



## NOBLE INITIATIVE

Actor Shweta Tripathi says, she always encourages sustainable fashion for the sake of environment

LEISURE P2



## G7 MINISTERS MEET IN LONDON

Ministers from G7 countries are meeting in person for the first time in two years in London

INTERNATIONAL P10



## COVID-19 HITS IPL

Game between KKR and RCB called off Monday as two Knight cricketers test positive hours before start

SPORTS P12

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Of course, we will celebrate the World Press Freedom Day. Just waiting for permission from the govt!

# O<sub>2</sub> crunch kills 24 in Karna

AGENCIES

**Bangalore, May 3:** In yet another hospital tragedy in the country in recent days, 24 patients, 23 of them Covid-infected, died in Karnataka's Chamarajanagar due to alleged oxygen shortage in the district hospital in the last 24 hours, with the government warning of stringent action against those found guilty.

The government ordered a probe into the matter and appointed senior IAS officer Shivayogi Kalasad as the inquiry officer. Following the incident, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa convened a meeting with oxygen producers, where a number of decisions were taken to ensure supply of allocated quantity of oxygen to the state by the Centre.

Among these were to reduce the time taken to refill oxygen tankers, provide a green corridor for faster commuting of oxygen tankers and avoid unnecessary delay at toll gates. Utilising the service of the LPG tanker drivers in case of emergency was also another important decision.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar maintained that only three people had died due to oxygen shortage and not 24 as reported, though he stressed that the probe would reveal the truth. The incident evoked a sharp response from the Congress, with party leader Rahul Gandhi wondering "how much more suffering before the 'system' wakes up."

In heart-breaking episodes preceding today's incident in the country, a fire at a mall in Mumbai housing a Covid-designated hospital in March left nine, including those on ventilators, dead, while 22 COVID-19 patients who were either on ventilator or oxygen support, suffocated to death when their oxygen supply stopped suddenly due to a malfunction in the main storage at a civic hospital in Nashik.



Relatives grieve after 24 Covid-19 patients died allegedly due to shortage of oxygen cylinders in Chamarajanagara of Karnataka

Similarly, 15 coronavirus patients died after a fire broke out at the Intensive Care Unit of a private hospital in Palghar district, also in Maharashtra in April. Further, 12 COVID-19 patients, including the HoD of the gastroenterology department of Batra Hospital in Delhi died allegedly due to oxygen shortage Saturday. A glitch in oxygen supply in Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh resulted in three deaths last week.

At Chamarajanagar, a pall of gloom descended on the district hospital as the grieving kin of the deceased gathered after hearing the news. Family members of the dead also staged a demonstration at the hospital and alleged

there was shortage of oxygen and raised slogans. Speaking to reporters in Chamarajanagar, Sudhakar said 123 COVID patients were admitted to the hospital. "Of these, 14 are on ventilator, 36 are on Non Invasive Ventilator, 58 were on High Blow Oxygen, 29 are on normal oxygen (Up to 10 litres per minute)," According to Sudhakar, 14 people, all of whom had been undergoing treatment for the past 14 to 18 days, died due to COVID from Sunday 7 am to 12 midnight. Their condition had worsened and they died naturally due to the disease, he added.

"Between 12 midnight to 3 am, three people died. From 3 am to 7 am, seven

people died. So three people died due to shortage of oxygen, according to the district authorities, our health department officials and doctors," he told reporters. He said 23 people died in the district hospital and one at Kamagere village in the past 24 hours. Chamarajanagar district in-charge Minister S Suresh Kumar said he has ordered a death audit report from the district administration into the incident.

He, however, maintained that all the deaths did not occur due to oxygen shortage. It's not appropriate to say that all the 24 deaths were due to oxygen shortage. These deaths occurred from Sunday morning to this morning.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

## PIPLI BYPOLL PUT OFF AGAIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, May 3:** The Election Commission Monday deferred the bypoll to Pipli Assembly constituency. Besides, it also postponed bypolls to Jangipur and Samserganj Assembly seats in West Bengal in view of the raging Covid-19 situations in the country.

According to the commission, the decision was taken after taking all material facts and inputs of Chief Electoral Officers of Odisha and West Bengal into consideration and taking note of the lockdown/restrictions imposed in the state under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 as issued by the NDMA/SDMA.

"The commission has decided to defer the scheduled poll and extend the period of elections in Pipli

Assembly constituency in Odisha and Jangipur and Samserganj Assembly constituencies of West Bengal. Fresh notifications will be issued after assessing the pandemic situation," the ECI informed Monday.

The ECI also lifted the model code of conduct in the constituencies and said it will be in operation from the next date of notification.

Significantly, the polling for the by-election to Pipli Assembly constituency was re-scheduled for May 16 following the death of Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj. Mangaraj succumbed to Covid-19 April 14, three days before the earlier schedule of election April 17.

On October 4 last year, the sitting BJD Pipli MLA Pradeep Maharathy had died which necessitated the by-poll to the Assembly seat.



TWICE DEFERRED

## SHORT TAKES

### Aahar centres to remain open

**Bhubaneswar:** Revising its earlier order issued ahead of statewide lockdown, the state government Monday allowed Aahar Centres to remain open during the lockdown (May 5 to May 19). However, the facility is only for takeaways and dine-in is strictly prohibited. The government provides cooked meal at ₹5 at Aahar Centres at all major hospitals and public places. Also, central government bodies like IIT, IIM and others were allowed to keep their hostels open.

### Minor tribal rape victim dies

**Baripada:** A minor tribal rape victim of Mayurbhanj district died during treatment at SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack Monday, police said. The 15-year-old girl, a student of Class IX, was missing from her house at Jhalimara village of Mayurbhanj district since April 25 and she was found in serious condition on the roadside near Baghuasol village five days later, police said. She was immediately rushed to the PRM Medical College, Baripada where doctors said the girl was raped by a man for five days.

## State launches 3rd phase jabs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Odisha formally launched the third phase of COVID-19 vaccination for people in the 18-44 age group here Monday, with beneficiaries being administered the first dose of Covaxin, a health department official said. The drive is underway at all government hospitals in the state capital.

The third-phase of vaccination is taking place between 8 am and 1 pm, while those above 45 years will receive the shots from 3-6 pm, according to the schedule announced by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation.

People who have registered on COWIN, UMANG or Arogya Setu are being administered the jabs, he said. The third phase had a symbolic dry-run on Saturday after

the state received 1.5 lakh doses.

The civic body has set a target of vaccinating 5 lakh people in Bhubaneswar for which it requires about 10.34 lakh doses, the official said.

A large number of young people were seen standing in queues outside government hospitals since morning, braving the scorching sun. The third phase of the inoculation drive, however, could not be taken up outside the state capital due to paucity of doses, another official said.

Vaccination is underway in only 256 of the 1,500 session sites in the state, he said. Director (family welfare), Bijay Panigrahi, said immunisation in private hospitals in Bhubaneswar has also been stopped. Panigrahi said the Odisha government has placed orders for 25 lakh doses of Covishield.

## CONVOY TO SAVE LIVES



Tankers with medical oxygen gas for COVID-19 patients, amid a shortage of gas in many parts of the country due to surge in coronavirus cases, in Ghaziabad, Monday

## CT scan in mild Covid cases may do more harm than good: AIIMS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 3:** The AIIMS chief Monday warned against rushing for CT scan in cases of mild COVID-19, saying it has side effects and can end up doing more harm than good.

Stressing that there is no need for doing CT scans in mild COVID cases, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria said that many people are opting for the test the moment they find out they are positive for COVID-19 and added that misuse of CT scans and biomarkers may cause damage.

"One CT scan is equivalent to 300 to 400 chest x-rays. According to data, repeated CT scans in younger age groups increase the risk of cancer in later life. Exposing yourself to radiation again and again may cause damage. So, there is no point in doing CT scan in mild COVID-19 if the oxygen saturation is normal," Guleria said.



Even in mild illness and according to a study, even in asymptomatic cases, a CT scan may show patches which go away on their own without treatment, he said. He advised that CT scans should be done in cases of moderate disease, when hospitalised. "And if there is a doubt, one should opt for a chest x-ray," he said.

He said that several blood tests for biomarkers are also not needed in mild illness or in home isolation if the oxygen saturation is fine, fever is not high and there are no other symptoms. He said that clinical management norms are clear that people with mild illness need no medicine.

## Won't demoralise HCs by asking them not to question: SC

THE APEX COURT SAID IT CAN'T ALSO RESTRAIN MEDIA FROM REPORTING AS IT IS IN PUBLIC INTEREST

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 3:** Batting for "free flow of dialogue" in courts, the Supreme Court Monday said it would neither restrain the media from reporting oral observations during proceedings in public interest, nor demoralise high courts - "vital pillars of democracy" - by asking them to refrain from raising questions.

The apex court said however that it's order would take into account Election Commission's submission that "wanton charges" levelled against it by the Madras High Court were unwarranted and would try to strike a balance between two Constitutional bodies.

It termed as "too far-fetched" the poll panel's plea of restraining media from reporting remarks made in court

proceedings. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah reserved its order on the EC appeal against the Madras High Court's "critical" remarks holding it responsible for surge in COVID-19 cases in the country and fastening responsibility on its officials with the murder charge.

It assured the poll panel that the high court's remarks were not meant to "run down" a constitutional body but may have been made "momentarily" in the flow of discussions and that's why it was not in the judicial order. "Election Commission is a seasoned constitutional body, entrusted with the responsibility to ensure free and fair election in the country. It should not be rattled by the observations made."

"We cannot say in today's time the media will not report the discussions taking place in the court as it is



also in public interest. The discussions that take place in courts are also important as is the order. Therefore, unfolding of the process in the court of law is in public interest," the bench said. It said that the media is a "powerful watchdog" of unfolding of the process in court of law and "we cannot ob-

ject to that reporting by media".

Justice Chandrachud said that judges ask questions to elicit response from lawyers and it does not mean that the court is against that person or body. "We have an Indian pattern of arguments in our courts. It's not a monologue that one person will speak and then judges will

speak. We have discussions here and there is an aspect of application of mind," the bench said. Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel said that it is not objecting to the discussions and observations made by the high courts but it has to be in the context of matter in hand and there should not be any off-the-cuff remarks.

## Covid handling not our prerogative, EC tells SC

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission, rattled over the strong high court observations related to conducting of just concluded Assembly elections, told the Supreme Court Monday that COVID-19 management was not its prerogative and it does not run the governance of the state. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah was told by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the EC, that remarks of murder charges made by the Madras High Court against the constitutional body were unwarranted and such conclusive remarks should not have been made without hearing the poll panel.

# leisure



## KAT, ANDREW SHARE COSY PICTURE

American actress Kat Dennings and her musician beau Andrew WK seem to be on a PDA spree lately. In a new post on Instagram Story image, Kat and Andrew are seen locking lips passionately. She captioned the picture with just a heart icon.

## I'M IN THE WORST SHAPE OF MY LIFE: WILL SMITH

Hollywood star Will Smith has done a reality check on his fitness, confessing he is in the worst shape ever. In an Instagram image posted Monday according to India time, Smith appears in a more regular frame than his usual muscular self.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesh advises patience as results don't come overnight.

**TAURUS**  
This one of those ordinary days that, somehow, do not turn out too well. Unexpected expenses, that could totally upset your budget, cannot be ruled out. Something or the other is likely to give you an uncomfortable stomach upset.

**GEMINI**  
You may come up with a precise understanding of other things, says Ganesh. You will please your sweetheart with both your presence and presents. You will browse through dozens of showrooms for that perfect, and expensive, gift for your beloved. You will also work towards achieving your long-term goals.

**CANCER**  
You may discuss certain serious issues with your beloved today, predicts Ganesh. Your time till afternoon will be spent in discussions and deliberations about the issue. However, this issue may not be enough in letting you off the hook on the work front. Think twice before you act.

**LEO**  
After a long time, it seems as if the stars are aligning to bring something special for you. Call it your field day, but today, everything will go your way, says Ganesh. Expect to get appreciated for your hard work in office.

**VIRGO**  
Surf's up as you enjoy an unexpected achievement! But your joy ride today may well be spent in vexing about the problems you have. Expect to gain new money for a new venture. Your business will rise atop the highest wave today, foretells Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Working for the government is always a key responsibility, says Ganesh. But today of all days proves to be fabulous and phenomenal for all those in government service. Your actions will translate into accomplishment and you may rest assured that you shall be duly recognized and rewarded for your meritorious service.

**SCORPIO**  
Your business associates will emerge as intangible assets for you today, says Ganesh. You will probably start off an innovative joint venture without any doubt or indecision. Hard work and enthusiasm are always a good combination for achieving success.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The sage within you will take the lead today. You are likely to prescribe yourself to your own medication for peace of mind. Wise and content that you are today, you will spread the message of love around you.

**CAPRICORN**  
People may call you a busy bee, but that you admittedly will be, says Ganesh. Work will demand your undivided attention, but the good thing is you will quickly get done with pending work one by one. In fact, you will be left with plenty of time in the evening which you are likely to spend romancing with your sweetheart.

**AQUARIUS**  
The monotony of your routine will get little bit of colour with the help of your wit and humour. Your jovial nature will lighten the burden of work from the shoulders of one all, says Ganesh. People love to be in your company and that is the reason why you are on the top of every guest list.

**PISCES**  
A day wherein you will be handling responsibilities on both the home front and at the workplace awaits you, says Ganesh. Expect to be involved in home refurbishing projects, where expenses are likely to soar. Appreciation and gratitude will come your way at the end of a hard day's work.



## SHWETA bats for sustainable fashion

**Mumbai:** Actress Shweta Tripathi encourages sustainable fashion for the sake of the environment. "I am a big advocate of sustainable fashion and I think if one is conscious of the environment, they'd always choose ethical clothing over anything else. Right from thrift stores to second-hand shopping, I'd like to encourage people to indulge in these practices and make a difference," Shweta said. The *Masaan* actress treats her clothes with a lot of love and care to ensure they are not torn or damaged. "The problem is that everyone thinks someone else will save the world. It's time to be that someone. If we all do our little bit, the world will be in a better place. I'd also like to tell people that even when it comes to sourcing for shoots, we try our best to cut down on new things," she added. In the upcoming web-series, the thriller *Escape Live*, Shweta wears her own footwear.



## Vir Das entertains docs, raises funds for charity

**Mumbai:** Stand-up comedian and actor Vir Das announced Monday that he has raised about Rs 7 lakh for charity, apart from entertaining 200 doctors and nurses over the weekend. "Very happy to announce we raised about 7 lakhs for both our charities, and also made 200 doctors and nurses laugh this weekend. Thank you to everyone who bought tickets. We will make sure the money gets to those who need it. #VirDasAtHome," Vir tweeted. Last month, he had shared on the micro-blogging website that he was hosting a charity show for doctors and nurses.

## Urvashi can't get over her love for selfies

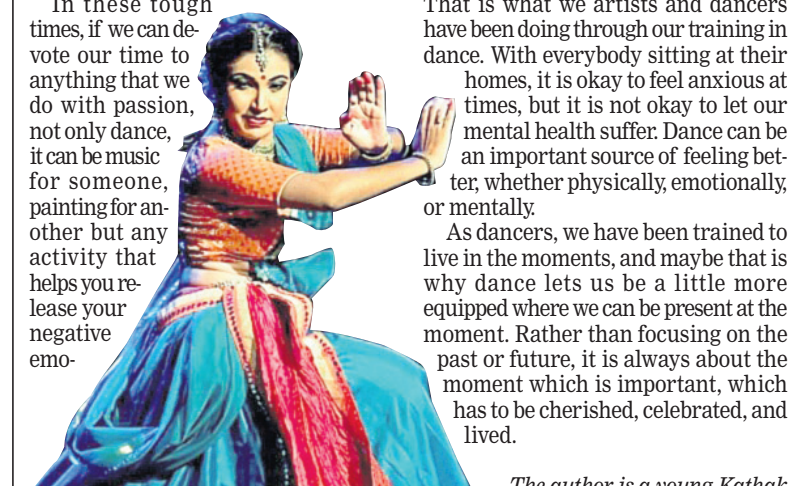
**Mumbai:** Actress Urvashi Dholakia opened up about her love for selfies Monday. "No matter how many photos I may have gotten clicked, but I looovee taking a selfie #happy #monday #selflove #selfie #time #pink #gold #lovingit #urvashidholakia #indian #ethnic #look #happiness #believe #alwaysandforever," she wrote on Instagram. She posted the note with a selfie that captures her donning a magenta and gold ensemble teamed up with big earrings and a magenta bindi. The actress often posts funny videos to keep her fans engaged. She also recently posted information on Covid safety protocols and urged her fans to follow the same. Known for her popular role of Komolika in *Kasautii Zindagii Kay*, Urvashi has been seen in several shows in television.



## How dance can lift spirits during difficult times

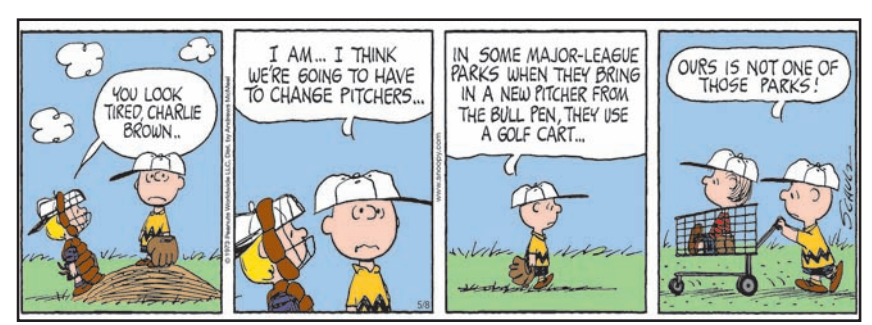
With everybody sitting at their homes, it is okay to feel anxious at times, but it is not okay to let mental health suffer

Passion is something that is performed not only with our body but with our spirit, with our highest possible state of being. When we dance we feel that our spirits have been lifted. We enjoy every moment and the reason behind this is because dance is not only about your body moving rather about the spirit feeling free and lifted. In these tough times, if we can devote our time to anything that we do with passion, not only dance, it can be music for someone, painting for another but any activity that helps you release your negative emotions, it can fill you with a lot of joy that will come from your own spirit and your high life condition. Just remember that this too shall pass, and by that time, we can keep our passion alive and dance our hearts out to face these tough times.

