry associations," it said.

A nitrogen plant modified for the production of oxygen can be either shifted to a nearby hospital or, in case it is not feasible to shift the plant, it can be used for on-site production of oxygen, which can be transported to the hospital through specialized vessels or cylinders, it asserted.



Flamingos are seen in huge numbers behind NRI Colony in Talawe wetland, Nerul, in Mumbai, Sunday.

# Using O<sub>2</sub> concentrator without medical guidance can be harmful

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 2:** Experts have warned that using oxygen concentrators without medical guidance can be very harmful.

Speaking at a webinar organised by PIB, Covid Co-ordinator, St. John's Medical College Hospital in Bangalore, Chaitanya H. Balakrishnan said, "Patients with moderate pneumonia induced by Covid-19 -- with oxygen saturation less than 94 -- can benefit from supplemental oxygen given through oxygen concentrator, but only till they get hospital admission. However, patients using it themselves without suitable medical ad-

vice can be harmful."

Oxygen concentrators are simple devices which do precisely what its name promises - they take in ambient air and increase the oxygen concentration, by filtering out and throwing away nitrogen.

These oxygen concentrators work the same way in supplying oxygen needed by the body such as oxygen tanks or cylinders, with the use of a cannula, oxygen masks or nasal tubes. The difference is that, while the cylinders need to be refilled, the Oxygen Concentrators can work 24 x 7.

According to a WHO training manual on pulse oximetry, if the oxygen saturation is 94 per cent or



lower, the patient needs to be treated quickly. A saturation of less than 90 per cent is a clinical emergency.

Now, according to the latest clinical guidance for management of adult Covid-19 patients, issued by the Union Health Ministry, an oxygen concentration less than or equal to 93 per cent on room air requires hospital admission, while that below 90 per cent is classified as a severe disease, requiring admission in ICU.

The government advises that given the prevalent situation in the wake of the second wave, one must do whatever he or she best can, in order to try and replenish oxygen levels, in the event of delay or in-

ability in getting hospital admission as per the clinical management protocol.

Speaking on the appropriate usage of concentrators, Professor and Head of Department Anaesthesia, B. J. Medical College, Pune, Sanyogita Naik said, "Oxygen concentrators can be used only in moderate cases of Covid-19, when the patient experiences drop in oxygen levels, where the oxygen requirement is a maximum of 5 litres per minute."

Naik further stated that oxygen concentrators are also very useful for patients experiencing post-Covid complications which necessitate oxygen therapy.



Frontline workers, such as medical personnel, police, teachers and other workers put their lives on the line during the height of the pandemic to keep the country going. We salute these heroes and heroines  
CYRIL RAMAPHOSA | PRESIDENT, SOUTH AFRICA

## SPACEX RETURNS 4 ASTRONAUTS TO EARTH

SpaceX returned four astronauts from the ISS Sunday, making the first US crew splashdown in darkness since the Apollo 8 moonshot. The Dragon capsule parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Panama City



### of the day quote

I don't think that a place in the state of Israel should be extraterritorial, that the state doesn't have any control over it, doesn't manage it, isn't responsible for it  
ELI BEN DAHAN | FORMER DEPUTY RELIGIOUS SERVICES MINISTER, ISRAEL



They want to bring in a university, which is indeed a serious university on the international level, but its charter requires that it represent the worldview of the Chinese Communist Party  
GERGELY KARACSONY | MAYOR, HUNGARY



We have so far received enthusiastic response to the scheme from a number of US pharma companies; the Production-Linked Incentive scheme would enable production that will facilitate supply chains in zillions  
TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU | INDIAN AMBASSADOR, US



# N Korea warns US over Biden speech

BIDEN CALLED NORTH KOREA AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMMES 'SERIOUS THREATS' TO AMERICAN AND WORLD SECURITY AND SAID HE'LL WORK WITH ALLIES TO ADDRESS THOSE PROBLEMS THROUGH DIPLOMACY AND STERN DETERRENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Seoul, May 2: North Korea Sunday warned the United States will face "a very grave situation" because President Joe Biden "made a big blunder" in his recent speech by calling the North a security threat and revealing his intent to maintain a hostile policy against it. Last week, Biden, in his first address to Congress, called North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs "serious threats" to American and world security and said he'll work with allies to address those problems through diplomacy and stern deterrence. "His statement clearly reflects his intent to keep enforcing the hostile policy toward the DPRK as it had been done by the US for over half a century," Kwon Jong Gun, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, said in a statement. DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name. "It is certain that the US chief executive made a big blunder in the light of the present-day view-



point," Kwon said. "Now that the keynote of the US new DPRK policy has become clear; we will be compelled to press for corresponding measures, and with time the US will find itself in a very grave situation." Kwon still didn't specify what steps North Korea would take, and his statement could be seen as an effort to apply pressure on the Biden administration as it's shaping up its North Korea policy. The White House said Friday that administration officials had

completed a review of US policy toward North Korea, saying Biden plans to veer from the approaches of his two most recent predecessors as he tries to stop North Korea's nuclear programme. Press secretary Jen Psaki did not detail findings of the review, but suggested the administration would seek a middle ground between Donald Trump's "grand bargain" and Barack Obama's

"strategic patience" approaches. After a series of high profile nuclear and missile tests in 2016-17, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un launched summit diplomacy with Trump on the future of his growing nuclear arsenal. But that diplomacy remains stalled for about two years over differences in how much sanctions relief North Korea could win in return for limited denuclearization steps. In January, Kim threatened to enlarge his nuclear arsenal and build more high-tech weapons targeting the US mainland, saying the fate of bilateral ties would depend on whether it abandons its hostile policy. In March, he conducted short-range ballistic missile tests for the first time in a year, though he still maintains a moratorium on bigger weapons launches.