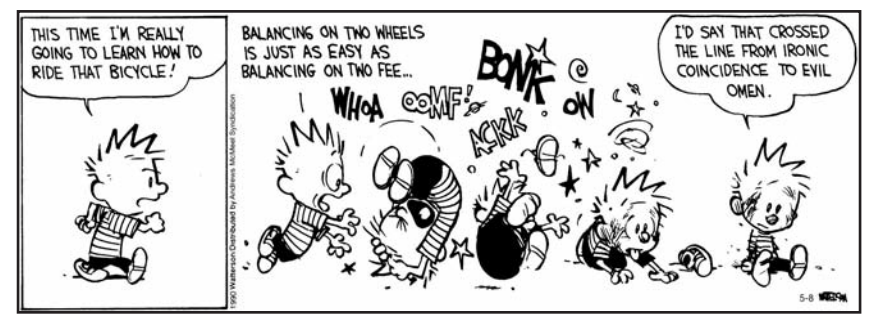


The author is a young Kathak exponent and faculty at a creative organisation that offers online and offline training to the budding artists

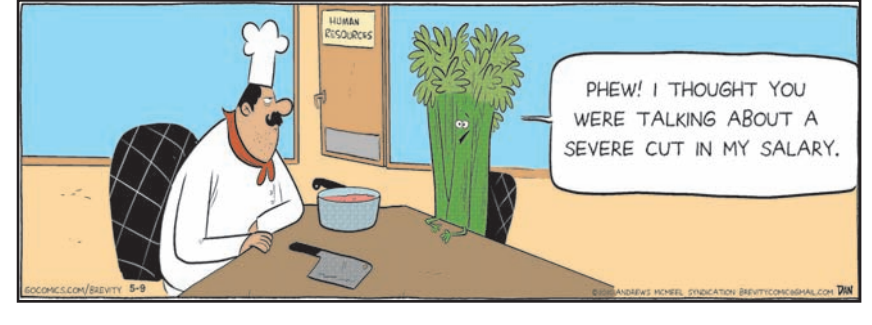
### PEANUTS



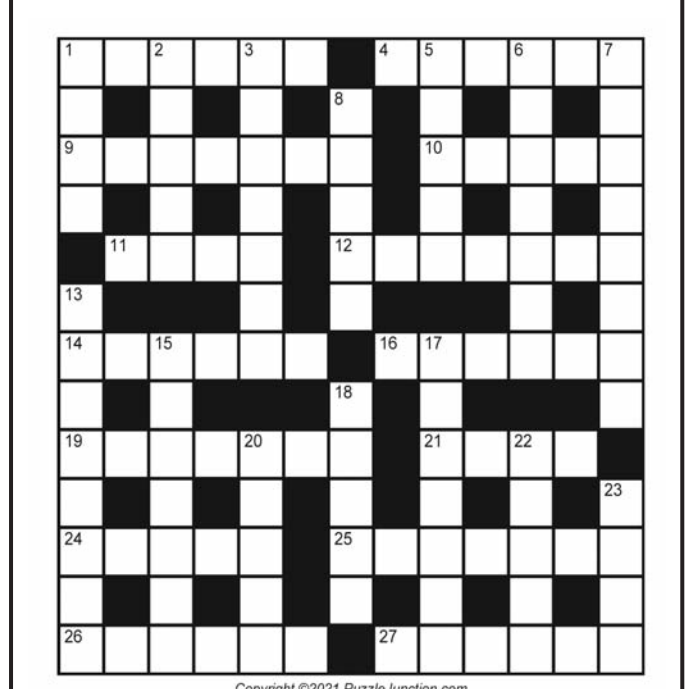
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



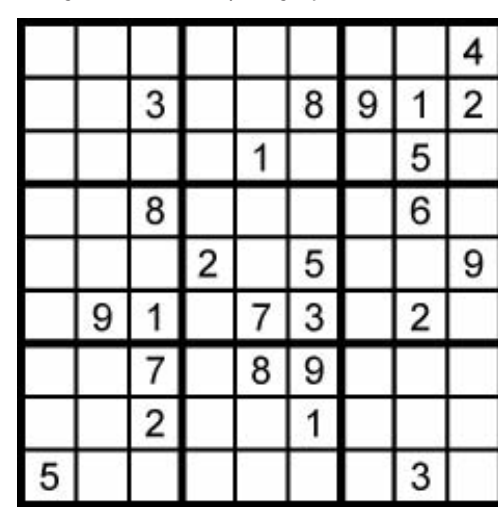
### FUN post CROSSWORD



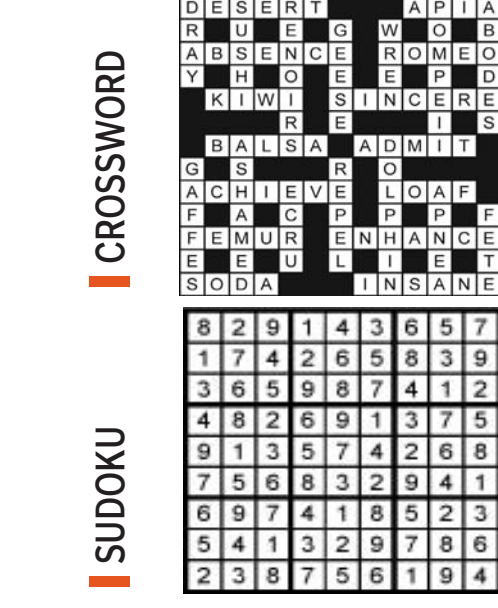
- Across**
- 1 Bordeaux wine
  - 4 Abominates
  - 9 Nuclear weapons ingredient
  - 10 Chef's wear
  - 11 Toy with a tail
  - 12 Hangman's venue
  - 14 Diamond measurements
  - 16 Predicament
  - 19 Obtain
  - 21 Vagabond
  - 24 Bumbling
  - 25 Dramatic scene
  - 26 Mental picture
  - 27 Artist's workroom
  - Down**
  - 1 Masterstroke
  - 2 Valuable violin
  - 3 Distinguished
  - 5 Free-for-all
  - 6 Rowboat part
  - 7 Ominous
  - 8 Alpha's opposite
  - 13 Special time
  - 15 Entreaty
  - 17 Suppress
  - 18 Moorage
  - 20 Foreword, briefly
  - 22 Recipe direction
  - 23 Camera setting

### 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

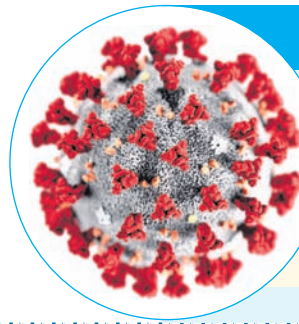


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



**COOLING OFF**  
As temperature soars, children enjoy swimming at Bindusagar in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	15,35,98,296	13,09,41,957	32,18,287
India	1,99,25,604	1,62,93,003	2,18,959
Odisha	4,71,536	4,04,063	2,073

## Govt allows Aahar takeaways

CREATING CROWD WOULD DEFEAT THE VERY PURPOSE OF THE LOCKDOWN, SAYS SRC



Unit-1 market in Bhubaneswar, Monday, witnesses a rush after a two-day weekend shutdown

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Revising its earlier order issued for the ensuing statewide lockdown, the state government Monday allowed Aahar centres to remain open during the period (May 5 to 19). However, only takeaways are allowed and dine-in is strictly prohibited at Aahar centres. The state government is providing 5-rupee cooked meals at Aahar centres opened at major hospitals and public places across the state. Similarly, Central government institutions like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and others are allowed to keep their hostels open in strict adherence to Covid safety protocol, the government said in an order issued Monday.

**S**hops selling grocery, fish, vegetable, milk, food items and other essential commodities would remain open from 6am to 12 noon from Monday to Friday

**C**entral government institutions like IIT, IIM and others are allowed to keep their hostels open in strict adherence to Covid safety protocol

Meanwhile, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) and Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena has appealed to the people not to resort to panic buying and create rush at the shops. Jena said as per instructions of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, shops dealing in grocery, fish, vegetable, milk, food items and other

essential commodities would remain open from 6am to 12 noon for 5 days from Monday to Friday during the lockdown. "The shops will be closed only during weekend shutdowns on Saturday and Sunday. There is sufficient stock of essential commodities. Transportation of food items and other goods is also continuing. Supply of essential items will remain unabated. There is no need for buying more things at a time," he said in a video message. "Going into the crowd near the shops will infect you and ultimately your family," he stated. The SRC urged the people not to invite corona to home by creating crowd and entering the crowd. Creating crowd would defeat the very purpose of the lockdown.

### Avoid panic buying, CP tells citizens

**BHUBANESWAR:** Commissioner of Police Saumendra Priyadarshi Monday urged the denizens not to resort to panic buying in view of the 14-day statewide lockdown starting Wednesday. Covid-19 norms went for a toss as the shops in the Capital city recorded heavy footfall Monday. In a video message, Priyadarshi appealed to the people that all the essential shops will remain open during the lockdown as per the directions issued by the state government. He informed the denizens that essential shops including those selling vegetables, non-veg items, grocery items, medicine and milk will remain open for six hours between 6am and 12 noon from Monday to Friday. "I request the citizens of the twin city to avoid panic buying Monday and Tuesday. Don't overcrowd the shops unnecessarily. The government has made adequate arrangements for availability of essentials during the lockdown," he mentioned. Priyadarshi also stated that vaccination drive will continue during lockdown. He said that there will be no restriction on the movement of people to vaccination centres. Police will facilitate the movement of vehicles for medical emergencies during the lockdown, he added. He also appealed to the people to cooperate with police for successful enforcement of lockdown and avoid stepping out unnecessarily during the period.

## Denizens crowd liquor shops

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Liquor shops across the Capital city Monday witnessed heavy rush in view of the 14-day lockdown announced by the state government. Denizens including women were seen standing in long queues before the liquor shops in the Capital city. Speaking to **Orissa POST**, an employee of a liquor shop at Patia revealed that the shop recorded brisk business due to huge footfall of customers Monday. He, however, denied selling more than two bottles of wine per customer. Customers at another liquor shop at CRP square were seen carrying huge quantities of liquor bottles in large plastic bags.



Madhusudan Jena, one of the customers, who works for a contractor was spotted carrying liquor worth around ₹15,000. Jena said that he has been keeping the stock for 14 days as the officials including engineers working at construction sites will demand this every alternate day. Meanwhile, sources also revealed that many are buying liquor in bulk with a view to selling it in black market at a higher price during the lockdown. It was observed that distancing norms were thrown to the winds at a liquor shop in Patia even though police were present over there.

## Induct 20% more manpower to tackle nCoV: Govt to DMs

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** With the rise in Covid-19 cases in the state, the government has asked the district Collectors to engage 20 per cent additional manpower for the management of Covid related works. Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department has instructed all Collectors, Municipal Commissioners and head of all medical institutions to engage 20 per cent more healthcare professionals than the sanctioned strength for Covid duty. "As part of preparedness to tackle the situation arising on account of

The H&FW dept has instructed Collectors, Municipal Commissioners and head of medical institutions to engage 20% more healthcare professionals than the sanctioned strength

the recent resurgence of Covid positive cases in the state, the government has now been pleased to allow 20 per cent additional manpower over and above the norms on

outsourcing basis for Covid treatment facilities by the district authorities and superintendent of medical colleges for a period of three months (from May to July)," the department said in a letter. As the family members and relatives are not allowed to attend their patients in the Covid hospitals, it is necessary to engage more manpower including auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), staff nurses and attendants beyond the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms, it said. The additional deployment of health staff will be done for a temporary period on outsourcing basis.

## State logs 8,914 new cases, 5 fatalities



**ODISHA CURRENTLY HAS 65,347 ACTIVE CASES, WHILE 4,04,063 PATIENTS HAVE RECOVERED SO FAR**

**T**HE COASTAL STATE'S POSITIVITY RATE STANDS AT 4.61 PER CENT

**O**VER 1.02 CRORE SAMPLES HAVE BEEN TESTED IN THE STATE THUS FAR, INCLUDING 46,643 SUNDAY

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Odisha's Covid-19 caseload Monday surged to 4,71,536 after 8,914 more people tested positive for the infection, while five fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 2,073, a Health department official said. Of the 8,914 new cases, 5,081 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the remaining during contact tracing, the official said. Khurda district, of which state

### CM SANCTIONS ₹10CR TO CMC FOR COVID-19 MGMT

**CUTTACK:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday sanctioned ₹10 crore to Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) for better management of Covid-19 in the Silver City. The amount has been sanctioned from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to strengthen the fight against the virus in the Millennium City, said an official order. Cuttack district, which encompasses CMC area, saw 587 Covid infections within 24 hours, according to data shared by the

**The Chief Minister had earlier sanctioned ₹10 crore to Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation for better management of Covid**

Information and Public Relations department. The CM had earlier sanctioned ₹10 crore to Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for better management of Covid.

## COMPULSORY RETIREMENT FOR ABHAY PATHAK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** On recommendation of the state government, the President of India has given his stamp of approval to compulsory retirement of tainted IFS officer Abhay Kanta Pathak.



As part of policy of zero tolerance towards corruption, the state government had recommended the Centre for compulsory retirement of the 1987-batch Odisha cadre IFS officer. The President has approved the compulsory retirement of Pathak, official sources said here Monday. In November 2020, the state Vigilance had arrested Pathak and his son Akash on evidence of amassing disproportionate assets worth over ₹20 crore. The father-son duo has been put behind the bars since then. Akash was also charged with impersonating a Tata Motors official and duping aspirants on the pretext of proving them jobs in the company.

### NHRC moved over minor's rape & murder

**BHUBANESWAR:** A petition was lodged with National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Monday seeking Rs 15 lakh aid to the relatives of a minor girl of Mayurbhanj who died after allegedly being sexually abused by a youth for five days. Sources claimed that the minor succumbed to injuries Monday while undergoing treatment at SCBMCH in Cuttack. Rights activist Himanshu Sekhar Nayak moved the NHRC urging the latter to direct the state Chief Secretary to pay compensation of Rs 15 lakh to the family members of the victim. The NHRC has also been requested to instruct the Mayurbhanj SP to take stringent action against the culprit as well as the police officials of Chandua PS who did not pay any heed to the missing complaint filed by victim's parents. Notably, the victim's family had lodged a complaint with the police after they found the girl missing April 25. However, police reportedly took no action to trace the minor.

## MLU will be a model institution, says Kamaljeet Singh

Madhusudan Law College, one of the oldest law institutes in Odisha and India, was officially upgraded to the status of a university April 28. **Professor Dr Kamaljeet Singh** has assumed office as the first Vice-Chancellor of Madhusudan Law University (MLU). Singh, who has served as Member, Himachal Pradesh Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Commission, opens up in an interview. Excerpts...

- What would be your first reaction as the VC of a new varsity (MLU)?
- A VC has nothing much to do after joining an already established university. On the other hand, it is no less than a challenge to be the VC of a new university. It is an opportunity for me and I will utilise my foresight to establish the institute as a model university.
- How do you think the journey would be from a teacher to an administrator?
- I have more than 27 years of teaching experience. Moreover, I have worked in several positions at 17 universities and 277 colleges. Hence, I have an exposure to a host of areas. I believe that this experience would definitely help me further.
- What according to you is the most challenging task in varsity management?
- Managing a varsity is full of challenges. From admissions to hosting classes, challenges are everywhere. It is more, especially, during the pandemic as we are unable to host physical classes. Our efficacy, however, improves only with challenges.
- What are your plans for the university's development?
- There are three key parts of a varsity—students, faculty and non-teaching staffs. We believe that development of the university is directly proportional to the development of the three. As students play a key role in an educational system, our focus would be to offer state-of-the-art classroom, library and infrastructure to them.
- How do you think MLU is going to create an identity in national and international levels?
- We will try focussing on this once the university starts functioning in a full-fledged manner. We will sign agreements with national and international universities apart from starting the student-teacher exchange programmes.
- Can we expect a competition between National Law University and MLU?
- National Law University (NLU) and MLU are totally different. While NLU has only 15-20 per cent students from Odisha, MLU will have 100 per cent Odisha students. We don't have any competition with NLU. I want to provide law education to common students in Odisha.



# 329 tonne O<sub>2</sub> carried through ECoR green corridor

# Virtual tour of Tribal Museum every Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** East Coast Railway (ECoR) has carried 329 tonne of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) from different steel plants in its jurisdiction to states like Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana and Delhi.

A total of 187 tonne LMO has already been transported from Tata Bhushan Siding in Angul. Similarly, 105 tonne of LMO has been transported from Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, Visakhapatnam and 31 tonne of LMO from Jindal Steel, Angul.

Different hospitals in various states are in dire need of oxygen. Getting requests from different state governments, Indian Railways has prepared itself to provide oxygen transportation services to all the states in need. Green corridor has been provided for faster movement of the Oxygen Express. Indian Railways is ensuring that the medical oxygen is made available to Covid-19 patients across the country through Oxygen Express.

The first Oxygen Express, loaded with 105 tonne of LMO in 7 tankers, left from Visakhapatnam. The second Oxygen Express was loaded with 32 tonne of LMO in two tankers from Tata Bhushan Steel Plant for



## IN A NUTSHELL

**R**o-Ro service of Oxygen Express through Green Corridor will reach destinations at the earliest without delay

**C**oal and foodgrains are being loaded from different loading points under ECoR jurisdiction

**3**29 tonne of LMO has been carried in 19 containers through six Ro-Ro service trains

Haryana. The third Oxygen Express from Tata Bhushan Steel Plant at Angul, loaded with 63.6 tonne of LMO in five tankers, left for

Telangana by Roll on - Roll off (Ro-Ro) service of Indian Railways.

30.6 tonne of LMO in two tankers from Tata Bhushan Steel Plant, 30.86 tonne in two tankers from Jindal Steel Plant and again 60.23 tonne of LMO in four tankers from Tata Bhushan Steel Plants were sent to Faridabad, Delhi Cantt and SNAG respectively through Ro-Ro service.

More empty LMO tankers from different states are on the way to carry LMO from ECoR jurisdiction. ECoR has taken all precautions for safe running of Oxygen Express Special Trains from its jurisdiction and sending these trains

## 4,410 TONNE OXYGEN SENT TO 10 STATES

**BHUBANESWAR:** Standing in solidarity with states facing acute shortage of medical oxygen, the Odisha government has so far sent 241 tankers carrying 4,410.462 metric tonne (MT) of the life-saving gas to 10 states.

The states which received the LMO are: Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh has received the highest quantity of 1,404.83 MT medical oxygen in 68 tankers, followed by Telangana (1,124.179 MT in 67 tankers), Madhya Pradesh (417.55 MT in 25 tankers), Haryana (528.782 MT in 27 tankers), Uttar Pradesh (362.42 MT in 20 tankers),

Maharashtra (211.16 MT in 13 tankers), Chhattisgarh (182.931 MT in 12 tankers) and Tamil Nadu (116.22 MT in six tankers) in the last 11 days.

In addition to the above, two tankers with 33 MT of oxygen were also sent to Delhi and one tanker with 29.32 MT to Punjab.

These tankers were loaded at oxygen plants in four districts — Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur and Sundargarh (Rourkela).

The lion's share of medical oxygen — 1,844.412 MT — was sent in 98 tankers from Rourkela. A total of 1,314.53 MT, 458.02 MT and 793.5 MT of medical oxygen were sent in 65, 28 and 50 tankers from Jajpur, Angul and Dhenkanal districts respectively.

at the earliest.

Since liquid oxygen is a cryogenic cargo, utmost care has been taken about the maximum speed, maximum acceleration and maximum deceleration at which it can be carried.

Earlier, ECoR General Manager Vidya Bhushan had instructed officials to take it as a challenge to supply oxygen at the earliest during the crisis. He had stressed upon proper lashing and packing of the tankers on the rake.



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Tribal art aficionados have something to cheer about as the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (ST&SC) Development department Monday said that it has arranged virtual tour of Odisha State Tribal Museum here every Sunday.

In view of Covid-19 resurgence, the ST&SC Development department has shut the Odisha State Tribal Museum located on the premises of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) here for the public. However, the department has taken steps to enable people to visualise the exclusive artifacts and unique aspects of Tribal Museum being at home every Sunday by opening Facebook and

Twitter pages of the SCSTRTI - @scstrti, @stscdev.

The Museum of Tribal Art and Artifacts, now known as Odisha State Tribal Museum, celebrates the life and culture of Odisha's 62 tribal communities and 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). It is considered as one of the best tribal museums in India.

Located at Bhubaneswar, the museum has been conceptualised as a 'Museum of Man', which is a hub of anthropological knowledge for visitors and research scholars. The museum represents the richness of indigenous tribal culture and social systems followed by tribal communities. In addition to five galleries depicting numerous tribal arts and crafts, there is an exhibition gallery on PVTGs called 'PVTG World'.

# Mixed response to third phase vax drive in City



Journalists waiting for their turns at a vaccination centre at Jatri Niwas

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** The first day of the third phase vaccination which began here, Monday, drew bouquets and brickbats from the denizens of the Capital city as a section of people were dissatisfied with the arrangements at the vaccination centres.

The third phase vaccination drive aims at inoculating people in the age group of 18-44 years. The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) which has set a target to vaccinate as many as 5 lakh people saw drives being carried out in about 30 sites. More than 11,000 had registered through CoWIN app with the civic body procuring about 1.5 lakh vials for the initial phase.

"Very excited to take my first vaccine, I have not stepped out of home for about a month and this is

the only time I have come out. Allowing students like us to take the jab will definitely lessen worries of our family's apart from preventing further spread of infection. We are following all guidelines of the government," said Priyadrasni Sahoo, a resident at Satya Nagar.

Meanwhile, some others complained about lack of proper arrangements at the vaccination centres and proper dissemination of information. "Initially, I struggled to book a slot for myself in the CoWIN app as the OTP didn't come. After that I had to wait in a long queue under the scorching sun. When my turn came, they asked for a copy of my ID proof which was not mentioned anywhere," lamented Suwendu Mohanty, a resident of Laxmisagar.

Moreover, many complained of vaccination centres running out of vials after long and impatient

## Vaccination to continue on Saturdays

**BHUBANESWAR:** In a bid to vaccinate more people, the state government Monday directed district Collectors to continue the inoculation programme Saturdays as well. In view of two-day weekend shutdown, the state government had earlier decided against holding vaccination programme on weekends (Saturday & Sunday) till May 15. However, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department has now issued instruction to conduct vaccination session on all the days excluding Sundays. There will be no vaccination Sundays for sanitisation of the vaccination centres, H&FW additional chief secretary PK Mohapatra said. Owing to the reported shortage of vaccine in the state, the Health department has also asked the district administrations to give priority to those waiting for the second dose.

wait. It can be mentioned that the inoculation programme, which started from 8am continued till 1pm for the 18-44 age group while the beneficiaries above 45 got the jab between 3pm and 6pm at the same sites. All the beneficiaries from this group will be given the second dose by the end of June or first of July - after a gap of 45 days.

## PANIC BUYING



People queue up at a grocery store at Kharavel Nagar in Bhubaneswar, Monday, ahead of the statewide lockdown

OP PHOTO

# Sanvridhi to empower state-based startups

POST NEWS NETWORK

## STARTUP ACCELERATION PROGRAMME

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** A Tal Incubation Centre-Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation (AIC-Nalanda) Bhubaneswar hosted the virtual inaugural session of 'Sanvridhi-Startup Acceleration Program' Monday.

AIC-Nalanda, which is supported by NITI Aayog, plans to run this program during May and July for

Odisha-based startups which are at their pre-market or early traction levels of growth.

'Sanvridhi' is an initiative by AIC-Nalanda which is designed to give the participating startups a complete strategic outlook towards their business proposal and prepare them for future challenges pertaining to their respective fields

of operation.

This program is supported by Lemon School of Entrepreneurship as the knowledge partner with Startup Odisha, Startup India, Headstart and MSME & Startups Forum as the ecosystem partners, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as the industry partner.

The inaugural session witnessed

the presence of 30 participating startups of Odisha belonging to a varied range of sectors like health-care, agriculture, education, manufacturing, IT & IoT, FinTech, E-Commerce, hospitality supply chain, services, social impact and clean energy. These startups are looking forward to best-in-class training in order to pivot their ideas or expand into new avenues of business with market and investment readiness.

## Universities urged to make NCC elective

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 3:** UGC, AICTE and ICAR have urged all universities and affiliated colleges to introduce National Cadet Corps (NCC) as an elective subject in their degree courses.

The advisory conforms to the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020), and aligns India's education system with Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030.

Primarily, NEP 2020 seeks to adapt India's education to the changing landscape of knowledge, employment and ecosystem. One of the most important steps taken in this direction has been to efface the distinction between curricular and non-curricular subjects.

Against this backdrop, Universities are being compelled to expeditiously reorient their education system and be more creative and multidisciplinary, as envisaged in NEP 2020.

## CRY FOR COVID CARE



Locals of Choudwar demonstrate near the community health centre at Tangi demanding a Covid care facility

# Process for declaration of HSC exam results begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 3:** Officials of the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) have started the process of publishing the results of High School Certificate (HSC) examinations.

According to a source, district education officers (DEOs) have asked headmasters of all the schools for detailed information of Class X students. They have been asked to compile information in a specific format designed by the BSE. Besides other data, the format will have the roll number of the students and names of their schools.

Most importantly, the headmasters have been asked to provide the marks allotted to the students in the Class IX annual examinations and Class X tests.

Students will be awarded marks for the matriculation exams on the basis of the compiled data,

## DEOs have asked headmasters of all the schools for detailed information of Class X students

sources said.

However, the Odisha Secondary School Teachers Association (OSSTA) has opposed the decision of the BSE, it was learnt.

Notably, the HSC examinations were to be held from May 3, 2021. But, in view of the spike in Covid-19 cases, the examinations were postponed.

Later, Class X students, demanding cancellation of the examinations, staged a protest in the state capital April 20. A day later, the Odisha government announced that the matric exams stand cancelled.

## Donation drive by SAI Int'l School

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** With the rise in Covid-19 cases in the city, the Going Global and Interact Club of SAI International School has organised a donation drive collecting unused masks, hand sanitiser, sanitary pads for the poor and frontline workers.

An online donation drive, 'High on Hygiene', requesting people to drop masks, sanitizer bottles and sanitary pads in two drop boxes is in progress for the last three weeks. The drop boxes were installed in Cuttack and the other at SAI International School, Bhubaneswar.

In order to comply with social distancing norms, the drop box was kept outside so that people could access it easily. Over 2,000 unused cotton and medical masks, 1,000 bottles of hand sanitiser along with 250 packets of sanitary pads were collected during the drive.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Doyal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

# Move to turn Satkosia into tiger conservation project hits roadblock



The National Tiger Conservation Authority and the state government have launched joint efforts to turn the Satkosia region into tiger conservation project

The state government tried to increase the tiger population in the area and even brought a tiger from the Kanha Wildlife Sanctuary and a tigress from the Bandhavgarh National Park, both in Madhya Pradesh

HOWEVER, THE LOCAL INHABITANTS, MOSTLY TRIBALS, ARE RELUCTANT TO LEAVE THEIR VILLAGES WITHOUT PROPER COMPENSATION AND ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

as Revenue, Panchayati Raj and Wildlife conducted meetings in every village and tried to persuade the villagers to leave their homestead. The concerned officials also explained in details the displacement process and compensation meant for the residents if they agree to the government's demands. However, the villagers refused to yield and move out from their native villages where they have been living for several years.

Few days back, the state government returned the female tigress Sundari to Bandhavgarh National Park. Meanwhile, the state government has launched fresh efforts to displace the residents in some tribal-dominated villages under Badasinga panchayat in Nayagarh district. It has been learnt that the move has sparked tension among the tribals.

The tribals of Damaghati, Bedadi, Tudungi, Kumuri and Jankajhola villages under Badasinga panchayat recently convened a meeting in Jankajhola village and voiced their protests over the government's move. Santosh Kumar Sahu, deputy ranger of Banigochha East Forest Range, Forest officials, former sarpanch of Badasinga panchayat Prafulla Kumar Nayak, local political leaders Raghunath Sahu and Naib sarpanch Bipracharan Mallick attended the said meeting and had three-hour discussion with the tribals about the displacement process.

On their part, the tribals drew the attention of the officials to protecting their rights and interest under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and R&R Policy, 2005.

They demanded that the government should first think of about their rehabilitation and livelihood following which they would consider leaving their villages.

The tribals said similar meetings will be held in other tribal villages also.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Gania, May 3:** An attempt to turn the Satkosia region under Mahanadi wildlife division and spread over Nayagarh, Angul and Boudh districts into a full scale tiger conservation project has hit roadblocks with the local inhabitants refusing to move out of the area demanding rehabilitation before displacement, a report said.

Most of the local inhabitants are tribals who claimed that the government should consider their rehabilitation and livelihood before taking any step to displace them from their homestead. The unyielding attitude of the tribals has put the government in a fix.

Reports said that the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the state government have launched joint efforts to turn the Satkosia re-

gion into tiger conservation project.

As part of this effort, the state government tried to increase the tiger population in the area and even brought a tiger from the Kanha Wildlife Sanctuary and a tigress from the Bandhavgarh National Park, both in Madhya Pradesh.

The male tiger was identified as Mahavir, while the female tigress as Sundari. However, Mahavir succumbed to unknown reasons during his stay at Satkosia, while the Sundari's attacks on local residents sparked off unrest in the area.

Meanwhile, the state government had issued a notice seeking to displace the inhabitants of Raiguda village in Angul district, Marda in Boudh district, Kuturi, Salapanda, Musuguda, Bedadi, Kumuri, Tudungi and Damaghati in Nayagarh district in 2018-19.

All the line departments such



A sanitisation drive being undertaken in Lefripada block of Sundargarh district bordering Chhattisgarh following a spike in Covid cases

OP PHOTO

# Tension over Covid patient's death

A DEMONSTRATION RESULTED IN HUNDREDS OF VEHICLES STRANDED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, May 3:** Tensions flared up at Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital located in Panposh area of the Steel City Sunday night following the death of a Covid patient, Sunday night.

Holding the hospital authorities responsible for the death of the patient, the infuriated family members staged a roadblock on NH-143, Monday.

Family members even alleged that the staff of the hospital cremated the body without informing his family members. They came to know about his death and subsequent cremation after they reached the hospital to enquire about his



health condition. Reports said that Dilip Saha of Bandhamunda area near the city tested positive for Covid-19 and was admitted to Hi Tech Covid Hospital two days ago. He however, succumbed to his illness while undergoing treatment,

Sunday morning. The staff of the hospital took out the body and allegedly cremated it without informing his family members about his death.

The road blockade was withdrawn Monday morning after top police officials held a discussion

with the agitators and assured them of justice.

According to a source, another patient who was admitted at the Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital Sunday evening died the same night while undergoing treatment.

Unable to digest the news, the family members accused the hospital authorities of not taking proper care of their patient.

Subsequently they laid siege to NH-143 near Gandhi Square and staged a sit-in placing the body on the road.

The roadblock resulted in hundreds of vehicles stranded on both sides of the road.

# 34 patients flee quarantine centre



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Saraskana, May 3:** In a shocking incident, as many as 34 inmates, who were earlier put in quarantine, have fled from a facility at Seemanta Mahavidyalaya of Jharapokharia area in Mayurbhanj district.

Two of the 34 inmates had fled Friday, while 32 others fled the quarantine centre later.

The incident came to the fore after Saraskana Block Development Officer (BDO) lodged an FIR in this regard Sunday afternoon.

All the 34 inmates were West Bengal-returnees. A police case (No.-106/2021) has been registered against two of them. Acting on the FIR, police have launched a probe

in this connection and initiated a manhunt as well. BDO Sangram Keshari Bhol said.

On being contacted, Mayurbhanj project director DRDA Bhabesh Kumar Nayak said, "I am aware of the fact that 32 more inmates have fled Seemanta Mahavidyalaya quarantine centre. I have asked the BDO to lodge an FIR with local police against these 32 inmates."

Notably, after a large number of Covid-19 cases were detected in West Bengal, surveillance activities were intensified by Mayurbhanj district administration in the bordering areas. The migrant workers returning from West Bengal are being put in quarantine.

# Covid positive spends 3 days under banyan tree

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koksara, May 3:** In a bizarre incident, a coronavirus-infected youth of Chhilipal under Koksara block in Kalahandi district spent three days and three nights under a giant banyan tree in the village.

The incident came to the light three days later and subsequently the patient was admitted to a local Covid care hospital by the administration.



According to sources, the 23-year-old youth named Khirod Nayak of Dalguma panchayat had to take

shelter under the tree as he had no other place to stay after he was infected with coronavirus.

Khiro had been attending his ailing mother Sunadei (45), who is suffering from kidney disease and was being treated at Kalahandi district headquarters hospital (DHH). The youth was infected while he was attending to his mother at the DHH. He had returned home April 28, a villager said.

The family owns a very small thatched house. Hence, the youth decided to stay away under the tree for the safety of other members.

On being contacted for his views, Koksara Block Development Officer (BDO) Manisha Das said, "Khiro got infected at Bhawanipatna DHH. Following the advice of doctors treating his mother there, the youth had recently returned home."

Khiro is now under treatment at Parla Covid-19 hospital.

# PRAYER MEETING



A silent prayer meeting organised by the district administration underway in Malkangiri in memory of the deceased Covid warriors

# 4 years on, mega power project in Jaipur yet to be functional

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rasulpur, May 3:** Although four years have passed since work on a mega electricity project was started under Kundapatna electricity section of this block in Jajpur district, it is yet to become operational or be of any use for thousands of consumers in the region, a report said.

The Kundapatna electricity section functions under Dharmasala electricity sub-division and Kuakhia electricity division. The project, a 33/11 KV electric sub-station, was started four years back with an aim to provide optimum and uninterrupted power supply to the consumers who have been reeling under frequent power cuts and low voltage problems. A plan outlay of Rs 6 crore was sanctioned for the project.

The project has crossed its deadline, which expired six months back, but works on the project is yet to be completed. As a result, over 10,000 consumers in eight panchayats of the



The project has crossed its deadline, which expired six months back, but work on the project is yet to be completed

Over 10,000 consumers in eight panchayats of the area are yet to receive power supply from the project

While the project is getting delayed, power distribution company Tata Power North Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPNODL) and the implementing agency L&T are blaming each other for the unfinished project

area are yet to receive power supply from the project.

Residents have demanded to make the project functional without any further delay. While the project is getting delayed, power distribution

company Tata Power North Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPNODL) and the implementing agency L&T are blaming each other for the unfinished project.

Reports said that residents in-

habiting eight panchayats under Kundapatna, Kaema and Kotpur feeders are yet to receive power supply from this sub-station. These panchayats are Rourtrapur under Rasulpur block, Kaema, Patpur, Mangalpur, Mirzapur, Kotpur, Deoda and Uttarpratap panchayats under Dharmasala block. Keeping the problems in view, the state government decided to set up a 33/11 KV power sub-station at Narsinghpur village under Kaema panchayat which would make power supply uninterrupted to the residents in these eight panchayats.

The project has two five MVA transformers and three feeders at Kundapatna, Kotpur and Nalaku. The implementing agency has completed work on the main structure and three feeders, while power connection has been established between one 33KV line and two 11KV lines.

The transformers have been charged and preparations are un-

derway to connect the new lines with the old line. An electrical inspector from Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission also visited the site and issued certificate to make the project operational, February 8, 2021. On April 13, the OERC also asked the implementing agency to cooperate with the distribution firm TPNODL in charging the line.

When contacted, Dhiren Kumar Behera, field engineer of L&T, said that work on the project has been completed and it will be handed over to TPNODL a fortnight after it is charged in May.

Chittaranjan Bhuyan, engineer of Kundapatna electricity section, said that non-completion of works is the reason behind the delay in making the project functional. He, however, hoped that the project will become functional by May.

A local resident, Prabhat Kumar Prusty held both the implementing agency as well as the power distribution firm responsible for the delay

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
e-Tender Notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-01-21  
Description of Work: PROVISION OF ALL IN ONE SOLAR STREET LIGHT AT LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) IN LIEU OF THE EXISTING MANNED LEVEL CROSSING AT SPECIFIED LOCATIONS OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.  
Approx Cost of the work: ₹ 2,41,36,000.00  
Completion period: 6 Months  
Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 24.05.2021.  
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without consideration.  
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender.  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G),  
PR-67/M/21-22  
Khurda Road

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No.A-88  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**'e'-Procurement Notice No.01 (NGR) of 2021-22**  
e-mail id: [eenidivn@gmail.com](mailto:eenidivn@gmail.com)

1	Name of work	River embankment, road & canal works
2	Total No. of work	24 (Twenty four)
3	Estimated cost	Rs.12.59 Lakhs to 41.24 Lakhs
4	Period of completion	Six (06) calendar months
5	Date & time of availability of Bid Document in the portal	15.00 hours of 06.05.2021 to 17.00 hours of 17.05.2021
6	Last date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	17.05.2021 up to 17.00 hours
7	Date and place of opening of Technical Bid	On 18.05.2021 at 9.00 Hours in the office of the Executive Engineer, Nayagarh Irrigation Division, Nayagarh
8	Name and address of the O.I.T. (Officer Inviting Tender)	Executive Engineer, Nayagarh Irrigation Division, Nayagarh

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "https://tendersodisha.gov.in"  
Executive Engineer, Nayagarh Irrigation Division, Nayagarh  
OIPR-32303/11/0001/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No.A-94  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, JONK IRRIGATION DIVISION, NUAPADA**  
**e-Procurement Notice No.- (JID) 01/2021-22**  
e-mail address: [ee.jid.npd@gmail.com](mailto:ee.jid.npd@gmail.com)

**PERCENTAGE RATE e-TENDER**

1. The Executive Engineer Jonk Irrigation Division, Nuapada, Dist.- Nuapada, Pin-766105, (Odisha) on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites "PERCENTAGE RATE Bids" IN SINGLE COVER SYSTEM, in electronic tendering system for the construction works detailed in the table below, which are eventually to be draw on P1 agreement.