His statement clearly reflects his intent to keep enforcing the hostile policy toward the DPRK as it had been done by the US for over half a century  
KWON JONG GUN | SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL, NORTH KOREA

### SHORT TAKES

#### Roaring tanker fire kills seven

Kabul: A searing blaze that roared through several fuel tankers on the northern edge of the Afghan capital of Kabul killed seven people and injured 14 others, the Interior Ministry said Sunday. Investigators were combing through the dozens of tankers that lay in smoldering ruins and a gas station caught in the flames that roared through the area late Saturday, said ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

#### Iranian Foreign Min apologises

Tehran: Iran's Foreign Minister apologised Sunday for recorded comments that were leaked to the public last week, creating a firestorm in Iran less than two months before presidential elections. The recordings of Mohammad Javad Zarif included frank comments on powerful late Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a US drone strike in 2020. The attack at the time brought the US and Iran to the brink of war.

#### Casino shooting: Gunman slain

Green Bay: A gunman killed two people at a Wisconsin casino restaurant and seriously wounded a third before he was killed by police late Saturday, in what authorities said appeared to be a targeted attack. Brown County Sheriff's Lt. Kevin Pawlak said investigators believe the gunman was seeking a specific person. "He was targeting a specific victim who was not there, but he decided to still shoot some of the victim's friends or co-workers, it appears," Pawlak said.

#### 93 police officers injured in riots

Berlin: At least 93 police officers were injured and 354 protesters were detained after traditional May Day rallies in Berlin turned violent, Berlin's top security official said Sunday. More than 20 different rallies took place in the German capital Saturday and the vast majority of them were peaceful. However, a leftist march of 8,000 people through the city's Neukoelln and Kreuzberg neighbourhood, which has often seen clashes in past decades, turned violent. Protesters threw bottles and rocks at officers, and burned garbage containers.

### Demand for oxygen rising in Nepal as Covid cases surge

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kathmandu, May 2: Demand for oxygen has been rising in Nepal as more and more hospitalised Covid-19 patients are in need of oxygen. "The majority of the Covid-19 patients admitted at our hospital required the support of bottled oxygen," Somnath Bastola, senior manager (corporate communication and public relation department) of Norvic International Hospital said.

According to him, over 30 patients have been admitted at the Norvic and the hospital planned to increase beds for coronavirus patients amid surging numbers of such patients, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Nepal's former Queen Komal Shah is getting treatment at Kathmandu-based Norvic International Hospital at an intensive care unit (ICU) fighting the Covid-19 for the last few days.

As treatment with plasma therapy could not bring the desired result, she was moved to ICU and she has been kept there on high flow oxygen.

"The situation of almost all patients is serious and all of the Covid-19 patients admitted at our hospital have required extra oxygen from outside for their survival," said Sagar Kumar Rajbhandari, director of the hospital, Saturday.

Hospitals in Kathmandu are not admitting patients who are not in serious condition. "We have been suggesting the non-serious patients stay at home in isolation," said Rajbhandari.

Considering the potential shortage of oxygen, the Nepali government has asked the private oxygen plants to import oxygen cylinders while offering them exemption of taxes including customs duty, excise duty and value-added tax.

### MAY DAY



Demonstrators release coloured smoke during a "Kill the Bill" protest at Trafalgar Square in London, Britain

### China's aircraft carrier group holds drills in South China Sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, May 2: China's Shandong aircraft carrier group has recently conducted routine annual exercises in the South China Sea, the People's Liberation Army said Sunday, after Beijing criticised the US for sending Navy ships into the strategic area.

The Chinese Defence Ministry last week urged the US to restrain its front-line forces in the air and seas near China. US reconnaissance aircraft and warships have become more active around China since President Biden took office, it said.

The South China Sea is particularly contentious because China's smaller neighbours also have competing claims to one of the world's busiest sea lanes, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety.

China has constructed several man-made islands in the disputed waters in what the US says is a move to militarise the area. Navy spokesperson Gao Xiucheng said in a statement that the exercises were completely legitimate and part of safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as maintaining regional peace and stability. "We hope the outside world will view it in an objective and rational way. In the future, the Chinese navy will continue to hold similar exercises as planned," said Gao. The Shandong is the second Chinese aircraft carrier to enter service after the Liaoning, which was originally purchased as a hulk from Ukraine and entirely refurbished.

# 'G7 moots rapid response mechanism against Russia'

THE G7 COUNTRIES WILL LOOK AT A PROPOSAL TO BUILD A RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISM TO COUNTER RUSSIAN 'PROPAGANDA' AND 'DISINFORMATION'

AGENCIES

London, May 2: Speaking ahead of a G7 foreign ministers' meeting in London, the first such meeting in two years, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the United Kingdom was "getting the G7 to come together with a rapid rebuttal mechanism" to counter Russian misinformation.

"So that when we see these lies and propaganda or fake news being put out there, we can - not just individually, but come together to provide a rebuttal and frankly to provide the truth, for the people of this country but also in Russia or China or around the world," Raab said.



Russia and China are trying to sow mistrust across the West, whether by spreading disinformation in elections or by spreading lies about COVID-19 vaccines, according to British, US and European security officials. Russia denies its meddling beyond

borders and says the West is gripped by anti-Russian hysteria. China says the West is a bully and that its leaders have a post-imperial mindset that makes them feel they can act like global policemen. Britain has identified Russia as the biggest threat to its security though it views China as its greatest long-term challenge, militarily, economically and technologically. The G7 members are Britain, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. The combined gross domestic product of G7 members is about \$40 trillion - a little less than half of the global economy.

# Covid's 'spike' protein plays key role in illness: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, May 2: SARS-CoV-2's distinctive "spike" proteins have been known to infect its host by latching on to healthy cells, but scientists have, in a new study, showed that they also play a key role in the disease.

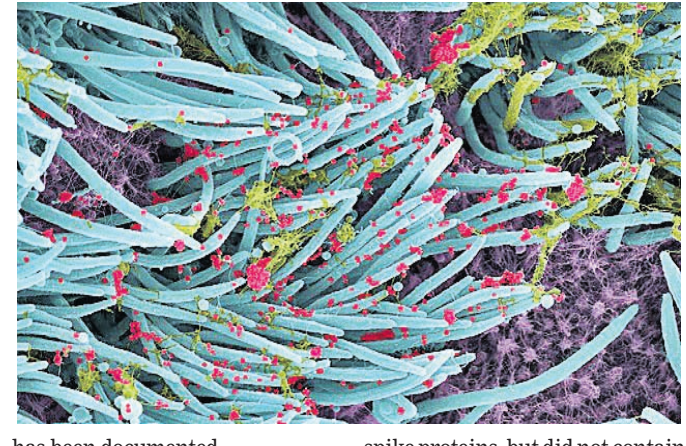
The paper, published in the journal Circulation Research, showed conclusively that Covid-19 is a vascular disease, demonstrating exactly how the SARS-CoV-2 virus damages and attacks the vascular system on a cellular level.

The findings help explain Covid-19's wide variety of seemingly unconnected complications, and could open the door for new research into more effective therapies.

"A lot of people think of it as a respiratory disease, but it's really a vascular disease," said Uri Manor, Assistant Research Professor at the Salk Institute in California.

"That could explain why some people have strokes, and why some people have issues in other parts of the body. The commonality between them is that they all have vascular underpinnings," Manor added.

The study, for the first time, revealed the mechanism through which the protein damages vascular cells. The mechanism was not understood before. Similarly, scientists studying other coronaviruses have long suspected that the spike protein contributed to damaging vascular endothelial cells, but this is the first time that the process



has been documented. In the study, the team created a 'pseudovirus' that was surrounded by SARS-CoV-2 classic crown of spike proteins, but did not contain any actual virus. Exposure to this pseudovirus resulted in damage to the lungs and arteries of an ani-

A lot of people think of it as a respiratory disease, but it's really a vascular disease. That could explain why some people have strokes, and why some people have issues in other parts of the body. The commonality between them is that they all have vascular underpinnings  
URI MANOR | ASSISTANT RESEARCH PROFESSOR, SALK INSTITUTE

mal model - proving that the spike protein alone was enough to cause disease. Tissue samples showed in-

flammation in endothelial cells lining the pulmonary artery walls. The team then replicated this process in the lab, exposing healthy endothelial cells (which line arteries) to the spike protein. They showed that the spike protein damaged the cells by binding ACE2. This binding disrupted ACE2's molecular signaling to mitochondria (organelles that generate energy for cells), causing the mitochondria to become damaged and fragmented. Previous studies have shown a similar effect when cells were exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, but this is the first study to show that the damage occurs when cells are exposed to the spike protein on its own.

# business

## of the day quote

We are aggressively growing our food and beverages (F&B) segment and are extremely optimistic about our new F&B road map with the introduction of new processes and exciting innovations, including making our food available on online food ordering platforms, Swiggy, Zomato, Dineout & Thrive and a few more

**ALEX TANDON** | CEO, INOX LEISURE LTD

The association had also reached out to the Centre and various states to address some of the issues early on, leading to timely action and outcomes. This time, we are better prepared in so far as processes are concerned, and we took immediate timely action thinking Covid wave is likely to be more stronger

**TR DUA** | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, TAIPA

The overall decline in coal imports during the year 2020-21 was on expected lines. In coming months, import demand is likely to be subdued in view of the surge in Covid infections, high coal stock in the system and high prices prevailing in the international market

**VINAYA VARMA** | MD AND CEO, MJUNCTION SERVICES

## SHORT TAKES

**Centre waives off 'late fee'**

**New Delhi:** The government has waived late fee for delayed filing of monthly return GSTR-3B and tax payment for the months of March and April and also reduced interest rate for late filers. The Finance Ministry, said it has provided several relief measures in view of the challenges faced by taxpayers in meeting the statutory and regulatory compliances under the GST law due to the outbreak of the second wave of Covid-19.

**M-cap jumps over ₹1.62L cr**

**New Delhi:** Seven of the top-10 most-valued companies together added a whopping ₹1,62,774.49 crore in market valuation last week, with major contribution coming in from Reliance Industries Ltd and Bajaj Finance. Last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark gained 903.91 points or 1.88%.

**flydubai posts \$194mn loss**

**Dubai:** Dubai's budget carrier flydubai reported Sunday a loss of \$194 million in 2020 as revenue fell by more than 50% in what it described as one of the toughest years in the aviation industry. The carrier's financial losses reflect how the coronavirus pandemic has pummeled the aviation industry, resulting in the closure of airports, suspension of flights and the loss of billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

**RBI to review RBS of banks**

**Mumbai:** The RBI has decided to review and strengthen the Risk Based Supervision (RBS) of the banking sector with a view to enable financial sector players to address the emerging challenges. The RBI uses the RBS model, including both qualitative and quantitative elements, to supervise banks, urban cooperatives banks, non-banking financial companies and all India financial institutions.