Package No.	BID ID No. (JID) 01/21-22 TO (JID) 19/2021-22
Name of Work	19, (Nineteen) Nos. C.C. guard wall with bed lining & road works
Approximate value of work	Varies Rs.5.98 to Rs.22.24 Lakhs (Excluding GST)
Period of Completion	06, (Six months)
Classification of Bidder	'B' & 'C' and 'D' & 'C' class Contractor only
Bid documents available Date and Time	05.05.2021 to 15.05.2021 upto 13.00 Hrs.
Bid clarification start date & Closing date	05.05.2021 to 15.05.2021 upto 13.00 Hrs.
Date, Time and Venue of opening of bid online	17.05.2021 at 11.30 Hrs. at O/o the Executive Engineer, Jonk Irr Division, Nuapada
If stipulation arises the Tender will be decided through transparency Lottery System.	20.05.2021 at 10.00 Hrs. at O/o the Executive Engineer, Jonk Irr Division, Nuapada

Further details can be seen any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) only.  
Sd./- Executive Engineer, Jonk Irrigation Division, Nuapada  
OIPR-32393/11/0001/2122

FOCUS NATION

# THE VACCINE DEBACLE



Even if we take the missteps that led us to the misery of the second wave in our stride, the missteps on vaccines are a new order of failure

Consider that on April 19, the Prime Minister announced a "liberalised and accelerated phase 3 strategy" of vaccination effective May 1 that brought in a public-private and states-Centre distinction in vaccination policy and roll-outs. Within two days, on April 21, Serum Institute announced differential pricing for states and the private sector, keeping silent on prices for the Centre. On April 22, Dr. Krishna M. Ella, the Founder-Chairman and MD of Bharat Biotech reportedly said that he would "like to get the maximum price... to recover all costs..."

Poonawalla is known for his high-flying ways. Dr. Ella is known for his simple living. Both have now begun talking the language of profits. This is quite a change from the vision of the founder of Serum Institute, Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla, the current CEO's father, who has often stressed on affordability. Worse, the current pricing games are about a vaccine that has not yet been fully licensed, and is only approved for "restricted use". Because of this, these vaccines technically cannot be sold, at least not yet.

It may be futile to look to the vaccine makers for answers when the government of the day is mired in games and projections, not facts and solutions. It would have been possible to stand tall and write a story of grit and growth; to be affordable and profitable. If the vaccine makers insisted on higher prices, compulsory licensing could have been invoked. We could have said when the time came, we stood together and tall. Alas, we were all pulled down.

**Jagdish Rattanani is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Dr T Jacob John is retired Professor of Clinical Virology, CMC Vellore. Views are personal.**  
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The world's second largest market for vaccines is India. The world's largest vaccine producer is in India. This should be a simple case of, 'ergo, problem solved!' But we have turned this on its head. It is plain that we don't have enough vaccines. Citizens stand in long lines, and crowding is common. Many will have to take their chances another day because vaccines run out. All this in the midst of a deadly second wave that has caused nation-wide havoc.

Even if we take the missteps that led us to the misery of the second wave in our stride, the missteps on the vaccines are a new order of failure. The planning, pricing and actual rollout are nothing short of a callous and culpable act for which the ordinary people of India will pay a terrible price - in money spent, in lives lost and in terms of signaling the pharma giants of the world that India has become a place to make money even in the midst of untold misery.

Barely four years ago, the government of India under Narendra Modi cut prices of stents as much as 80 per cent in some cases and stood up to strong lobbies of stent manufacturers and traders. Prices were force-dropped with the intention of making advanced cardiac care affordable to a wider section of people.

Why then would such a government allow the Serum Institute of India, which makes the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine called 'Covishield', a juicy money-making deal on a direly-needed vaccine in the midst of a crisis? What is the secret behind this pact that will generate ₹60,000 crore in revenue, if one is to count just 50 crore people (roughly 40 per cent of Indians) taking two doses each at ₹600 per dose in the private sector alone? Would this not be a case of usurious profits when even at ₹150 a shot charged

to the Union government, the company admittedly made money? Similar questions can be asked of the other Indian vaccine manufacturer, the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International, the manufacturer of the indigenous vaccine named 'Covaxin'.

Further, what is the difference between the Union government and the state governments in so far as vaccination for citizens is concerned, with the former paying ₹150 but the latter being charged a higher price of ₹400 per dose? After a hue and cry, this price then was reduced to ₹300 per dose for the states, a drop of 25 per cent "as a philanthropic gesture" that "will... save countless lives," as the CEO of Serum Institute of India Adar Poonawalla put it. Isn't that an admission in some sense that vaccine manufacturers have been allowed to profiteer in so blatant a manner that philanthropy is being invoked to save lives? Bharat Biotech followed suit, reducing the price of its vaccine to the states from ₹600 to ₹400 a dose.

Both vaccine manufacturing companies are private sector entities entitled to their profits. They are also at the forefront of the war against Covid-19. A pandemic

response demands that vaccination coverage be universal and free. With numbers of doses known, orders could have been placed in advance. But the government did none of this. In the initial days, it paid almost nothing to the companies to support or ramp up production. It has instead now set the stage for public-private sector mismatches that will occur in a differential pricing system. Expect the free vaccine stations to dry up soon.

The central government under normal circumstances must advise states to pay no more than it is paying, and negotiate with the suppliers for a bulk order with the Centre-state cost-sharing to be decided as policy. Is it at all possible for a state authority to pay more for any set of goods and services that are bought in bulk at a price negotiated by the Centre, that too in an emergency?

The sudden departure of Adar Poonawalla for Britain at the beginning of the month raises questions. There is likely more here than we know. It is a mirror to the underhand nature of the dealings, and to the hubris, callousness and dressing-up that has been the hallmark of the government's response to the pandemic.

Jagdish Rattanani & Dr T Jacob John

**THE CURRENT PRICING GAMES ARE ABOUT A VACCINE THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN FULLY LICENSED, AND IS ONLY APPROVED FOR "RESTRICTED USE"**

SPECTRUM MANOJ DAS

## Disillusioned Marxist to passionate humanist

Manoj Das was a literary prodigy, whose first collection of poems, Satabdira Artanada came out when he was 15 and he edited a journal, Diganta, a year later. He is by far the tallest bilingual writer that Odisha has produced. While his writing in Odia is prodigious, he is equally respected for his exceptional craft in writing short stories in English and commenting about myriad social issues in reputed newspapers. Graham Greene, the celebrated English writer, compared him with RK Narayan, the first Indian fiction writer in English to catch the global eye, with 'perhaps an added mystery'. When RK Narayan passed away in 2001, Manoj Das wrote a delectable Obit. "He cooked no delicacies out of his country's shortcoming, churned out no concoction of realism and erotica but focussed on little ironies of life." Manoj Das believed that while RK Narayan did not believe in occult, he was a passionate mystique!

Manoj Das flirted with communism as a student leader. His disillusionment with Marxism happened on a trip to Indonesia in June 1956, when he met DN Aidit, Secretary General of Communist Party, Aidit in that meeting brought out how Khrushchev had brought out in a report, the brutal tyranny of Stalin. Stalin and Lenin who had replaced God in the minds of communists in USSR and India had become fallen Gods. It is largely this frustration that drove him to undertake the spiritual journey



and embrace the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. He moved to Pondicherry in 1963. Marx disappointed him, spiritualism spurred his inner self and literature catapulted him, thereafter.

He was against sectarian secularism and exhorted his fellowmen to imbibe the true spirit of secularism. He recalls how in a get together for celebrating Sahitya Akademi award to Kalindi Charan Panigrahi in 1968, Sahid Zahir, the poet sang the glory of Krishna. For him the myth of Krishna was not the monopoly of Hindus but an inheritance of all Indians. Secular Hindus for him must try to broaden the outlook of non-Hindu brothers and sisters. Secular intellectuals should also divert their zeal to lift the orthodox Hindu society from the pit of casteism. He wrote that Ayurveda cannot be shunned by non-Hindus, just as Unani cannot be dismissed by Hindus just because the medieval Muslim physician brought the systems from

Byzantine Greece! Manoj Das is the master of satire and wit. His wit and humanism comes through, when he asks to choose between a dreaded terrorist and a mob leader who punctures the tyre of a rickshaw during rasta roko, carrying a slum dwelling woman in the throes of labour.

Village and rural culture of Odisha are the central tools of Das' writing. Lack of respect for rural grace along with the inability to see the consequences of certain kinds of development activities often appear in his story. He is like Indian Chekhov in his awareness of human misery and ironies of life and in the art of exposing all that is vulgar, shameful and pitiable. A master of spinning of yarn, the reader seems to watch leisurely through a corridor and ante chamber like the merry pilgrims of Chaucer ambling their way to Canterbury. His stories contain messages which are not didactic but very subtle. While he presents predicament in his stories, his world is not dark and bleak like Kafka. His writing is also refreshingly free from horror, sex and violence as he strongly believed that negative impulses can be transcended by a feeling of love, sympathy and fellow feeling.

Manoj Das wrote a number of delectable edits, commenting on a number of social issues. On the centenary year of Jallianwala Bagh he writes, that no one can undo history but a British apology would have been symbolic "of collapse

of colonies, monarchy and feudal system as well as triumph of ideas of equality". Should Britain apologise, its dignified humility would indicate a new chapter in civilisation. He also laments that sense of humour is fading, as Shankar's weekly closed in 1975, due to commercial non-viability. Its satire and sympathy mingled harmoniously in cartoons, prompting Nehru to say: Do not spare me Shankar. The punch was closed in 1998.

Quest for Indianness has remained the most central concern of his artistic endeavour. He depicted transition of rural Odisha from feudalism to capitalism. He was sympathetic towards struggle that females had to undergo in patriarchal social setup of India. Lakshmi's Adventure is a heart-rendering story of a poor mother who cannot afford to buy a frock for her daughters. Novella Cyclones is a critique of environmental degradation of eco-friendly villages where government officials and greedy corporate join hands to devastate environment. Manoj Das was not merely Vishnu Sharma of Odisha, peddling mythology and mystique, but was a humanist par excellence. He was disillusioned with Marxism but his writing persistently carried his passionate plea for socio-economic and gender justice. He was always weary of false freedom as emancipation from the bondage of soil is no freedom for the tree.

The writer teaches Constitutional Law.



SN Misra

**FOR MANOJ DAS, THE MYTH OF KRISHNA WAS NOT THE MONOPOLY OF HINDUS BUT AN INHERITANCE OF ALL INDIANS**



## Fugitive Blames Govt

When India is fighting a grim battle against the second wave of Covid-19, here comes the shocking revelation from the fugitive Serum Institute of India (SII) chief Adar Poonawalla that the vaccine shortage will continue through July as the government didn't anticipate in January the second wave would hit the country. The complacency stemmed from the decline in caseload.

A report in Financial Times quoted him as claiming that the SII couldn't scale up its production of Covishield since there were no orders. The vaccine shortage will be felt even more acutely as the government has opened vaccination to all adults from May 1.

Poonawalla told the paper that he had been wrongly victimised. That apart, his decision to flee the country and seek refuge in the UK when the country has turned into hell with no one knowing whose turn it next is to be infected with the virus is a gross act against the country.

He has moved to the UK with his family for an "extended period" just in time before the foreign shores stopped entry of any Indian into the country. If money launderers and frauds such as Vijay Mallya, Mehul Choksi, Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi et al had fled India to escape arrest for their economic offences, Poonawalla followed in their footsteps in a similar but much cleverer manner, blaming inability to withstand threats and pressures for supplying vaccines as he claimed in an interview to The Times, London. Interestingly, not only had the government paid him ₹3,000 crore recently, he had also been accorded 'Y' category security by the Central government just days before he scouted from India. But, that was obviously not enough for him.

People afflicted with Covid are dying on the streets, in cars and inside and outside hospitals for lack of oxygen, vaccines and immunity boosting medicines. He must have found India to be too unsafe for his family and used his resources and contacts to find safety in the UK leaving millions of his countrymen in the jaws of death. Many other superrich have already chosen foreign shores to escape the scourge wiping out the population daily by thousands. Unfortunately, those still supporting Poonawalla and his ilk forget conveniently that common Indians like you or me do not enjoy the privilege of moving out of India when we are under great stress. We are compelled to grin and bear all hardships, even be prepared to die with an infection that this man could have helped us overcome with his vaccines.

Poonawalla has chosen to flee the country when less than 2 per cent of the population has been vaccinated against Covid and there is mad rush for the jobs. Poonawalla said he made the move because there was a grave threat to his life in India. "I don't want to go back to that situation. Everything falls on my shoulders but I can't do it alone... I don't want to be in a situation where you are just 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 stated in the interview. His words sound so pathetic especially when they came in the wake of allegations of ruling BJP politicians cornering stocks of vaccines and other medicines Covid-hit patients need.

If his words tell the truth, they tend to confirm the allegations about black-marketing and hoarding of vaccines. The alleged threats are likely since the SII's Covishield is the more common vaccine in the country and Poonawalla has had to balance international contracts and domestic commitments in the past two months.

Earlier this month, the government had also given a "stressed" Poonawalla an advance loan of ₹3,000 crore to ramp up production. According to some, this amount was too little too late. There has been widespread criticism of the Centre for monopolising procurement and distribution of the two vaccines - Covishield and Covaxin. When the situation went out of control, the Centre tried to find a scapegoat in the state governments and passed the blame for the collapse of health care system to save the people from the pandemic to the states. It also 'liberalised' its vaccine policy in a cynical manner allowing SII to sell Covishield directly to the states at a premium of ₹300 per dose as against the central government price of ₹150. With this policy, Poonawalla can sell half of his stock directly to the states and private hospitals, which has triggered a scramble for an already scarce vaccine supply. If his claim of undue pressure is to be believed, the reason for that is the Centre's confusing purchase policy which set the hawks on him.

The Centre failed to anticipate the grave crisis India would plunge into. The government kept lulling itself into complacency and dished out a false narrative that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership was the best in the world and that India had "defeated Covid-19." Publicity has been the corner stone of this government's governance policy for which the country is now paying with the lives of its citizens.

The SII CEO's admission betrays the smug confidence the government had. Instead of working on a war footing to fight the pandemic, they were relaxing with a misplaced self-confidence. "We'd struggled through 2020 to get everything ready. I thought I could put my feet up and take a vacation, but it's been the exact opposite. It's been chaotic," Poonawalla said.

The brazenness of the government was shockingly in display first when it announced a 2-day 'Tika Utsav' celebration and again when it told the Supreme Court there is no shortage of oxygen when hospitals after hospitals are still sending SOS to governments for supply, people are dying without oxygen, cylinders are being sold at a premium in the open market and whatever foreign help is landing up, it is being immediately gobbled up by the central government.

WISDOM CORNER

- You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club. JACK LONDON
- There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in. GRAHAM GREENE
- Try to be like the turtle - at ease in your own shell. BILL COPELAND

WORDSWORTH

**Mufti**  
This term for the off-duty civilian clothes of the military man, or these days anybody who usually wears some sort of uniform, was originally a joke among officers in the British Indian Army, and is first recorded early in the nineteenth century. It's usually said to come from Mufti, the title of a Muslim legal expert who is empowered to give rulings on religious law. The story is told in Yule and Burnell's Hobson-Jobson of 1886 that the word was "perhaps originally applied to the attire of dressing-gown, smoking-cap, and slippers, which was like the Oriental dress of the Mufti". It is assumed that officers wore this garb while relaxing in the mess.

LOL

**Crossing the border**  
and continued across the border.  
Two weeks later, the same thing happened. Again the guard demanded to see the two bags, which again contained nothing but sand. This went on every week for six months, until one day the cyclist with the sand bags failed to appear. A few days later, the guard happened to meet the cyclist downtown. "Say friend, you sure had us crazy," said the guard. "We knew you were smuggling something across the border. I won't say a word - but what is it you were smuggling?" "Bicycles!"



Expected results

Sir, In Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, exit polls had made it amply clear as to what was in store. It was a foregone conclusion the BJP will retain power in Assam and DMK will drive out the AIADMK from supremacy in TN. In Pondicherry, the NDA captured power as was also predicted in opinion polls. The Kerala poll results however have bucked the trend with Pinayari Vijayan's LDF retaining power. This also shows that the Left still has some relevance at least in the nation's periphery down south but this has nothing to do with ideology. The credit goes to the policies and programmes of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. He led the campaign single-handedly. The victory for the LDF this time changed the usual trend in the state of the two rival political formations - the UDF and the LDF - alternating in power every five years. The progressive erosion of the strength of the Congress spelt doom for UDF. In Assam too, even as it got a powerful regional party (king-maker) to its side, the Congress lost. The extensive campaign by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra there might have partly helped the Congress alliance win a decent number of seats. There is less of surprise in this round of Assembly polls to four states and a Union Territory. For those that expected a win for the BJP in West Bengal, this is time for disappointment. The feisty Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has managed to whip up sentiments in her favour also by way of a regionalistic approach and projecting 'leaders from Delhi' as marauders - a strategy that worked well with the Bengali mind. The BJP however rose from the level of a non-entity five years ago to being the principal Opposition in the state.  
K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Vaccine politics

Sir, Thirteen Opposition leaders have jointly called on the Modi government to launch free mass vaccinations to tackle the pandemic. The government provides free vaccinations in all state-run centers and millions of people have benefited from these centers. The demand for free vaccinations is not appropriate, because some people are willing to move to private hospitals and are able to pay for vaccines. People are free to choose an option at present. The Opposition parties should stop the politics on vaccination drive and support the government to control this pandemic. Citizens need to follow safeguards and keep precautions.  
Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# Cult politics set to return in TN with Stalin's win

Cult politics had subsided after the passing away of M Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, May 3:** With the DMK winning Tamil Nadu Assembly elections after crushing the AIADMK-led front, and MK Stalin set to become the Chief Minister, the cult politics, which had subsided after the passing away of M Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa, may as well return.

After MG Ramachandran, a matinee idol and superstar of Tamil Nadu entered the state politics, the cadres and sympathisers found in him a new messiah. He was adored and worshipped just like he was in the movies and there were jokes going round in Tamil Nadu that 'if MGR was found falling down during a fight scene in a Tamil movie, the spectators would throw knives at the screen so that MGR could use them and win the fight'. While this may be a joke, the point of adoring MGR as a Tamil icon and saviour of Tamil Nadu was clear. When MGR split the DMK and formed his own party, the AIADMK in 1972, the fans followed him and he won the elections with a comfortable majority.

M. Shivakumar, a political analyst and a former journalist with a Tamil newspaper of Madurai told IANS, "While Periyar and Annadurai gave the ideological moorings to the Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu, MGR raised it to a cult status and he was adored and worshipped across the spectrum and his movie fans moved on with him as his political fans and there started the cult worship in Tamil politics."

Karunanidhi, one of the best lyricists and writers of Tamil Nadu, had a special gift of the gab



and his oratory skills had kept the audience spellbound. He was also worshipped and adored within and outside the Dravidian politics even though the ideology was rationalism.

MGR had carefully picked Jayalalithaa, his one-time pair in filmdom as his political successor. But after his passing away, Jaya was kicked out of the party and even from the funeral procession of her mentor. However, Jaya bounced back and became a powerful Chief Minister with a huge fan following. She, as Chief Minister took the cult politics and image of invincibility to a higher level and even ministers and senior party functionaries were seen prostrating at her feet in public domain.

After the passing away of Jayalalithaa and Karunanidhi, the cult politics of Tamil Nadu had taken a backseat and both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam were ordinary leaders who were

accessible to the general public, bureaucracy and party office bearers.

However, after the DMK captured power with a sizeable majority and MK Stalin set to become the Chief Minister, the politics of cult worship will find an entry into the political firmament of Tamil Nadu as he has the aura of the political dynasty of Karunanidhi which is being worshipped by the cadres and leaders of the DMK.

C. Rajeev of the Centre for Policy and Development Studies, a think tank based out of Chennai while speaking to IANS said, "With Stalin coming to power, the DMK cadres and leaders will commence the worship culture again which will ultimately lead to cult worship. If Stalin does not fall into this trap and stick to his business of administering the state, there can be a respite but the culture of this politics is not easy to be erased and there is every likelihood that cult politics will continue in the state."

# Espionage case: CBI files FIR against Kerala cops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** The CBI has registered an FIR against former Kerala police officials for allegedly framing space scientist Nambi Narayanan on false charges in the 1994 ISRO espionage case, officials said Monday.

The CBI has officially refused to comment on the names of the accused in the FIR and the specific charges, but sources have said several former officials of the Kerala police have been named.

The Supreme Court, April 15, directed the CBI to conduct further investigation into the allegations of the framing of Narayanan on false charges by the police, based on the findings of a three-member committee under retired apex court judge Justice DK Jain.

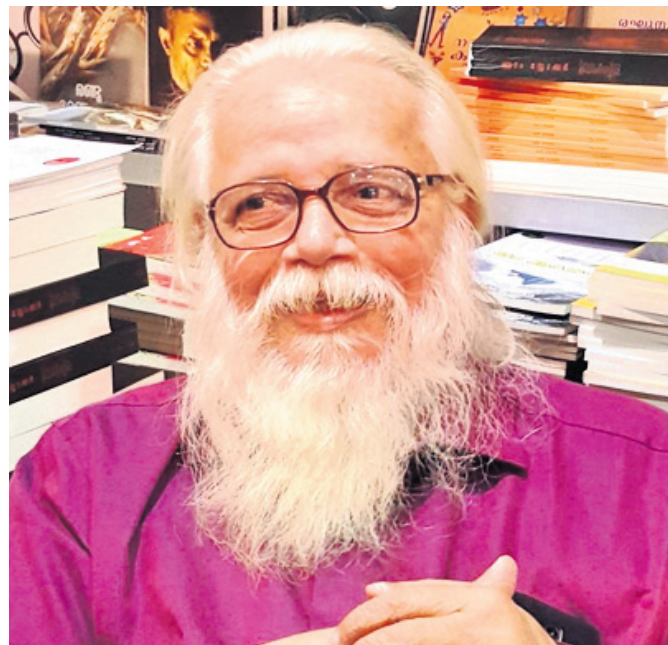
The court had also ordered that the findings of the committee should not be published.

"On the basis of the report, the Supreme Court directed the CBI to proceed in the matter in accordance with law, being a court-directed enquiry," CBI Spokesperson Joshi said.

Accordingly, the CBI has registered a case, he added. Narayanan (79), who was working at ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), was absolved of the espionage charges following the CBI probe. He had approached the Supreme Court seeking action against Kerala police officials.

Narayanan, the then director of the cryogenic project at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), along with the then ISRO deputy director D Sasikumaran, were arrested by the Kerala police in the 1994 case pertaining to the alleged selling of secret documents to Pakistan through a Maldivian woman, Rasheeda.

The police registered two cases at Thiruvananthapuram's Vanchiyoor police station in October and November of 1994 over stay beyond visa limits and espionage re-



The Supreme Court April 15 directed the CBI to conduct further investigation into the allegations of the framing of Narayanan on false charges by the police, based on the findings of a three-member committee under retired apex court judge Justice DK Jain

spectively against Rasheeda, who was arrested in the state capital for allegedly obtaining secret drawings of ISRO rocket engines to sell to Pakistan.

The arrest during the Congress government in Kerala assumed political colour when a section of the party leaders blamed the then chief minister K Karunakaran for the

police action, leading to his resignation.

The cases were handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which gave a clean chit to Narayanan.

"In the espionage case, the CBI submitted a final report before the chief judicial magistrate, Ernakulam, which was accepted by the court. While submitting the said report, the allegations pertaining to espionage were found to be false," Joshi said.

Narayanan approached the Supreme Court against a Kerala High Court judgment that said no action needed to be taken against former state director general of police (DGP) Siby Mathews, who was then heading the SIT, and two retired superintendents of police - K K Joshua and S Vijayan - who were later held responsible by the CBI for the scientist's illegal arrest.

Narayanan had said the Kerala police had "fabricated" the case and the technology he was accused to have stolen and sold in the 1994 case did not even exist at that time.

The CBI, while giving a clean chit to the scientist, had said Mathews had left "the entire investigation to the IB surrendering his duties" and ordered an indiscriminate arrest of the scientist and others without adequate evidence being on record.

September 14, 2018, the apex court awarded a Rs-50 lakh compensation to Narayanan and ordered the formation of a committee for ascertaining the actual scenario, including the arrest and false implication of Narayanan.

The panel was also tasked with finding out ways for taking appropriate steps against the erring officials.

In its order, the Supreme Court had said, "There can be no scintilla of doubt that the appellant, a successful scientist having national reputation, has been compelled to undergo immense humiliation. The lackadaisical attitude of the state police to arrest anyone and put him in custody has made the appellant to suffer the ignominy."

It accepted Narayanan's plea that the authorities, who were responsible for causing such a "harrowing effect" on his mind, should face "legal consequences".

The home ministry constituted the three-member committee under Justice Jain, which submitted its report to the apex court after nearly two-and-a-half years of investigation.

April 5 this year, the Centre moved the top court seeking an urgent hearing and consideration of the panel's report. After going through the report, the court ordered it to be kept in a sealed cover and not to be published.

It asked the CBI to take the findings of the report as part of its preliminary investigation and directed the agency to submit its report to it within three months.

The court rejected the submission of Mathews that he was not heard by the committee, while Narayanan was heard.

# Will Kerala get its 1st woman Speaker?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 3:** With Pinarayi Vijayan re-writing electoral history in the state and now becoming the tallest leader in the party not just at the state level, but at the national level, none will dare raise a word against him. The word that has started going around is he will in all likelihood bring in State Health Minister KK Shailaja as the new Speaker of the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly.

If that happens, it could well be another feather in the cap of Vijayan, as Shailaja will become the first woman Speaker in the history of the Kerala Legislature.

Shailaja herself wrote into record books by registering the highest margin of victory in the Assembly polls when she won the Mattanur seat in her home district - Kannur, with a margin of 60,963 votes.

There have been three women, who have donned the role of Deputy Speaker, but no woman has made to the Speaker's chair and Vijayan through this is expected to win the hearts of women in Kerala.

The party state secretariat and state committee meetings are scheduled in the coming days when the final decision on who all will become



Shailaja created history by registering highest margin of victory in the Assembly polls when she won Mattanur seat in her home district Kannur, with a margin of 60,963 votes

ministers and should Shailaja miss out on the Speaker's post, she is certainly going to get a second term in the health portfolio.

# Lotus blooms in TN again after 20 yrs

The saffron party had contested in 20 seats and won four; however, the party's vote share was only 2.6 per cent

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, May 3:** After a gap of 20 years, BJP's lotus has again bloomed in Tamil Nadu with four of its candidates set to enter the state Assembly, said the party's state President L. Murugan.

According to Murugan, the party had one lawmaker in 1996 and four in 2001 in Tamil Nadu assembly.

After a gap of 20 years, the BJP now has four lawmakers - C. Saraswathi from Modakurichi, M.R. Gandhi from Nagercoil, Vanathi Srinivasan from Coimbatore South and Nainar Nagendran from Tirunelveli, Murugan said.

The BJP had contested in 20 seats and had won four. However, the party's vote share was only 2.6 per cent. BJP women's wing national president Vanathi Srinivasan emerged a giant killer by defeating South Indian superstar and president of Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) with a margin of 1,540 votes at Coimbatore South seat.

Vanathi had been continuously working at the grassroots in the constituency after losing the seat in 2016 garnering 33,113 votes. However



in the 2016 elections, the BJP had contested alone while in 2021 it was in alliance with the AIADMK.

At Tirunelveli constituency, Nainar Nagendran of the BJP won by a margin of 23,402 votes against DMK leader ALS Lakshmanan. Nagendran was a former leader of the AIADMK and is presently the state vice-president of the BJP.

Senior BJP leader MR Gandhi won the Nagercoil Assembly constituency by a good majority over his DMK opponent N. Suresh Rajan by a margin of 9,857 votes. Kanyakumari district has been a good base of the BJP ever since its Jana Sangh days and the RSS has also a good number of Shakhas in this area. Nagercoil is part of the Kanyakumari district.

Party woman leader Dr C Saraswathi defeated DMK candidate, Subbulakshmi Jagadeeshan by a margin of 1,244 votes. Dr.

Saraswathi is a medical doctor who has been in the forefront of several social activists in the constituency for long.

While the BJP won four seats, it was not all rosy for the party with its state president L. Murugan and its senior leader and former national secretary H. Raja, Cine star and BJP leader Khushboo Sundar and IPS officer turned politician Annamalai losing the elections.

Murugan lost the elections at Dharapuram constituency by a slender margin of 812 votes against DMK's N Kavalvizhi. H Raja lost the elections at Karaikudi Assembly constituency by a margin of around 20,000 votes against S Mangudi of the Congress in a fight between two national parties. K Annamalai lost from Aruvakurichi constituency by a margin of 24,300 votes to R Elango of the DMK.

# BJP is the biggest loser in Kerala

Party's vote share dipped from 15.01 % in 2016 to 11.30 % in 2021

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 3:** The Kerala unit of the BJP has gone into a shell as the election results have shaken the rank and file of the party, especially the youthful state party president K. Surendran. Nothing that he claimed came true, and on the contrary the election saw not only the vote share dip, but also the only seat that the BJP had in 2016, was lost.

The Nemonem seat in the capital city district which was won by veteran BJP leader O Rajagopal was lost to the CPI-M leader V Sivankutty, who defeated former BJP state president Kummanem Rajashekeran.

What has hurt the party and has come as a shocker is their vote percentage saw a fall from 15.01 per cent in the 2016 Assembly polls to a mere 11.30 per cent after votes were counted Sunday to the 140-member Kerala Assembly. Incidentally in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, even though it drew a blank and the best that they could man-



Kerala BJP unit chief K Surendran

age then was to come a second in prestigious Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat, they secured 15.53 per cent votes.

If there is any solace for them in the present polls is they managed to come second in nine constituencies, but definitely the state leadership will have to do a lot of answering, as Surendran himself contested in two seats and he had claimed that for the BJP this could well be a landmark election with more number of seats.

# Palaniswami's epic fight slows down DMK juggernaut

IF NOT FOR PALANISWAMI, IT IS HARD TO GUESS IF THE AIADMK WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GARNER 33.3 % VOTE SHARE AS AGAINST THE DMK'S 37.7 %

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, May 3:** Undoubtedly, top AIADMK leader and outgoing Chief Minister K Palaniswami put up an epic fight against the DMK which fetched his party steered alliance 75 seats, nearly one third of the 234 seats in the Tamil Nadu Assembly and despite a decade of anti-incumbency. Beset by a resurgent DMK that

was firing on all cylinders to capture power and a renewed challenge from TTV Dhinakaran's camp, Palaniswami kept his poise and focused on polls and governance matters in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. If not for Palaniswami, it is hard to guess if the AIADMK would have been able to garner 33.3 per cent vote share as against the DMK's 37.7 per cent. AIADMK won 66 seats, its allies PMK and BJP five and four seats respectively and proved yet again that the western region was its fortress. The DMK front bagged 159 constituencies.

The fresh trouble from Dhinakaran camp surfaced when his aunt VK Sasikala was released from prison just ahead of polls in January and it was another matter that she eventually announced staying away from politics.

Several of Palaniswami's decisions like the 7.5 per cent reservation for government school students



in medical admissions who clear NEET, the Rs 12,000 crore plus farm loan waiver benefitting 16.43 lakh farmers and declaring the Cauvery delta region as protected agricultural zone were seen as politically astute and measures that helped slow down the DMK juggernaut.

Beginning December last, Palaniswami criss-crossed the state, taking on DMK and questioning

its track record while in seat of power. Betting on populism, a shared value of Dravidian politics, Palaniswami assured three phase power (24x7) for farmers and took pride in rejuvenation of over 5,500 waterbodies under 'Kudimaramathu scheme' across the state.

Carefully, he focused on his identity as a farmer and put his best foot forward to convince them that their

interests would be best protected by him, one of them. He tagged projects including the Cauvery-Godavari link proposal, Athikadavu Avinashi Scheme, new check dams and accused DMK chief M K Stalin of "entering into an MoU for hydro-carbon exploration" in Cauvery delta region whereas his government banned such initiatives by declaring it a protected zone. The 'good governance' of Amma's government established the rights of Tamil Nadu in Cauvery and Mullaiperiyar issues and it should continue, he appealed to people at his rallies.

Several welfare measures also contributed in preventing a complete rout for AIADMK and such schemes were often highlighted by Palaniswami. It includes Rs 2,500 cash assistance as part of 'Pongal' hamper to 2.07 crore ration card holders, free textbooks, bicycles, laptops and uniform for government school students.

# UDF HAD ENGAGED IN VOTE TRADING WITH BJP: VIJAYAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 3:** A day after leading the CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala to a historic win in the April 6 assembly polls, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Monday lashed out at the Congress-headed UDF alleging it had engaged in vote trading with the BJP to ensure more seats.

"The poll results have shown that UDF has been dealt a massive drubbing. But what we saw even during the counting day May 2 was that they were extremely confident of winning the elections. This sort of confidence must have been due to the vote trading they had engaged with the BJP," Vijayan told a meet-the-press programme here.

Vijayan attributed the UDF's victory in 10 seats, including Chalakudy, Kovalam, Kundara and

Pala, to this "pact" with the BJP and alleged that if such a deal had not taken place, the Congress-led front's debacle would have been far more severe. The BJP leadership should probe the vote trade, he said. The LDF had won 99 of the 140 seats to retain power, while the UDF could manage only 41 seats and BJP drew a blank. In 2016, the left had secured 91 seats and the congress front 47, and BJP one.

Despite national leaders of the saffron party extensively campaigning in the state in the run up to the polls, in 90 of the 140 seats, the BJP's votes had dipped compared to the 2016 elections, he said, adding such a massive erosion of votes had never happened before in the state.

"Why only the BJP did not get the benefit of the increase in new voters?" he asked.

## of the day quote

This is grotesque. No money for Oxygen and Vaccines as our brothers and sisters die waiting for a hospital bed to be cremated in parking lots but Modi will squander public money to feed his megalomaniac vanity. Stop this Crime

SITARAM YECHURY | CPI(M) GENERAL SECY

While urging media professionals to always remain committed to the cardinal principles of journalism like truthfulness, objectivity, accuracy, impartiality and fairness, I commend them for working tirelessly in bringing information to the people during this pandemic

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

The present Election Commission should be disbanded and actions of its members probed. The EC has disgraced itself and voters trust betrayed

ANAND SHARMA | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### Pak opens fire along IB

**Jammu:** Pakistani Rangers violated the ceasefire by opening fire along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district Monday, a senior BSF officer said. A BSF spokesman said this is first-ever ceasefire violation by Pakistan along the IB after the two countries signed a fresh agreement to maintain calm along the border February 25 this year. "Pakistan Rangers resorted to unprovoked firing along IB at 06:15 hours in Ramgarh sector", Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier, NS Jamwal said.

### Consuming hand sanitiser kills two

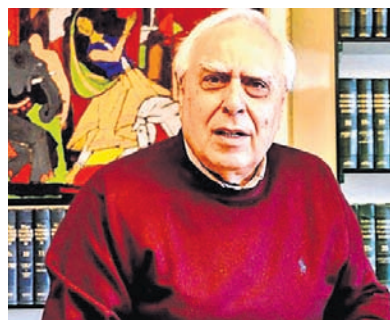
**Raipur:** Two persons died and as many others fell sick after consuming hand sanitiser in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, police said Monday. The incident took place late Sunday night in a locality near a multi-speciality hospital under Gole Bazaar police station limits, they said. Prima facie, the four men consumed the sanitiser due to unavailability of liquor during the curbs imposed here to contain the spread of COVID-19, a police official said.

### Covid +ve girl, mother dead

**Wardha:** The decomposed bodies of a woman and her daughter, both Covid-19 patients, were found dead in a home in Samudrapur tehsil of Maharashtra's Wardha district, police said Monday. The mother and daughter, aged 80 and 45 respectively, were living in a house in Sawangi village separately from the rest of the family, a Samudrapur police station official said.

### Residents urged to return cylinders

**Agra:** Two major NPOs here that have been providing oxygen to Covid patients, have urged their families to return empty cylinders. About 200 oxygen cylinders and 15 concentrators, provided by the two non-profit organisations: Shri Chetra Bajaj Committee and Help Agra, are lying with people being treated in home isolation, they said. "Some people are renting our cylinders further to other people at heavy rates," Committee Spokesperson Nandkishore Goyal said.



**In West Bengal, Who lost: Arrogance, Might, Money power, Using Jai Shri Ram for politics, Divisive agenda & The Election Commission**

KAPIL SIBAL | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

## VACCINATION FOR 18+ COMMENCES IN DELHI

The third and largest phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive to inoculate people in the 18-45 age group began here Monday morning. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said 301 centres have been established in 76 schools in the city. Around 90 lakh people are eligible for the jobs under this category in Delhi



# Can't ramp up vaccine production overnight: Poonawalla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** With states scrambling to secure vaccines, Adar Poonawalla, whose firm is the main supplier of COVID vaccine in India, Monday said his firm cannot ramp up production overnight as vaccine making is a specialised process. Serum Institute of India (SII) has orders from the Government of India to supply 11 crore more doses over the next few months on top of 15 crore already supplied, he said in a statement.

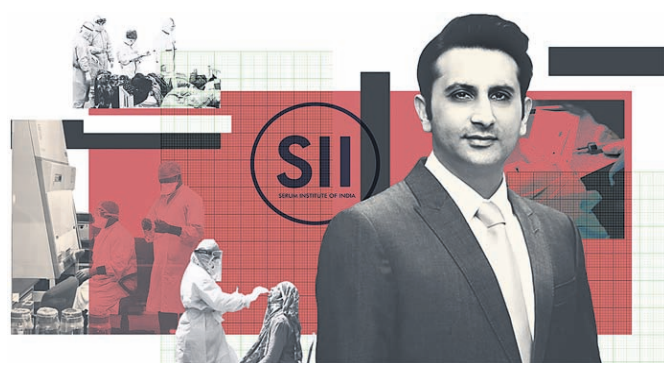
Another 11 crore doses will be supplied to states and private hospitals in the next few months, he said. He, however, did not give a timeline for supplying the vaccines. Pune-based SII can produce 6-7

crore doses a month and is reportedly planning to ramp up production to 10 crore by July.

Facing the world's fastest-growing coronavirus outbreak, India has seen a near collapse of its health care system in several parts as hospitals ran out of oxygen and did not have enough beds to admit new patients.

To deal with the crisis, the government has among other measures, opened up vaccination for all above 18 years. But the procurement of vaccines for those between 18 and 44 years has been left to states and private hospitals.