**We have found a molecule that can potentially attack coronavirus. We have applied for a joint patent and cannot reveal the name of the molecule unless the patent process is completed**

**NIKHIL MALHOTRA** | GLOBAL HEAD (MAKERS LAB), TECH MAHINDRA

## OLA TO TAKE e-SCOOTER TO EUROPE

Ola Electric is looking at taking its electric scooter to European markets, in countries like France, Italy and Germany, this fiscal, said a company executive. Ola, which is working on setting up a 'Hypercharger Network for its electric vehicle, is slated to launch its electric scooter in India in July this year



# India's exports in April rise to \$30.2bn, trade deficit surges

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 2:** India's exports in April jumped nearly three-folds to \$30.21 billion on account of healthy growth in key sectors including engineering, gems and jewellery, and petroleum products, even as trade deficit widened to \$15.24 billion, according to commerce ministry's preliminary data released Sunday.

The country's merchandise exports were to the tune of \$10.17 billion in April 2020. Trade deficit in that month was \$6.92 billion. Imports too rose by over three-folds to \$45.45 billion last month as against \$17.09 billion in April 2020.

"India's merchandise exports in April 2021 were \$30.21 billion, an increase of 197.03% over \$10.17 billion in April 2020 and an increase of 16.03% over \$26.04 billion in April 2019," the ministry said in a statement.

In percentage terms, the growth rate in exports and imports are at record high, mainly due to base-effect. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown last year, exports shrank by a record 60.28% in April 2020. In March this year, exports grew by 60.29% to \$34.45 billion.

In April 2021, oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.65 billion in the corresponding month last year.

## AWS leads \$42bn global Cloud services market in Q1 2021

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 2:** Amazon Web Services (AWS) was the leading cloud service provider with 32% market share in Q1 2021, as cloud infrastructure services spending grew 35% to \$41.8 billion in the first quarter, according to a new report. Microsoft Azure grew 50% for the third consecutive quarter, taking 19% market share in Q1 2021.

Google Cloud maintained its momentum, growing 56% in the latest quarter to account for a 7% market share, according to the report by market research firm Canalis.



The trend of using cloud services for data analytics and machine learning, data center consolidation, application migration, cloud native development and service delivery continued a pace.

Overall, customer spending exceeded \$40 billion a quarter for the first time in Q1, with total expenditure nearly \$11 billion higher than in Q1 2020 and nearly \$2 billion more than in Q4 2020, according to Canalis data.

"Cloud emerged as a winner across all sectors over the last year, basically since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of lockdowns. Organizations depended on digital services and being online to maintain operations and adapt to the unfolding situation," said Canalis Research Analyst Blake Murray.



**THE 3-FOLD CLIMB**

April exports jumped nearly 3-folds to \$30.21bn on account of healthy growth in key sectors including engineering, gems and jewellery, and petroleum products

Imports too rose by over three-folds to \$45.45 billion last month as against \$17.09 billion in April 2020

In April, oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.65 billion in the corresponding month last year

billions in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, pharmaceuticals, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products

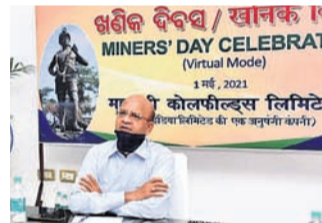
# 'MCL to achieve 163 MT coal production target in FY22'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 2:** Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) will achieve its coal production target of 163 million tonne in the financial year of 2021-22, said PK Sinha, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, MCL.

On the occasion of Miners Day celebrated in by Coal India, Sinha appreciated coal miners for the contributions in ensuring energy security in the country by producing and supplying adequate quality of coal to consumers, particularly the power plants, even during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

Highlighting the record-breaking performance of the company in last fiscal, he said, "I have confidence in the dedication shown by MCL, and I am sure that coal min-



ers in MCL will also achieve production target of 163 MT in the current fiscal."

MCL had achieved the highest-ever production of 148.01 million tonne (MT) and the highest-ever coal despatch of 146 MT in year ended March 31, 2021. A record over-burden removal of 174.5 million cubic meters (MCuM) during last fiscal has set a strong foundation for enabling Coal India achieve the target of one billion production by 2024.

## Global tablet shipments reach 40mn units in Q1

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 2:** Tablets had an outstanding first quarter of 2021 with 55.2% growth (y-o-y) and shipments totalling 39.9 million units, according to preliminary data from the International Data Corporation (IDC). Apple led the tablet segment with 31.7% share, followed by Samsung at 20% and Lenovo at 9.4% share.

Chromebook shipments totalled 13 million units in 1Q21, up from 2.8 million in the first quarter of 2020. "While vaccine rollouts and businesses returning to offices may slow down the work-from-home



trend, we are still far from returning to 'normal' working conditions and hence the demand for tablets, especially detachables, is expected to continue for a while," said Anuroopa Nataraj, research analyst with IDC's Mobility and Consumer Device Trackers. Growth of this magnitude has not

## India's fuel sales drop in April on Covid wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** The second wave of coronavirus sweeping the nation has pummeled fuel sales in April as local restrictions clamped to curb the spread of infection stifled demand, preliminary data showed.

"At the end of April, overall fuel demand is down by about 7% from pre-Covid level of April 2019," Arun Singh, Director for Marketing and Refineries at Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), said.



India was under one of the world's severest lockdowns in April 2020, bringing to a halt almost all economic activity. Fuel sales had halved that month and so comparing current month sale to April 2020 will not throw a correct interpretation.