This has led to state after state rushing to SII, which can meet only a small part of the demand. Poonawalla, who had last week



cited unprecedented pressure and aggression for him and his family temporarily leaving the country for the UK, said everyone wants the vaccine to be available in the quickest possible time.

This is our endeavour too and we are making every effort to achieve that, he said. We shall work even harder and strengthen India's fight against Covid-19.

Serum is licensed to manufac-

**Vaccine manufacturing is a specialised process; it is therefore not possible to ramp up production overnight. We also need to understand that the population of India is huge and to produce enough doses for all adults is not an easy task. Even the most advanced countries and companies are struggling with relatively smaller populations**

ADAR POONAWALLA | CEO, SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA

ture COVID shots from AstraZeneca Plc and Novavax Inc. But so far, the government has approved only AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine for use. The government has also approved the homegrown Covaxin vaccine of Bharat Biotech. Russia's Sputnik V vaccine too has been approved for emergency use.

Earlier in the day, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in a

statement said 11 crore doses of Covishield are to come from SII during May, June and July. Another 5 crore doses of Covaxin have been ordered from Bharat Biotech India Ltd for the same months.

SII CEO Poonawalla, who is currently in London, said the population of India is huge and to produce enough doses for all adults is not an easy task.

## 'Delhi, Maha among 13 states showing signs of decline in fresh cases'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** The Centre Monday said the rising number of daily COVID-19 cases in some states remains a cause of concern and while a few others like Delhi and Maharashtra are plateauing in terms of daily cases, these are very early signals and containment efforts have to continue to break the chain of transmission.

Addressing a news briefing, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said 13 states, including Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, are showing early signs of plateauing or decrease in daily new COVID-19 cases.

He said states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal are still showing an increase in daily infections.

Delhi, which had recorded 25,294 cases April 24, registered 24,253 cases May 2. Similarly, Maharashtra had reported 65,442 infections April 24 and 62,417 April 30.

Chhattisgarh, where 15,583 cases were reported on April 29, recorded 14,087 fresh cases May 2.

A similar trend has been seen in Daman and Diu, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

On the situation in districts, Agarwal said Durg, Gariyaband, Raipur, Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh; Chhindwara, Guna, Shajapur in Madhya Pradesh, Leh

in Ladakh; Nirmal in Telangana are showing signs of decline in cases in the last 15 days.

Agarwal said 12 districts of Maharashtra are also showing signs of a decline during the period.

However, these are very early signals. It is important to have continued efforts of containment at district and state level so that we can preserve these gains and reduce cases further, he said.

He further said there are 12 states where active cases are more than a lakh. They are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu.

There are seven states where the active cases are in the range of 50,000 to 1 lakh cases and 17 states where the active cases are more than 50,000.

There are 22 states where the positivity rate is more than 15 percent and in nine states the positivity rate is between 5 to 15 percent and in five states it is less than five percent.

He said states and union territories like Andaman and Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Odisha are showing an increasing trend in daily cases.

Puducherry, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal are also in the same situation.

## Pfizer donates drugs to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** Global pharma major Pfizer is sending its medicines worth USD 70 million (over Rs 510 crore), from its distribution centres in the US, Europe and Asia, that have been identified as part of India's COVID-19 treatment protocol, the company's Chairman and CEO Albert Bourla said Monday.

We are deeply concerned by the critical COVID-19 situation in India, and our hearts go out to you, your loved ones and all the people of India, he said in a mail sent to Pfizer India employees that he has shared on his LinkedIn post.

We are committed to being a partner in India's fight against this disease and are quickly working to mobilise the largest humanitarian relief effort in our company's history, Bourla said.

Right now, Pfizer colleagues at distribution centres in the US, Europe and Asia are hard at work rushing shipments of Pfizer medicines that the Government of India has identified as part of its COVID-19 treatment protocol, he added.

We are donating these medicines to help make sure that every COVID-19 patient in every public hospital across the country can have access to the Pfizer medicines they need free of charge, Bourla said.

## 'Nandigram RO feared for his life, didn't give order for recounting'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, May 3:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged Monday that the returning officer of Nandigram feared for his life and so he did not give a recounting order.

Addressing a press meet, Banerjee reiterated that she will move court over the election result in Nandigram where she lost to BJP's Suwendu Adhikari.

Banerjee made public a purported SMS from the Nandigram Returning Officer to a CEO official, claiming that he had expressed fear that if he ordered recounting he would face serious consequences, and may even have to die by suicide.

How come EC reverse Nandigram result after formally announcing it? We will move court against this, she said.

"Why was the server down for four hours? We are willing to accept people's mandate but if the result of one place has anomalies, there may be something beyond what appears. We have to seek the truth," she added.

Banerjee urged her supporters to maintain peace amid reports of violence from some areas, asking them not to fall prey to provocations. The central forces committed many atrocities on TMC support-



## Mamata to take oath as CM May 5

**Kolkata:** Mamata Banerjee will be sworn in as the chief minister of West Bengal for the third time May 5, her party announced Monday. The newly-elected MLAs of the Trinamool Congress unanimously elected Banerjee as the legislative party leader at a meeting here, its secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said. The TMC legislators elected the speaker in the outgoing House, Biman Banerjee, as the pro-tem speaker in the new Assembly. "The newly-elected members will take oath in the Assembly from May 6," Chatterjee told reporters at the party headquarters here after the meeting of the legislators.

heard that in Gujarat, vaccine is being given from the BJP party office. Does they (BJP) have any expertise in giving vaccines she claimed.

Replying to a question, Banerjee said her priority is fighting the pandemic and would think about her role in the national elections of 2024 once the COVID-19 crisis is over.

I am just a street fighter. I can boost the morale of the people, so that we can fight a strong fight against the BJP. One cannot do everything alone and it should be a collective effort, she said.

## BOATS AFLOAT



Fishermen row their boats in the Arabian Sea at Gateway of India in Mumbai, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

## Govt orders central insts to postpone all offline exams in May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** The Ministry of Education Monday asked all centrally-funded institutions to postpone offline exams scheduled in May in view of the Covid-19 situation in the country, officials said. Such institutions include all IITs, NITs, IIITs and central universities.

In a letter to the heads of centrally funded institutions, Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare asked them to postpone all offline examinations scheduled this month.

The online examinations, etc may however continue. The decision will be reviewed in the first week of June, 2021.

# India's lone fossil of world's oldest animal found in Bhimbetka

DICKINSONIA IS AN EXTINCT GENUS OF BASAL ANIMAL THAT LIVED DURING THE LATE EDIACARAN PERIOD IN A GEOGRAPHICAL AREA NOW DIVIDED INTO AUSTRALIA, CHINA, INDIA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** Researchers have discovered fossils of one of the Earth's earliest known multicellular animals - the 550-million-year-old Dickinsonia - on the roof of the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh.

Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late Ediacaran period in a geographical area now divided into Australia, China, India, Russia and Ukraine.

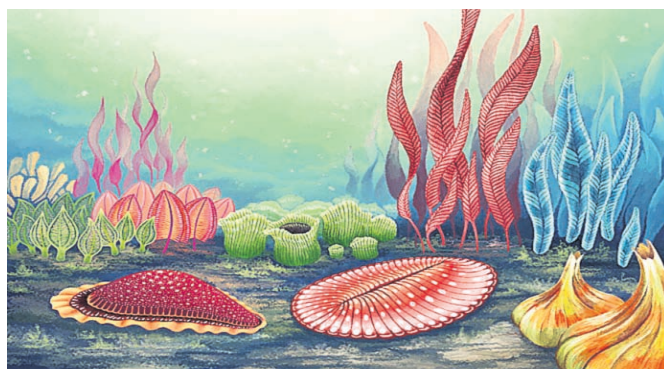
The individual Dickinsonia typically resembles a bilaterally symmetrical ribbed oval. Its fossils are known only in the form of imprints and casts in sandstone beds. The specimens found in

Bhimbetka are around 17 inches long, where as the ones that have been found in other parts of the world exceeded four feet in length, the researchers from Geological Society of India (GSI), Nagpur, Maharashtra, noted.

The finding, published in the journal *Gondwana Research*, confirms close proximity of Australia and India, according to the researchers.

"Dickinsonia fossil was first discovered in 1947 in Flinders Ranges of South Australia. Its fossils have also been discovered in Ukraine, Russia and China," Ranjit Khangar Director & Coordinator, GSI, told PTL.

"Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, a UNESCO World Heritage Site for Paleolithic and Mesolithic cave art,



near Bhopal, is once again highlighted worldwide due to the first discovery of oldest animal fossil, Dickinsonia from India," Khangar said. The new fossils were discovered on the last day of 36th

International Geological Congress 2020 field trip conducted by GSI in March last year.

However, it took the team almost a year to publish the findings. Other teammates involved in the

study were from the University of Oregon in the US, National Operations Center, Bureau of Land Management, Geospatial Section, US, and the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.

"Dickinsonia is the earliest Ediacaran multicellular animal life yet found - predating explosion of life in Cambrian Period (around

541 million years) in geological time scale," Merajuddin Khan, senior geologist and member of GSI, Nagpur, noted.

"Palaeobiologists believe that these earliest living creatures were used to live in shallow warm seas, as early as 570 million years ago, and are representative of earliest complex life form in animal kingdom," Khan told PTL.

As the fossil is out of reach, multiple digital images of the site were processed using three-dimensional (3D) modelling, the researchers said.

The geological condition and occurrences of Dickinsonia were compared with fossils reported from South Australia before arriving at the final conclusion, they said.







The BJP government did nothing in past four years and remained in isolation due to which it has put entire state in isolation now. The tall claims of Adityanath are exposed in frightening pictures and videos coming from hospitals daily

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY (SP) CHIEF

PM, EU CHIEF DISCUSS nCoV SITUATION IN INDIA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen Monday, and discussed the prevailing Covid situation in India and the ongoing efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic



of the day quote

All should support the new administration with its efforts to overcome the challenging situation we are in and in restoring the richness of Tamil heritage. Best Wishes



SADHGURU JAGGI VASUDEV | SPIRITUAL LEADER

Mysuru requires more oxygen or other life-saving drugs, but that should not come in the way of supplying oxygen or other medicines to the neighbouring districts



S SURESH KUMAR | K'TAKA EDUCATION MINISTER

In the middle of a pandemic GOI should focus on saving lives instead of firing govt employees on flimsy grounds in Kashmir. No wonder its misplaced priorities have converted India into shamshanghats & kabristans. The living continue to suffer & the dead are deprived of dignity



MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

'No shortage of oxygen in country; use it judiciously'

Italy Monday sent to India a team of experts, an oxygen generation plant and 20 ventilators to assist the country in its fight against coronavirus pandemic



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 3: The Centre Monday said medical oxygen being given to COVID-19 patients, especially in hospitals, should be used "judiciously" and claimed that there was "shortage" of the life-giving gas in the country.

At a routine briefing on steps taken by the government to battle the COVID-19 crisis, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Piyush Goyal told reporters that multiple efforts were being undertaken to enhance production and quickly transport oxygen to the hospitals and patients.

"It is very important for all the hospitals that they ensure judicious use of oxygen as per the guidelines issued in this context by the Union Health Ministry. Many efforts are being undertaken in this context and we are getting positive results also."

Goyal was speaking to reporters in the presence of Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry Law Agarwal and AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria. The country is grappling with a raging second wave of the pandemic with lakhs of patients and their family members anxiously scouring for oxygen beds in hospitals, cylinders, medicines and other medical facilities.

Goyal also sought the support of citizens in ensuring that no "hoarding or black marketing" of oxygen cylinders takes place so that these are made available to patients who are gasping for breath

due to the coronavirus infection. The officer said the production of medical oxygen has increased in the country as he cited data to say that while on August 1 last year, the total production was 5,700 metric tonnes, it is 9,000 metric tonnes now.

"This is 125 per cent of daily production capacity (of medical oxygen)," he said. He reiterated that despite increase in the demand of medical oxygen for patients due to rapid surge in COVID-19 infection, the country had "adequate" oxygen and the government was also importing it from abroad for future needs.

The officer said both traditional and non-traditional avenues are being explored and enhanced for production of liquid oxygen. He said a group of senior officials from the Centre, various states, Union Territories, manufacturers and other stakeholders were making a daily assessment of the oxygen demand in the country and oxygen is being allocated to states as part of a "dynamic process" being undertaken everyday.

Goyal said the oxygen demand of no state was being "ignored" and the Centre has deployed Indian Air Force (IAF) heavy-lift aircrafts to transport empty oxygen tankers and the railways to ferry filled oxygen tanks from the place of production to their destinations. He said major medical oxygen production facilities are based in the eastern part of the country while the maximum demand at present is in the central and northern region.

STRICT LOCKDOWN RULES



Police nab rule-breakers during a curfew imposed to control the spike in coronavirus in Jodhpur

PTI PHOTO

MHA asks Bengal govt for report on post-poll violence

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 3: The Union Home Ministry Monday sought a report from the West Bengal government on the post election violence in the state targeting opposition political workers.

The Home Ministry in a letter to the West Bengal Chief Secretary has asked him to submit a detailed report on the violence that broke out in parts of the state Sunday evening even as trends and results from the Assembly election were pour-

ing in.

The houses and vehicles of some Bharatiya Janata Party candidates were allegedly attacked and a party office at Arambagh was set on fire. The vehicle of Suvendu Adhikari, who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram, was also reportedly attacked.

After the violence, Trinamool Congress leaders, however, said they had nothing to do with any such incidents in West Bengal and urged people to maintain peace and follow Covid-19 protocols.

PM TAKES KEY DECISIONS TO BOOST HR FOR COVID-19

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday reviewed the growing need of adequate human resources for responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and took several important decisions to boost availability of medical personnel in Covid duty.

A decision was also taken to postpone NEET-PG for at least four months and the exam will not be held before August 31 this year. Students will also be given at least one month time after announcement of exam before it is conducted.

"This will make a large number of qualified doctors available for Covid duties," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said. It was also decided to allow deployment of medical interns in Covid management duties under the supervision of their faculty, as part of the internship rotation. The services of final year MBBS students can be utilised for providing services like tele-consultation and monitoring of mild Covid cases after due orientation by and under supervision of faculty, it said. This will reduce the workload on existing doctors engaged in Covid duty and provide boost to efforts of triaging, it added. The services of final year Post Graduate students (broad as well as super-specialties) as residents may continue to be utilised until fresh batches of PG students have joined, the statement said. BSc or GNM qualified nurses may be utilised in full-time Covid nursing duties under the supervision of senior doctors and nurses, it said. The individuals providing services in Covid management will be given priority in forthcoming regular government recruitments after they complete minimum of 100 days of Covid duty, the statement said.

SHORT TAKES

MP official kicks nCoV norm violator

Indore: A video of a tehsildar kicking a man for not performing a punishment task given to him for COVID-19 norm violation in Indore in Madhya Pradesh went viral on social media, prompting the MP Human Rights Commission to ask authorities to submit a report on the incident. In a video of the incident, said to have taken place Sunday in Depalpur town here, the official is seen kicking the man on the back when he fails to leap like a frog in sync with drum beats, the punishment handed down to the latter for violating corona curfew.

Gurugram hosps stop operations

Gurugram: Nearly 15 critical Covid-19 patients have lost their lives due to acute shortage of oxygen in smaller hospitals of Gurugram during the last week. These hospitals regularly demand from the district administration through Twitter or other social media platforms to provide liquid oxygen to them. Several of them have discharged all patients and shut down operations, claiming the administration and the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) have not paid attention to their repeated requests for liquid oxygen.

Partial curfew in AP from tomorrow

Amaravati: A partial curfew from 12 noon to 6 am will be imposed in Andhra Pradesh from Wednesday for two weeks to curb coronavirus that has been on a virulent spread. At a high-level review meeting on the prevailing situation here Monday, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy announced this decision, official sources said. Shops would be allowed to open daily from 6 am to 12 noon, with prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC in force.

Man kills in-laws

Lucknow: Upset over alleged betrayal by his second wife, a man murdered her parents in a fit of rage. The Kaiserbagh police Sunday arrested the accused, Ram Milan Neelu, from Basti district. His accomplice Durgesh, is still absconding. The incident came to light after Suraj Thapa, Ram Milan's brother-in-law, lodged a missing complaint of his parents, Buddhi Bahadur and Beena, April 25.

BJP likely to send central observers to Assam to pick next Chief Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 3: The BJP is likely to finalise its choice of Chief Ministerial nominee for Assam in a day or two as internal consultation within the party has begun amid a suspense over whether it will continue with incumbent chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal or bring in a new face.

Mr Sonowal and his powerful ministerial colleague Himanta Biswa Sarma are being seen as the two most obvious contenders for the top job.

BJP sources said internal con-fabulation is on in the party, and its parliamentary board may soon name central observers to preside over the meeting of its newly-elected party MLAs in Guwahati where they will pick their leader.

Central observers generally convey the choice of the party top brass to the state leadership which in turn is endorsed by the MLAs. The ruling BJP-led NDA has retained its grip on Assam, bagging



74 of the 126 assembly constituencies that went to polls, while the opposition Congress-led grand alliance managed to clinch just 50 seats.

The BJP alone won 60 constituencies, the same as in 2016.

The BJP's decision to not name its chief ministerial candidate during the polls had fuelled speculation about the likely choice in the eventuality of the party retaining power.

While Mr Sonowal, who hails from upper Assam, a BJP stronghold, is seen as a soft-spoken leader with a clean image, Mr Sarma enjoys the image of an efficient administrator with sharp political instincts.

Strokes in young adults linked to Covid-19: Study

THE STUDY LED RESEARCHERS TO FEAR THAT THE VIRUS MAY INCREASE THE RISK OF STROKE, EVEN IN PEOPLE WITHOUT CHRONIC CONDITIONS LIKE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE OR DIABETES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 3: A team of Israeli researchers have identified a link between coronavirus and stroke victims, especially in healthy young people, media reports said.

The global study led by researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem involved at least 136 medical centers in 32 countries, i24news.tv reported.

Of the 380 patients who suffered stroke while suffering from Covid-19, nearly 38 per cent were asymptomatic to the coronavirus, and had no recognisable symptoms from the virus such as cough or fever. The diagnosis came only after they were admitted to the hospital for stroke. The study, published in the journal 'Stroke', led researchers to fear that the virus may increase the risk of stroke,



Representational image

even in people without chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. Of the 432 patients, 323 had acute ischemic stroke, 91 had intracranial hemorrhage, and 18 had cerebral venous or sinus thrombosis.

The younger patients with ischemic strokes had no known existence of the types of aclassical' risk factors that contribute to the onset of stroke such as vascular disease, high blood pressure, di-

abetes or smoking, the report said. "This study further strengthened our understanding of the link between coronavirus and stroke in young patients," said Ronen Leker, a professor from the varsity.

"In the future, we recommend performing PCR tests routinely on all young stroke patients, especially those who have had a stroke, especially in those with no known pathologies," Leker added.

Short-term lockdowns can help India lower Covid caseloads

THE BASIC FACT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SPREAD OF COVID IS TO STOP HUMAN-TO-HUMAN CONTACT SO THAT THE DEADLY CHAIN OF TRANSMISSION CAN BE BROKEN

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 3: As India continues to suffer from the uncontrollable second Covid wave that has now engulfed small cities, towns and even villages, health experts on Monday once again vouches for short-duration complete lockdowns to mitigate the situation and lower the caseloads.