Sales of petrol fell to 2.14 million tonnes in April, the lowest since August, according to the preliminary data of state-owned fuel retailers. Petrol sales in April were 6.3% lower than March 2021 and 4.1% lower than April 2019. Petrol sales in April 2020 were 872,000 tonnes.

## HOSPITALITY SECTOR FHRAI urges govt for spl credit guarantee window under ECLGS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) Sunday said it has requested Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to provide a special credit guarantee window to the hospitality sector under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

In the representation, the industry body has asked the government to standardise and align the tenure and the moratorium facilities floated under ECLGS 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0, FHRAI said in a statement.

FHRAI has also asked that the tenure of loan and moratorium facilities granted under the ECLGS 3.0 should be extended to loans already sanctioned under the earlier emergency credit line guarantee schemes with retrospective effect, it added.

"The repayment schedule for loans taken under ECLGS 1.0 and 2.0 are likely to begin now, but unfortunately due to the ongoing lockdown many establishments do not have the cash flow to repay it.

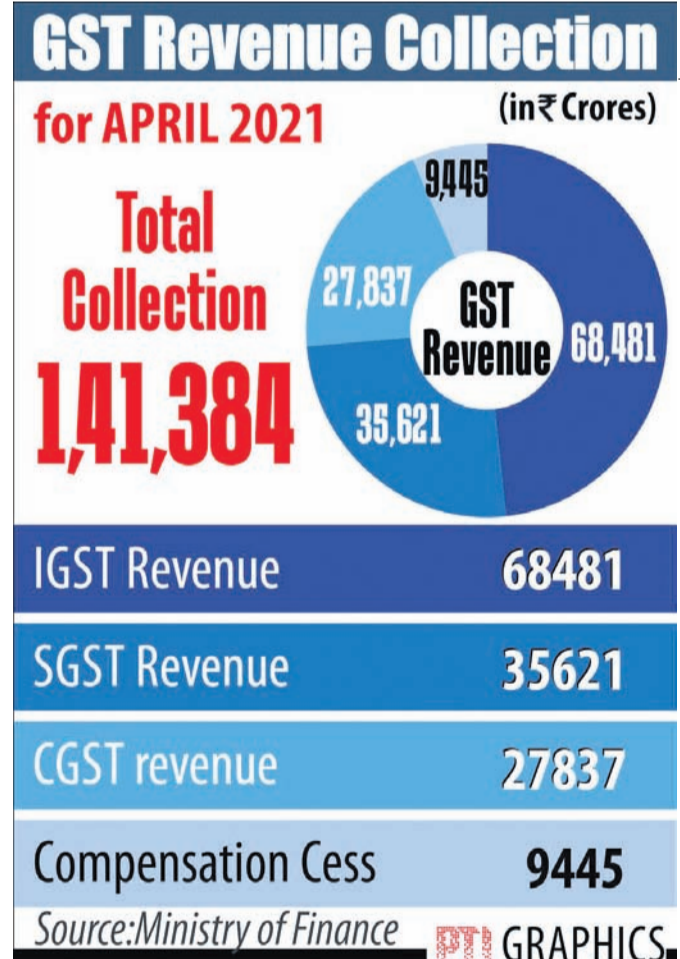
"Therefore, it is imperative to align the tenure and moratorium facilities under ECLGS 1.0 and 2.0 with ECLGS 3.0," FHRAI Vice-President Gurbaxish Singh

**In the representation, the industry body has asked the government to standardise and align the tenure and the moratorium facilities floated under ECLGS 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0**

Kohli said. The sector is under tremendous financial stress due to the ongoing lockdown. Closure of many establishments in large numbers has been reported from all parts of the country along with massive job losses in the sector, he added.

"Without adequate government intervention, the situation will escalate further impacting lakhs of livelihoods along with a large number of units pushed towards insolvencies and NPAs (non-performing assets)," Kohli said.

Asking for additional funds for the sector among other things, FHRAI said allocation of ₹54,000 crore to the travel, tourism and hospitality sector along with 27 other sectors under the ECLGS 2.0 was grossly inadequate and so, additional funds under ECLGS be provisioned specifically for the hospitality sector.



# Markets to be guided by Covid situation, macro data: Analysts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** Market movement this week will be influenced by updates on the Covid-19 front, macroeconomic data announcement, quarterly earnings and global trends, said analysts.

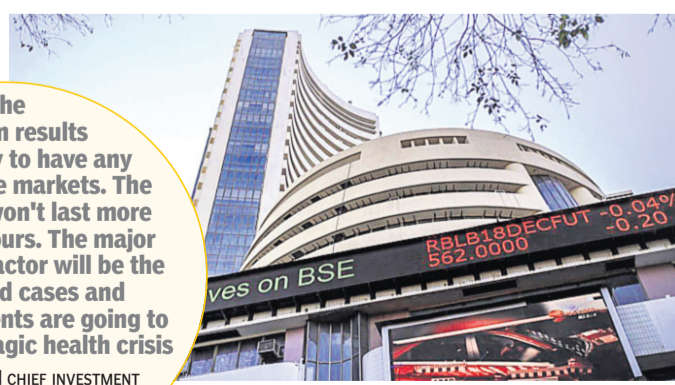
They also added that state election results are unlikely to have any major impact on the markets and the major determining factor will be the rising Covid-19 cases and how governments (both central and states) are going to address this health crisis.

The ruling Trinamool Congress was leading the elections in the keenly watched state of West Bengal, while the saffron party-led NDA was leading in Assam and the DMK in Tamil Nadu, according to the latest trends for Assembly polls.

In Kerala, the ruling LDF is leading in 88 of the 140 assembly constituencies while the opposition Congress-headed UDF was ahead in 50 segments. Geojit Financial Services Chief Investment Strategist VK Vijayakumar said, "The election results are unlikely to have any impact on the markets. The news value won't last more than a few hours. The major determining factor will be the rising Covid-19 cases and how governments (both central and states) are going to address

**The election results are unlikely to have any impact on the markets. The news value won't last more than a few hours. The major determining factor will be the rising Covid cases and how governments are going to address this tragic health crisis**

**VK VIJAYAKUMAR** | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES



this tragic health crisis." He added that if the rising Covid-19 case load leads to a major catastrophe and another country-wide lockdown is declared, the market would be hugely

impacted. The counting of votes for the Assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory is being taken up at a time when the country is grappling with a raging Covid-19 pandemic.

Religare Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra said, "We

expect volatility to remain high this week, too. First, participants will react to Reliance Industries results which came in after market hours on Friday. Election results of the 5 states will also be the focus."

He added that on the economy front, manufacturing PMI and services data are scheduled May 3 and May 5, respectively. "Needless to say, updates related to Covid-19 cases, vaccine drive and global cues will also be closely tracked.

"Earnings season will also gain pace and some big names like Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hero MotoCorp, Tata Steel, Dabur and HDFC will announce their results along with several others," Mishra said.

Reliance Industries on Friday reported more than doubling of its March quarter net profit as consumer businesses of retail and tele-

com as well as petrochemicals saw sequential recovery on improved spreads offsetting continued weakness in refining business.

Samco Securities Head (Equity Research) Nirali Shah said, "Domestic bourses this week are expected to be influenced by dual factors: Quarterly results and further restrictions on increasing Covid-19 cases."

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Enterprises, CEAT and Adani Power are also among the other important earnings to be announced this week.

Major automobile manufacturers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor, Tata Motors and Kia on Saturday reported a decline in passenger vehicle sales in April compared to March this year as the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic hit dispatches.

ENGLISHMAN HITS FIRST T20 TON AS RAJASTHAN ROYALS WIN BY 55 RUNS IN ONE-SIDED CONTEST AGAINST SUNRISERS

WEST INDIAN HITS 34-BALL 87 TO STEER MI HOME

# Buttler blitzkrieg sinks SRH

# People remember such knocks: Pollard

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 2:** Jos Buttler (124, 64b, 11x4, 8x6) announced his return to form with a belligerent maiden T20 hundred as Rajasthan Royals (RR) made a mince-meat of an out-of-sorts SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH). Banking on Buttler's batting histrionics and some fine bowling by Mustafizur Rahman (3/20) and Chris Morris (3/29), RR won the game by 55 runs Sunday. Batting first RR scored 220 for three in their 20 overs and then restricted the demoralised opposition to 165 for eight.

Other than Buttler, skipper of RR, Sanju Samson (48, 33b, 4x4, 2x6) also struck form with the bat. The two put on 150 runs for the second wicket to power their team to a very good position. Even a

change in captaincy couldn't bring in luck for SRH. With the win, the Royals moved up to fifth spot while SRH continued to stay at the bottom, having won only one match all season.

In their reply, SRH raced to 57 for no loss in the first six overs. However, Bangladesh pacer Rahman struck right after the first strategic time out, getting rid of Manish Pandey (31). The dangerous Jonny Bairstow (30) and Vijay Shankar

(8) soon followed. With the pressure mounting, new skipper Kane Williamson (20) went for the big shot only to be caught at deep mid-wicket by Morris off Kartik Tyagi as wickets tumbled at regular intervals.

Mohammad Nabi (17, 5b) injected some hope in the SRH camp, as he smashed Rahul Tewatia for two sixes in the 14th over. However, the Afghan was in the dugout after a quick cameo. With 91 needed in the last five overs the lower and middle-order struggled.

Earlier, put in to bat, Buttler and Samson belted the opposition bowlers to all parts of the ground after the early dismissal of Yashasvi Jaiswal (12). For SRH, Rashid Khan (1/24), Vijay



RR players congratulate Chris Morris after the dismissal of Kedar Jadhav. PHOTO: @IPL

## Warner 'shocked and disappointed'

**New Delhi:** David Warner is 'shocked and disappointed' after being dropped from the SunRisers Hyderabad playing XI but the team's director of cricket Tom Moody defended the 'hard call'. He said someone had to miss out and it's him. Under Warner, SRH have lost five out of six games and he himself hasn't been in greatest of form which led to Kane Williamson being handed the reins. This is the first time in Warner's IPL career that he has been dropped by any franchise for lack of form. "We had to make the hard call, somebody has to miss out and unfortunately it's him. He's shocked and disappointed and anyone would be," Moody said Sunday. Warner and Moody have not been on best of terms after the left-handed opener criticised Manish Pandey's exclusion from the playing XI.

Shankar (1/42) and Sandeep Sharma (1/50) picked up a wicket each. Put into bat, the Royals were off to

a sedate start as they managed just five runs of the first two overs. But what followed later was simple mayhem. Nabi, the only over he bowled, conceded 21 runs.

## Brief scores

RR 220 for 3 (Jos Buttler 124) beat SRH 165 for 8 (Manish Pandey 31, Mustafizur Rahman 3/20, Chris Morris 3/29) by 55 runs.