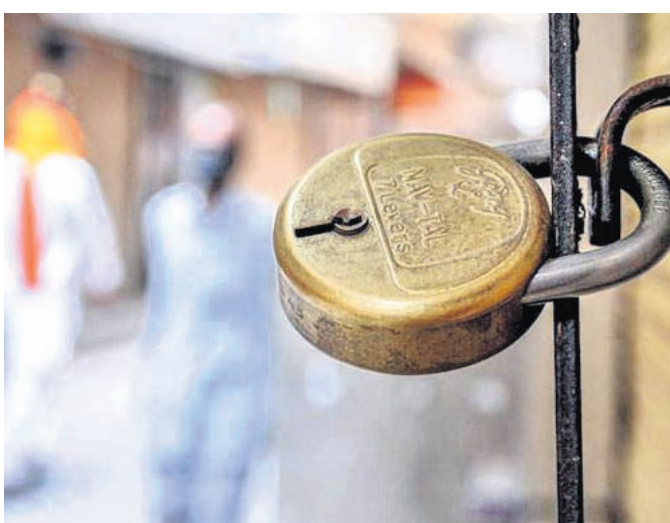
The basic fact in the fight against spread of Covid is to stop human-to-human contact so that the deadly chain of transmission can be broken, thus providing a super-burdened healthcare system a fresh breeze of life and take care of existing patients gasping for oxygen.

"Usually, cases are reported less on Monday following the week-end

lockdown. Lockdown definitely helps in flattening the curve as we saw during the lockdowns in 2020," said Dr Neha Gupta, Infectious Diseases Specialist at Medanta-The Medicity, Gurgaon.

India reported 3,68,147 fresh cases and 3,417 fatalities in the last 24 hours, according to the data provided by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

To break the chain of coronavirus transmission in the state, the Haryana government has announced a week-long lockdown, starting Monday. Delhi has already extended the lockdown for one more week. With Bihar reeling under the second wave of Covid-19, leaders have asked Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to impose a 15-day complete



lockdown across the state. According to Dr Harshal R Salve, Associate Professor at Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS New Delhi, clear messaging and risk communication are key to pandemic response. "Banning all large gatherings, universal mask use and vaccination are only measures which help to halt the pandemic," Salve told IANS.

According to Gupta, most important is to remember that maintaining social distancing, following hand hygiene, wearing mask and vaccination are the most important tools for prevention. "We need to follow these guidelines for a few years at least," she stressed.

White House's chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci last week sug-

gested a complete lockdown for a few weeks to curb transmission of the Covid-19 in India.

According to Fauci, a temporary lockdown in India is the need of the hour as it could have a significant impact on the dynamics of the outbreak.

The daily Covid-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Monday. The death toll increased to 2,18,959 with 3,417 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. While the country recorded 4,01,993 new cases May 1, it had registered 3,92,488 fresh cases May 2.

# international



The government's decision to ban travel from India amid the country's worsening Covid-19 situation was not motivated by racism  
MARISE PAYNE | AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

## POPE FRANCIS EMBARKS ON PRAYER 'MARATHON' AGAINST COVID-19

Pope Francis has launched a month-long prayer marathon to hasten the end of the coronavirus pandemic with a prayer at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican



### of the day quote

It will not have escaped the attention of anyone here that as China's role in the world grows and changes, the differences between our systems - and the interests and values that shape those systems - are becoming harder to reconcile  
JACINDA ARDERN | NEW ZEALAND PM

We kept the promise to all those who lost loved ones on 9/11: that we would never forget those we had lost and that the United States will never waver in our commitment to prevent another attack on our homeland  
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

The country's policies are made of different economic, military, social, scientific and cultural plans, including foreign relations and diplomacy  
AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENI | SUPREME IRANIAN LEADER

## US denies Iran claims of prisoner deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, May 3: The United States and Iran are in active talks over the release of prisoners, a person familiar with the discussions said Sunday as Washington denied a report by Iranian state-run television that deals had been struck. Prisoner swaps between the US and Iran are not uncommon and both countries in recent years have routinely sought the release of detainees. But any movement between the two countries is particularly sensitive as the Biden administration looks to restart nuclear talks. A 2015 atomic accord between the nations included prisoner exchanges.

The issue burst into public view with a report in Iran of a deal for the Islamic Republic to release US and British prisoners in exchange for Tehran receiving billions of dollars. US officials immediately denied the report, though a person with knowledge of the discussions who was not authorised to discuss them publicly said talks are active, with messages passed between intermediaries.

It wasn't immediately clear if the report represented a move by the hard-liners running the Iranian broadcaster to disrupt negotiations with the West amid talks in Vienna on Tehran's tattered nuclear deal.



Even after an initial American denial, an anchorwoman on Iranian state TV still repeated the announcement. "Some sources say four Iranian prisoners are to be released and \$7 billion are to be received by Iran in exchange for releasing four American spies," the anchorwoman said.

She described the claimed deal as coming due to congressional pressure on President Joe Biden and "his urgent need to show progress made in the Iran case."

But Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Majid Takht-e Ravanchi, later denied the report of the prisoner swap, saying that it's "not confirmed," according to the Telegram channel of state-run IRNA news agency. "Iran has always emphasised the comprehensive exchange of prisoners between the two countries," he said, without elaborating. State TV did not identify the Iranians that Tehran sought to be freed. State Department spokesman Ned Price immediately denied the Iranian state TV report.

Prisoner swaps between the US and Iran are not uncommon and both countries in recent years have routinely sought the release of detainees

The issue burst into public view with a report in Iran of a deal for the Islamic Republic to release US and British prisoners in exchange for Tehran receiving billions of dollars

Reports that a prisoner swap deal has been reached are not true," Price said. "As we have said, we always raise the cases of Americans detained or missing in Iran. We will not stop until we are able to reunite them with their families."

Biden's chief of staff Ron Klain told CBS "Face the Nation" that "unfortunately, that report is untrue. There is no agreement to release these four Americans."

"We're working very hard to get them released," Klain said. "We raise this with Iran and our interlocutors all the time, but so far there's no agreement."

Tehran holds four known Americans now in prison: Baquer and Siamak Namazi, environmentalist Morad Tahbaz and Iranian-American businessman Emad Shargi. Iran long has been accused of holding those with Western ties prisoners to be later used as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Despite the American denials, there have been signs that a deal on prisoners may be in the works based on Iranian officials' remarks in recent weeks.

Although no formal proposal for a swap has yet been presented to officials in Washington, let alone been signed off on by the White House, the specificity of the reports from Iran suggested that working-level consideration of a deal is at least underway.

## Russia turns to China to produce Sputnik shots

Russia has announced three deals totaling 260 million doses with Chinese vaccine companies in recent weeks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei, May 3: Russia is turning to multiple Chinese firms to manufacture the Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine in an effort to speed up production as demand soars for its shot. Russia has announced three deals totaling 260 million doses with Chinese vaccine companies in recent weeks.

It's a decision that could mean quicker access to a shot for countries in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa that have ordered Russia's vaccine, as the US and the European Union focus mainly on domestic vaccination needs.

Earlier criticism about Russia's vaccine have been largely quieted by data published in the British medical journal The Lancet that said large-scale testing showed it to be safe, with an efficacy rate of 91 per cent.

Yet, experts have questioned whether Russia can fulfill its pledge to countries across the world. While pledging hundreds of millions of doses, it has only delivered a fraction. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said demand for Sputnik V significantly exceeds Russia's



domestic production capacity.

To boost production, the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which bankrolled Sputnik V, has signed agreements with multiple drug makers in other countries, such as India, South Korea, Brazil, Serbia, Turkey, Italy and others. There are few indications, however, that manufacturers abroad, except for those in Belarus and Kazakhstan, have made any large amounts of the vaccine so far.

Airfinity, a London-based science analytics company, estimates Russia agreed to supply some 630 million doses of Sputnik V to over 100 countries, with only 11.5 million doses exported so far. RDIF declined to disclose how many doses are going to other countries. Through April 27, less than 27 million two-dose sets of Sputnik V have been produced in Russia.

### SHORT TAKES

#### 95 illegal migrants return to Tripoli

Tripoli: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said that some 95 illegal migrants rescued off the Libyan coast have returned to Tripoli. "Some 95 persons have been intercepted/rescued at sea and returned to Tripoli by the Libyan Coast Guard tonight," the UNHCR tweeted late Sunday. "UNHCR and International Rescue Committee are currently providing them with blankets, water, and medical assistance," the Agency added. The International Organization for Migration said that at least 11 illegal migrants drowned Sunday off the coast of Zawiya city.

#### 2 rockets target Baghdad airport

Baghdad: Two Katyusha rockets were fired and targeted the Baghdad International Airport area, causing no casualties, the Iraqi military said. The attack took place Sunday evening when unidentified militiamen fired the two rockets, one of which landed on the edge of the airport in the southwest of the capital Baghdad, the media office of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command said in a statement. The air defence in the area managed to shoot down the other rocket.

#### 3 Israelis hurt in West Bank shooting

Tel Aviv: A drive-by shooting attack in the West Bank injured three Israelis, including two in critical condition, authorities here said. An Israeli military spokesperson said in a statement that "a suspicious vehicle" arrived at the Tapuah Junction Sunday afternoon and opened fire at the Israelis who were waiting at a bus stop. The troops responded with fire towards the vehicle, which escaped the scene.

#### IS member detained

Istanbul: Turkish police have detained a suspected senior member of the Islamic State terror group in Istanbul, local media reported. The suspect, an Afghan national with a code name "Basim", was believed to be the right-hand man of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who was killed in 2019 in Syria. The Turkish National Intelligence Agency and anti-terrorism teams jointly launched an operation to capture Basim who was thought to be the chief of the military wing of the IS after he arrived in Turkey.

## Myanmar's Kachin rebels shoot down military helicopter

KIAs "foreign liaison unit" informed that the helicopter was brought down by rebel anti-aircraft fire at Momauk in Kachin state at 10.20 am local Myanmar time Monday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, May 3: The rebels of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) shot down a Myanmar military helicopter gunship when it was attacking their base Monday. This is the first time a rebel group in the country has brought down a military helicopter after the Tatmadaw (military) started offensives against the country's multiple ethnic rebel armies in late April.

KIAs "foreign liaison unit" located somewhere near India's Arunachal Pradesh informed this news agency that the helicopter was brought down by rebel anti-aircraft fire at Momauk in Kachin state at 10.20 am local Myanmar time Monday. The unit's chief liaison officer Naw Bu said the direct hit on the helicopter scared away two Burmese air force jets which were strafing the KIA base in the vicinity.

He said that helicopter crashed near Konglaw village after getting hit by anti-aircraft fire in its tail rotor. Tatmadaw's Burmese troops and KIA rebel fighters have twice clashed

near Momauk since April 11.

On April 29, the KIA launched an artillery attack on Bhamo airport which these military helicopters use for raiding rebel positions.

The fighting in Momauk is near the KIA's base at Alaw Bum on a hill overlooking Myanmar's border with China. The hill overlooks the strategic approach to the KIA base which the Tatmadaw is trying to capture. Naw Bu told IANS the KIA will "fight like hell" to prevent the capture of the Alaw Bum base because its fall to the Tatmadaw would help it dominate a large territory between Bhamo and Myitkyina, administrative capital of the Kachin state.

KIA seized this base from the Myanmar military Tatmadaw March 25. A total of 7,000 ethnic Kachins have been displaced due to the ongoing fighting in the Momauk area. Clashes between the Tatmadaw and KIA started in mid-March after the KIA launched a sneak attack on a military camp near Sai Zin village in Mohnyin district of Kachin state.



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

### ASSESSING COVID RISKS



People attend a test music festival as part of a national research programme assessing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Liverpool, Britain

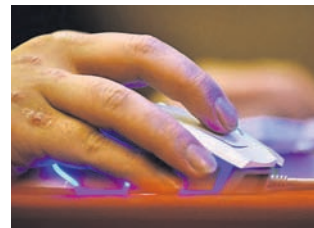
## DARKNET CHILD PORN NETWORK WITH 400,000 MEMBERS BUSTED

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Berlin, May 3: German police said Monday they had shut down "one of the biggest darknet child pornography platforms in the world" and arrested four of its members in a series of raids in mid-April.

The platform, named as "Boystown", had existed since 2019, counted over 400,000 members and was "set up for the worldwide exchange of child pornography", federal police said in a statement.

The darknet forum allowed users to communicate with others and share graphic image and video content which included "serious sexual abuse of toddlers", the



statement said.

Three men between the ages of 40 and 64 were arrested in seven raids in Germany, while a further suspect was detained in Paraguay on the request of German authorities. The suspect in Paraguay's Concepcion region, also a German citizen, is to be extradited back to Germany on the basis of an in-

ternational arrest warrant issued by a court in Frankfurt.

Three of the men are accused of having managed the platform as administrators, providing technical support and advice to members on how to avoid being discovered by the authorities, while another was "one of the platform's most active users", police said. Investigators added that the months-long, German-instigated operation had been coordinated by Europol and supported by law enforcement in the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States and Canada.

Both "Boystown" and other chat platforms were taken offline following the raids.

## G7 meet to focus on girls' education, women's employment

A COMMITMENT OF \$15 BILLION TO HELP WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ACCESS JOBS AND GLOBAL TARGETS TO GET GIRLS INTO SCHOOL WILL BE THE FOCUS FOR THE G7 FOREIGN AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS MEETING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 3: A commitment of \$15 billion to help women in developing countries access jobs and global targets to get girls into school will be the UK's focus for the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meeting, which begins in London Monday.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived for the summit Monday afternoon local time and is expected to join the discussions with other guest nations invited by the UK, which holds 2021 presidency of the G7 - which comprises Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, US, UK and the European Union (EU).

Alongside India, Australia, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and the chair of the Association



of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have also been invited to the meeting as part of Britain's foreign policy focus on ties with the Indo-Pacific region.

"Ensuring girls get 12 years of quality education and women can work and earn an income are some of the smartest investments we can

making to change the world, transforming the fortunes not just of individuals, but whole communities and nations," said UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

"This year, as we build back better from the pandemic, the UK is putting girls' and women's rights at the heart of our G7 presidency,

uniting countries that share our values so we shape a better path ahead," he said.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said the ministers will agree to invest \$15 billion in development finance over the next two years to help women in developing countries access jobs, build resilient businesses and respond to the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19.

The funding is aimed at the 2X Challenge, a partnership between G7 Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) launched in 2018.

According to the UK government, it leverages funding from DFIs and Multilateral Development Banks to provide finance to female-owned and staffed businesses or products or services that particularly benefit women, supporting female eco-

nomics empowerment.

DFIs are funded primarily by national governments and invest in developing countries and emerging markets to create jobs, boost growth, and fight poverty.

The ministers will also sign up for new global targets to get 40 million more girls into school and 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10 in low and lower-middle-income countries by 2026.

"Educating girls is one of the smartest investments we can make to lift people out of poverty, grow economies, save lives, and build back better from COVID-19. A child whose mother can read is 50 per cent more likely to live beyond the age of five years, twice as likely to attend school themselves - and 50 per cent more likely to be immunised," the FCDO said.

# business

## of the day quote

The real estate sector had shown a healthy bounce back in last few months backed by reduced stamp duty, contributing greatly to the exchequer. As the stamp duty was reduced, coinciding with the second wave resulting in a virtual lockdown, demand and sales of new homes was severely impacted



SHISHIR BAJAJ | CHAIRMAN & MD, KNIGHT FRANK INDIA

Given the focus on development of integrated solar module manufacturing facilities, timely selection of such projects under this scheme and implementation of the manufacturing capacities with value addition thereafter remains important to reduce the dependence on module imports



GIRISH KUMAR KADAM | CO-GROUP HEAD & VP (CORPORATE RATINGS), ICRA

Due to Covid and the new lockdown protocols on social distancing most of us including Customs are forced to operate with reduced manpower. At this time, there is a need to ensure that shipments for supporting Covid-19 treatment are cleared and delivered without delay



RS SUBRAMANIAN | SENIOR VP & MD, DHL EXPRESS

## SHORT TAKES

### Greg Abel likely successor: Buffett

**New York:** Warren Buffett ended long-running speculation about his successor at Berkshire Hathaway Inc by saying Greg Abel, who oversees the conglomerate's non-insurance businesses, would be named chief executive if he were to step down. Buffett, 90, told CNBC that "the directors are in agreement that if something were to happen to me tonight, it would be Greg who'd take over tomorrow morning."

### RBI imposes ₹3 cr fine on ICICI Bank

**Mumbai:** A penalty of ₹3 crore has been imposed on ICICI Bank Ltd for breaking of certain directions, the RBI said. The central bank imposed a monetary penalty of ₹3 crore on ICICI Bank for "contravention of certain directions issued by the RBI contained in Master Circular on Prudential Norms for Classification, Valuation and Operation of Investment Portfolio by Banks dated July 1, 2015", RBI said.

### TVS Motor sales dip 26% in April

**New Delhi:** TVS Motor Company Monday said its total sales stood at 2,38,983 units in April, down by 26% from 3,22,683 units in March. TVS had exported 9,640 two- and three-wheelers in April 2020. The company's total two-wheelers sales in April stood at 2,26,193 units compared to 3,07,437 units in March. In April 2020, the company had exported a total of 8,134 two wheelers, TVS Motor Company said.

### Fighting Covid: SBI allocates ₹71 cr

**New Delhi:** The country's largest lender SBI Monday announced allocating ₹71 crore towards the fight against Covid-19, a part of which will be used to set up a makeshift 1,000-bed hospital for the treatment of patients in some of the worst-affected states. The state-owned lender has allocated ₹30 crore for the makeshift hospital while ₹21 crore will be used to support initiatives like oxygen supply to hospitals, Covid-care centres.

## FM calls for sharing technologies on Covid vaccines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 3:** Cautioning the global community against vaccine nationalism at this hour of the Covid pandemic, India Monday asked the developed nations to share technology and allow free movement of critical components and raw material needed for production of vaccines.

Speaking at the annual meet of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also underlined the need for a re-look at the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Countries will have to be open about sharing vaccine-based technologies. The TRIPS agreement will have to be looked at in the context of the pandemic. There cannot be any more vaccine nationalism, countries will have to be flexible about it," she said.

The TRIPS agreement is a legal pact between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It establishes minimum standards for regulation by national governments of different forms of intellectual property as applied to nationals of other WTO member nations. The agreement has been in force from January 1995.

Participating in a virtual Governors' seminar, Sitharaman said there is a need to have a global multilateral approach to deal with the Covid pandemic.



One critical point in ramping up the production (of Covid vaccine) capacity is access to critical raw materials, she said.