Williamson, searching for wickets early on in the innings, introduced spin in the third over by bringing in star bowler Rashid. Jaiswal smashed three fours, before the Afghan showed his class and trapped the youngster leg before.

Buttler however looked in sublime touch. And all the bowlers went for runs. Having successfully navigated Rashid's four overs, Buttler and Samson upped the ante in the 13th over, scoring 17 runs. The Englishman muscled a six over wide long on before lofting one over extra-cover for boundary. The floodgates then simply opened.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 2:** Big-hitting Mumbai Indians (MI) batsman Kieron Pollard said Saturday he is proud of his match-winning knock against arch rivals Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the 'El Clasico' of IPL. Pollard said this was a kind of performance people would speak about for a long time. The West Indian single-handedly took MI to a four-wicket win over CSK by smashing a blistering 34-ball 87 not out in a last-ball thriller.

"There are world class players in CSK. We billed this match-up as the 'Clasico' of the IPL. When you have international guys with so much experience like Faf du Plessis and Suresh Raina, guys that have done it time and time again, the game is bound to be tough," Pollard said after the match.

"You know you want to be able to come and perform in these sorts of matches. It is these types of innings that stand out, when people speak about individuals," the West Indian added.

Pollard said for him it was just a matter of doing what he could do by playing to his strengths.

"You know what we have done over the years. For me it is not about ratings, it is more about doing the job and winning the game for your team

**I have grown comfortable with MI. I just want to continue to perform for them. I always try to do the best for my team**

KIERON POLLARD

and that is what I have done," Pollard said.

Thanks to Pollard's blitzkrieg, MI overhauled the target of

219, the second highest successful chase in IPL history.

"There are a lot of guys who are talented in their own rights. It was just nice to get an opportunity to bat a couple of overs and win the game. But again, it was a total team effort. The innings by Krunal (Pandya) was crucial," Pollard informed.



Kieron Pollard

# Dhawan anchors DC to easy triumph

AGENCIES

**Ahmedabad, May 2:** Shikhar Dhawan (69 n o, 47b, 6x4, 2x6) anchored the chase as Delhi Capitals (DC) trounced Punjab Kings (PBKS) by seven wickets in their IPL-2021 encounter here Sunday. Set a victory target of 167 runs, DC crossed the finish line with 14 balls to spare. Shimron Hetmyer (16 n o, 4b, 2x4, 1x6) finished the game off in a jiffy hitting Riley Meredith (1/35) for two sixes and a boundary in the 18th over the innings. Prithvi Shaw (39), Steven Smith (24) and skipper Rishabh Pant (14) were the three Delhi batsmen to be dismissed, but they were never in trouble with Dhawan in the middle.

This edition of the IPL has seen Dhawan in a new avatar. He went for his shots from the start, but never took any risk knowing that the situation was under control after he and Shaw gave DC a rollicking start putting on 63 runs in just 6.1 overs. With the start, DC were more or less in the driver's seat.

Earlier, after being put in, PBKS were always in trouble losing wickets at regular intervals. It was only stand-in skipper Mayank Agarwal's (99, 58b, 8x4, 4x6) brilliant knock which took PBKS past the 160-run mark. Other than Agarwal, none of the other PBKS batters could get going against the tight DC bowling attack. Much was expected of Dawid

**TODAY'S MATCH**

KKR vs RCB

TIME 7.30 PM

Telecast: Star Sports channels

Malan (26, 26b, 1x4, 1x6) on his IPL debut. However, the Englishman was bowled by Axar Patel (1/21) playing down the wrong line. With KL Rahul indisposed, PBKS hopes rested on Agarwal and Chris Gayle (13). However, the 'Universal Boss' was cleaned up by Kagiso

Rabado (3/36) early on in the innings and with it hopes of a 190-plus score for PBKS disappeared. The pitch had no venom, but PBKS batsmen threw away their wickets unnecessarily while trying to go for innovative shots. They should have taken a leaf out of Agarwal's book who played in the 'V' and yet scored at a very fast clip.

The victory took DC to the top of the points table as they now have 12 points from eight games and look sure of qualifying for the play-offs.

**Brief scores:** PBKS 166 for 6 (Mayank Agarwal 99, Kagiso Rabada 3/36) lost to DC 167 for 3 in 17.4 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 69 n o, Prithvi Shaw (39) by seven wickets.

# Rahul diagnosed with appendicitis, will miss 3 games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, May 2:** IPL franchise Punjab Kings (PBKS) skipper KL Rahul has been diagnosed with acute appendicitis and has flown to Mumbai for surgery and further treatment. The surgery will keep him out of action for at least a week if not more. In his absence Mayank Agarwal will lead the side.

"KL Rahul complained of severe abdomen pain last (Saturday) night and after not responding to medication, he was taken to emergency room. He was diagnosed with acute appendicitis and will require surgery," the team said in a statement.

## SHORT TAKES

### Asiad gold-winning rider Khan no more

**Jaipur:** Asian Games (1982) gold medallist rider Colonel Gulam Mohammad Khan (retired) died Saturday in Pune. The renowned rider, 74, had joined the Indian Military Academy in 1973. He also won a silver medal in the individual segment. At the next Asian Games in Seoul, he was a member of the Dressage and the Evening teams, winning bronze medals in both events.

### Easy for Lewis

**Portimao (Portugal):** Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton won the Portuguese Grand Prix for his 97th career win Sunday and extended his championship lead over Max Verstappen to eight points. The Mercedes driver started from second on the grid behind teammate Valtteri Bottas, who finished third behind Verstappen's Red Bull and took a bonus point for the fastest lap. Hamilton and Verstappen have been in the top two in all three races, with Hamilton winning two of them heading into next Sunday's Spanish GP. Hamilton dominated the race from the start.

### Fixtures declared

**Bangalore:** The Indian men's hockey team will open their campaign February 5 next year in the third edition of FIH Pro League against New Zealand. The world governing body released the schedule of the prestigious tournament Sunday. India will also take on Australia and Spain in February as they play five away matches that month before taking on Germany and Argentina at home. AGENCIES

# REAL CHASE FOR LA LIGA CROWN

AGENCIES

**Madrid, May 2:** Real Madrid held their nerve to beat Osasuna 2-0 in their La Liga game played Saturday as Eden Hazard made his first start since January. It raised the possibility of Zinedine Zidane picking him for Wednesday's Champions League semifinal second leg against Chelsea. After making a brief cameo off the bench in the first leg last week, Hazard played 72 minutes at Valdebebas and could now face his former club from the start in the pivotal return game at Stamford Bridge. The goals for Real were scored by Eder Militao (76th) and Casemiro (80th).

"He (Hazard) was very good," said Real manager Zinedine Zidane. "He played close to Karim (Benzema), they tried things and I was very happy with him," Zidane added.

Real have it all to do against Chelsea after drawing the opener 1-1 and they are playing catch-up in La Liga too, after Atletico Madrid had earlier scraped to a 1-0 victory against struggling Elche.

Elche's Fidel Chaves missed a 91st-minute penalty in what could

## Messi against online abuse

**Barcelona:** Lionel Messi used his social media platform with 200 million followers to call for action against online abuse. The Barcelona player's message Saturday coincides with a four-day boycott of social media by soccer leagues, clubs and players in England to protest against online racial abuse and discrimination. Messi was not silent. Instead, he used his Instagram post to 'send a big hug and congratulations to all the people in British soccer for the idea to hold this campaign against abuse and discrimination on social media'. He went further and asked for Facebook, Twitter and other social media companies to do more.

prove a pivotal moment in Spain's thrilling title race, with Atletico maintaining their two-point lead over Real Madrid and stretching the advantage to five over Barcelona.

The best chance fell to Hazard from a Marcelo cross but he failed to catch the volley cleanly, instead scuffing it into the ground and goalkeeper Sergio Herrera did brilliantly to save.

## THREE TIMES IN FOUR SEASONS

# Man City on cusp of Premier League title



**DEADLY STRIKE:** Teammates congratulate Sergio Aguero (centre) after he scored Manchester City's opening goal against Crystal Palace in their Premier League match played Saturday

AGENCIES

**London, May 2:** Manchester City got a step closer to laying their hands on the Premier League silverware after a 2-0 win Saturday against Crystal Palace. Chelsea on the other hand, maintained their hold on fourth place after beating Fulham by the same scoreline.

Pep Guardiola's side moved 13 points clear at the top thanks to second half goals from Sergio Aguero and Ferran Torres at Selhurst Park. They will be crowned English champions for the third time in four seasons if second-placed Manchester United lose Sunday at home to Liverpool. If Man United avoid defeat, City can

seal the title with a victory against Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium next Saturday.

City, who surrendered the title to Liverpool last season, overcame a mediocre first half with two goals in 84 seconds. Aguero, making only his sixth league start of an injury-plagued season, broke the deadlock in the 57th minute when he ran onto Benjamin Mendy's long pass and slammed a half volley into the roof of the net from 10 yards. It was only his fourth goal of the season. Aguero has announced this will be his final season with Manchester City.

Spanish forward Torres gave a glimpse of his potential when he fired home from the edge of the

area in the 59th minute. City have already won the League Cup this season and could also add the Champions League to their haul.

"We can start to think about it and put it in the fridge. The Premier League is already there, it is in our hands. We need one more victory," Guardiola said. "I will check on the Liverpool game. It's in our hands and now we will give everything to beat PSG," Guardiola added.

Meanwhile, Kai Havertz's double saw Chelsea beat struggling Fulham in the west London derby as they warmed-up for Wednesday's Champions League semifinal second leg against Real Madrid with a convincing win.

# Muchova sends Osaka packing in Madrid tourney

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Madrid, May 2:** Karolina Muchova added yet another stunning win over a top player to her collection with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 upset of World No. 2 Naomi Osaka in the second round of the Madrid Open tennis tournament here Sunday. This was Muchova's third win this season over a top-five player. She took 109 minutes to defeat the reigning Australian Open champion.

The Czech player looked in fine form against Osaka, as she survived a second-set comeback by the No. 2 seed. Muchova had 29 winners, two more than Osaka, and converted half of her eight break-points on the day.

Both players displayed powerful serving in the first set, but Osaka faltered early, double faulting down breakpoint to cede a 2-1 lead to Muchova. It was enough for the latter to win the first set. In the second set also, Muchova drew first blood. However, Osaka broke back in the sixth game and then won the next three games in a row to close the set.

In the decider, Muchova got an early break. She was untroubled during the rest of the set because of her powerful serve and duly closed the set and match.

"Overall I think I played a solid game," Muchova said after the match. "I knew it was going to be tough, but I was prepared to slug it out. Nothing comes easy when you play against the top players of the world," Muchova added.

What helped the Czech was her ability to win most of the crucial points. It made the difference in the end and she emerged victorious.

"It was a point here and there that I missed. That cost me the match," lamented the Japanese.



**TIMELY BREAKTHROUGH:** Eder Militao (No. 6) celebrates with a teammate after scoring Real Madrid's first goal against Osasuna. PHOTO: PTI