"Although we speak about global value chain and the need for countries to open up trade and also fa-

Sitharaman underlined the need for a relook at the TRIPS agreement in the context of the coronavirus pandemic

ilitate free movement of raw materials, critical components, critical APIs and so on, we find that the movement of critical raw materials for production of vaccines is finding certain hiccups. We would love that to be sorted out at the ear-

## 4-DAY WORK WEEK FOR SWIGGY

As Covid-19 infection cases are surging rapidly in India, food delivery platform Swiggy has announced plans to move to a four-day work week for the month of May. "As a mark of respect for the efforts and the month that May can be with the Covid cases escalating, we want to offer a 4-day work week to all of you," said the Head of HR



## FIGHTING COVID

### JSPL's Angul plant supplies 100 tonnes of LMO every day



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** Responding to the shortage of oxygen for treatment of Covid-19 affected people in the country, leading steelmaker Jindal Steel & Power Ltd (JSPL), has been supplying Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) from its 6 MTPA mega steel complex at Angul in Odisha, since April. Several hospitals across the country have received oxygen dispatched through tankers as per the government advice.

"JSPL has been always standing with the country and countrymen during calamities and emergencies and will continue to do so during the pandemic. For us, it is nation first. I am sure together we shall defeat Covid-19," JSPL's Chairman Jindal had stated few days before.

"We are improving our efficiency. The government is also ensuring the best way to tackle logistics on oxygen supply," he added in a Twitter message.

The company continually produces LMO at its oxygen plant within the steel complex at Angul and tankers are filled in round the clock. The tankers are being dispatched to several states that need medical oxygen like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Delhi-NCR, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and several other states as per the advice of the government.

A dedicated team, under the direct supervision of JSPL's Chairman Naveen Jindal, is working day in and day out to ensure the timely despatch of oxygen as per the government's directive.

An Oxygen Express train run by the Indian Railways also carried LMO tankers to other states. Similarly, two tankers airlifted from Maharashtra were also filled with LMO from JSPL Angul recently.

## India's production rise at slowest rates in 8 months in April: PMI

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 3:** India's manufacturing sector activity was largely flat in April, as rates of growth for new orders and output eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis, a monthly survey said Monday.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 55.5 in April, little changed from March's reading of 55.4.

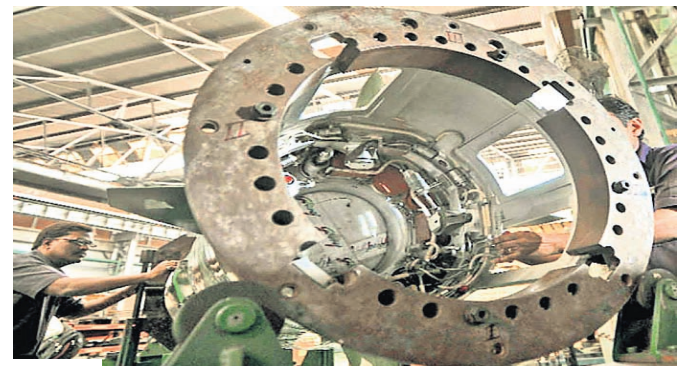
In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"The PMI results for April showed a further slowdown in rates of growth for new orders and output, both of which eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

Lima also noted that "the surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices."

The daily Covid-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

"The headwinds facing manu-



The PMI results for April showed a further slowdown in rates of growth for new orders and output, both of which eased to eight-month lows amid the intensification of the Covid-19 crisis

POLLYANNA DE LIMA | ECONOMICS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, IHS MARKIT

facturers cannot be ignored, however. The surge in Covid-19 cases could dampen demand further when firms' financials are already susceptible to the hurdle of rising global prices," Lima said.

On the prices front, survey participants also signalled a steep increase in input costs, the quickest since July 2014, and upward revisions to selling prices.

"April saw the steepest increase in input costs for nearly seven years drive the sharpest upturn in output charges since October 2013. Data for the coming months will be important at verifying whether client demand is resilient to these challenges or if producers will have to further absorb cost burdens themselves to secure new work," Lima said.

The survey, however, noted that while output and sales increased at the slowest rates since last August due to an intensification of the COVID-19 crisis, there was a faster upturn in international orders.

New export orders increased for the eighth consecutive month in April and at the fastest rate since October 2020. The rise was associated with a pick-up in international demand for Indian goods, the survey said.

## Barclays cuts India's FY'22 GDP growth forecast to 10%

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, May 3:** Blaming the slow pace of vaccinations and uncertainty around the number of those infected and dead in the second Covid-19 wave, global brokerage firm Barclays cut India's FY'22 GDP growth estimate to 10% from earlier 11%.

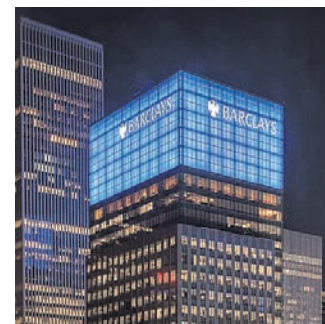
If the ongoing localised lockdowns continue till June, it will lead to economic losses of \$38.4 billion, it said.

In a more pessimistic scenario of the pandemic not being brought under control soon and mobility restrictions continuing till August, the growth can fall to 8.8%, Barclays warned.

The country's economy is estimated to contract by 7.6% in FY'21 as the pandemic-induced lockdowns led to chilling of economic activity, hurt jobs and demand.

The lower base is set to help the economy in posting a faster growth in FY'22, but the ongoing second wave and resultant localised lockdowns have led many analysts to review down their forecasts. The RBI is maintaining that the economy will grow at 10.5% this fiscal.

"As India's second Covid-19 wave continues, there is growing uncertainty around the number of



cases and fatalities. Slowing vaccinations are also hurting India's recovery prospects. We lower our FY 2021-22 GDP growth forecast by 1% to 10% to reflect this uncertainty," analysts at Barclays wrote.

India is in the "unwelcome position" of being the centre of the global pandemic now, with infections rising at over 4 lakh a day, it said, pointing out that the geographical area of infections is widening with positivity rates surging in many states.

"At the same time, India's vaccination programme has slowed, weighed down by rising supply constraints and logistical challenges," it said, adding that the move to liberalise vaccinations is unlikely to have any impact in the short term.

## Odisha records highest-ever GST collection

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 3:** The Commissionerate of CT & GST, Cuttack Monday announced that Odisha recorded the highest-ever OGSST Collection (since inception of GST) of ₹1,126.67 crore during the month of April, 2021.

"The collection of ₹1,126.67 crore is against the collection of ₹927.60 crore during April 2019 and ₹360.36 crore during the pandemic-affected April 2020. The previous highest was ₹954.62 crore collected in March 2021, according to officials.

There is also a collection of ₹952.43 crore in CGST, ₹1,157.05 crore in IGST and ₹613.33 crore



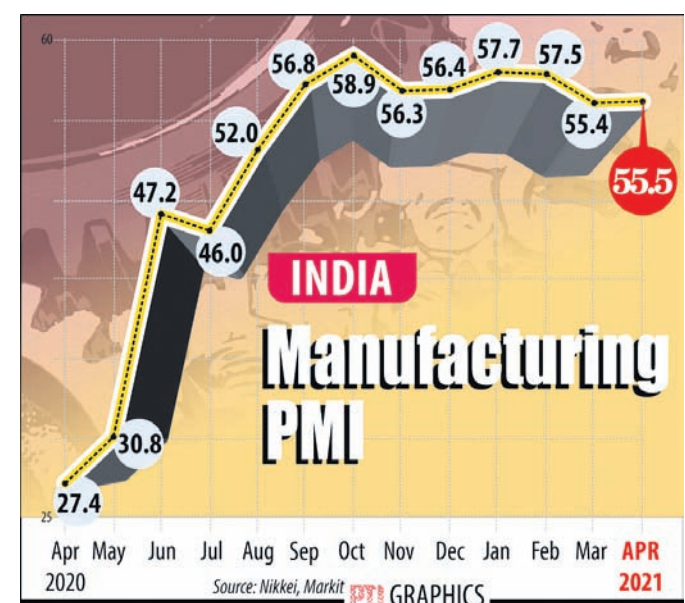
in cess. The total GST collection during April 2021 is also the highest-ever with ₹3,849.48 crore as against ₹2,955.60 crore collected during April 2019 and ₹774.29 crore

during April 2020. Since all VAT paying dealers (Petrol and Liquor) had paid tax till March 25, during same month, the balance collection of remain-

ing five days ₹218.95 crore was collected during April 2021 as against ₹130.11 crore during April 2020 and ₹183.92 crore during April 2019 with growth rate of 68.28%.

Of the above, collection from petroleum products registered a growth of 175.31% with a collection of ₹166.87 crore in April 2021 as against ₹60.61 crore in April 2020.

During the recent review with tax officials, Commissioner of CT & GST, Sushil Kumar Lohani, instructed all the field officers to detect the wrong return filers by applying data analytics and collect all taxes from them as per the provisions of law.



## AN EASY GUIDE TO YOUR MOTOR INSURANCE CLAIM



TA RAMALINGAM

Our motor vehicles are an indispensable part of our lives which we are heavily dependent on for our everyday routine life.

Today in the wake of the pandemic, people are avoiding public transport and cab services as a safety measure, ever more increasing the dependency on personal vehicles.

If you own a vehicle most probably you have a comprehensive motor insurance cover or at least a third party cover which is mandatory as per law.

Due to large number of people buying personal vehicles, motor insurance has become one of the most sought after insurance product which also consequently witnesses high number of claims every year.

Most of us are caught off guard when we witness our first motor claim. The intent of this article is to help readers understand about motor insurance claims.

### Types of claims

Motor insurance claims are typically classified into two categories - Cashless Claims and Reimbursement claims.

**Cashless Claims** - Under cashless claims, you need not bear any up-front expenses in case of damage to your vehicle which further needs repairs. The insurer directly pays the expenses incurred for the repair to its network garage. You, the customer, has to only pay the depreciation and deductible when applicable. The percentage of depreciation varies according to the age and part of the car. For example, fibre glass part has 30% depreciation. So if this particular part is damaged and needs to be replaced, the insurer will pay 70% of the cost with the remaining 30% to be borne by the policyholder.

### Reimbursement Claims

Under reimbursement claims, in case of any damage to your vehicle, you can get it repaired at any garage. You will have to bear the cost of repair and will have to apply for reimbursement afterwards with the insurer. Make sure that you take all the repair receipts and bills from the workshop. Insurer will make the payment after validating the claim documents and bills.

There are three types of claims in motor insurance based on the incident-

- Third party Liability
- Own damage
- Theft

**Third Party (TP)** - Third party is a mandatory cover by law in India. The purpose of TP is to provide coverage against legal liability claimed by a third party wherein they have suffered a damage or injury from your vehicle. TP section does not provide any cover to you or your vehicle. Under the TP section, a third

party, which has suffered injury, property damage or death arising out of your vehicle, can claim for compensation. In case of death or injury there is no limit capped on the compensation, the amount is to be decided by court of law.

**Own damage (OD)** - OD claims trigger when your vehicle is damaged due to an accident. The first step is to inform the police and your insurer. You should not move your vehicle from the accident scene without the consent of the police and insurer. Once you have the consent to remove the vehicle from the scene of the accident, you can take the vehicle for restoration and the insurer will make the payment either on cashless or reimbursement basis.

**Theft** - In a situation where your vehicle has been stolen, you need to register an FIR with the police, inform the insurer and

the RTO about the theft. You will be required to submit a copy of the FIR, driving license, vehicle registration certificate etc. to the insurer. The police will investigate the matter; however, if your vehicle is not traced within 90 days, the police will issue a no trace report. A no trace report is mandatory to settle the claim in case of theft. Once you submit the report along with required documents, insurer will start the process for claim settlement.

To conclude I will say, a smooth and hassle-free claim process is a big relief to customers. This can be a differentiator when you are evaluating your insurer. Drive safe, enjoy your ride and in case of an unfortunate accident, always reach out to your insurer!

(The writer is the Chief Technical Officer at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance)

KKR SPINNER CHAKRAVARTHY, PACER WARRIER HIT BY VIRUS, ISOLATED

# COVID bursts IPL bubble

- The two infected KKR players are under observation of the BCCI medical team
- All KKR players and support staff will now be tested on a daily basis
- Players and management of Delhi Capitals will also be tested as they had played against the Knight Riders



players of Mumbai Indians in their last game.

"Balaji's positive report is certainly a cause of concern although the CSK players have tested negative. But normally, a lot of people start showing symptoms from the fifth or sixth day. There are discussions whether it is safe to go ahead with the next two matches in Delhi," a senior BCCI source said on conditions of anonymity.

The BCCI however, insisted that the league will go on, but Monday's developments have definitely cast a shadow on how the COVID-19 threat would be managed for an event being staged across six venues.

Leg-spinner Chakravarthy and pacer Warrier, both 30, have been isolated and the rest of the KKR contingent has returned negative reports for now.

"The medical team is in contin-

uous touch with the duo and is monitoring their health. Meanwhile, KKR have now moved towards a daily testing routine to identify any other possible cases and treat them at the earliest," the IPL body said.

KKR last played April 29 against Delhi Capitals in Ahmedabad. It is bound to trigger anxiety in the league, which had been going along smoothly so far in a bio-secure bubble in front of empty stands.

"Now, the DC players (currently in Ahmedabad) will also have to be tested and every member of the team contingents that came in contact with Chakravarthy and Warrier will also be contact traced through the app watch that has been given to everyone," a BCCI source said.

According to IPL's Standard Operating Procedure for COVID-19 management, any close contact of an infected person has to iso-

late for six days. To return to the event, the person has to get three negative tests on days one, three and six.

In a late night development Monday, KKR CEO and MD Venky Mysore said that both Chakravarthy and Warrier are doing 'fine' and the team are hopeful of returning to action for their next IPL game once the quarantine phase is over. "Difficult times, but I'm happy to report that both Varun and Sandeep are doing well," Mysore told host broadcasters 'Star Sports'.

"We have taken all the precautions that are necessary and have been advised by the medical teams of IPL and KKR. Sandeep, in particular, is doing fine. No temperature, no other symptoms, and he is feeling good. Varun is still a little under the weather, but better than Sunday and both of them are in good spirits," Mysore added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 3: Players, especially overseas recruits, are feeling edgier following the emergence of two COVID-19 cases in the Kolkata Knight Riders camp Monday. However, the teams feel 'there is no going back' and the IPL should continue despite the ever-increasing threat of the raging pandemic. The positive results of Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier have left everybody worried. Foreign cricketers, who were already anxious about getting home with travel restricted from India, are a more worried lot.

"There is no going back now with half of the tournament done. The news (positive cases in KKR) makes the BCCI's job more challenging," a franchise official said Monday.

"We have heard that a player got infected because he was taken outside the bubble for scans. So, it could have happened outside the bubble. As far as I know, everyone is strictly following the protocols laid out by the BCCI and there was no breach there," the official added.

Another team official said the



WORRYING THOUGHTS: KKR pace spearhead Pat Cummins will certainly feel anxious as two of his mates have tested positive

tournament should continue as long as more teams are not affected by the virus.

UK, Australia and New Zealand have banned travellers from India and a sizable number of players

competing in the IPL are from these countries.

"We should let the BCCI decide what is best for all of us. Flooding them with too many opinions on what should be done following the cases at KKR would only lead to more confusion," said another top official of a team.

Five-time winners Mumbai Indians were already testing their players on a daily basis and other teams are likely to follow that in the wake of cases at KKR. The Kolkata players have been told to isolate in their rooms and even teams like Delhi Capitals have told their cricketers and support staff to stay in their rooms after the development Monday. The two sides played each other four days ago.

## No chartered flight for Australians

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia (CA) currently has no plans to arrange a charter flight to bring its players back home from COVID-ravaged India once the IPL gets over, its chief Nick Hockley said Monday. He however, insisted that Australians are feeling safe and secure. However, his comments came before the positive reports of Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier surfaced. Australian pacer Pat Cummins incidentally is a member of the same team. "There's no suggestion at the moment of any charter flight," Hockley told Melbourne radio station 'SEN'. "We're working closely and talking closely with the Australian Cricketers' Association, with the players and with the BCCI to make sure everyone's okay," he added.

## SHORT TAKES

### Hopes dashed

New Delhi: Top para shuttlers Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam's preparations for the Paralympics suffered a blow as the Indian team will not be able to compete at the Spanish International due to the new quarantine rules because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tournament is scheduled to be played May 11 to May 16 but with Spain announcing a 10-day mandatory quarantine period on travellers from India, it will not be possible for the players to compete in the event. "After a great performance in Dubai Para badminton tournament, I was eagerly looking forward for the Spanish tournament as this was the last tournament before Paralympics," Bhagat said. "I wanted to use this as an opportunity to prepare for my first ever Paralympics in Tokyo," he added.

### Perera retires

Colombo: Sri Lanka all-rounder and former captain Thisara Perera announced Monday his retirement from international cricket with immediate effect. Perera, in his letter submitted to Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), said that he feels the time is right for him to step aside and pave the way for the younger crop. The 32-year-old represented Sri Lanka in six Tests, 166 ODIs and 84 T20s. However, he is expected to keep playing franchise cricket around the world. "I take pride in the fact that I was able to represent Sri Lanka in seven cricket World Cups and be a contributing member of the 2014 T20 World Cup win against India in Bangladesh. Easily the highlight of my life," Perera mentioned in his letter.

### Archer in ICU

Guwahati: Former Olympian and World Cup gold medallist Jayanta Talukdar is being treated in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a hospital here for low oxygen count a week after he was diagnosed with COVID-19, his father Ranjan Talukdar said Monday. His (Jayanta) oxygen level had started plummeting to 92-mark so he was shifted to ICU Sunday. He is doing fine with an oxygen cylinder but the level drops the moment it's removed," Ranjan said. He was admitted at the hospital here, April 27, Ranjan added. According to the worried dad, Jayanta possibly contracted the virus from his doctor wife. Jayanta's World Cup gold medals came in 2006 and he took part in the 2012 London Olympics. AGENCIES

ANTONIO CONTE CONJURES UP SERIE A TITLE WIN FOR 'NERAZZURRI'

# Inter Milan end 11-year wait

AGENCIES

Rome, May 3: Inter Milan claimed the Serie A title Sunday for the first time in 11 years to end Juventus' nine-year reign in Italy. Antonio Conte's side clinched their 19th 'Scudetto' after nearest rivals Atalanta drew 1-1 at Sassuolo to leave the 'Nerazzurri' 13 points clear with four games remaining.

Conte had started Juventus' record run, winning the first three titles in a winning streak that stretched from 2012 to 2020. The 51-year-old took over Inter in 2019 and lifted the trophy after finishing second last season. "I'm astonished," said Conte.

"We're breaking up a dynasty. Not even in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that we'd make up this much ground on the team that dominated Serie A for nine years in the space of two seasons. This doesn't mean we're better than Juventus, they have a great squad. However, we've rolled our sleeves up and started doing some important work, trying



FABULOUS SHOW: The Inter Milan players have beaten all odds to emerge Serie A champions beating tough teams like Juventus

TEAMS	M	W	D	L	PTS
Inter Milan	34	25	7	2	82
Atalanta	34	20	9	5	69
Juventus	34	20	9	5	69

to make ourselves credible." Inter are now second for league trophies in Italy, one ahead of city rivals AC

Milan's 18, but still some way short of the 36 won by Juventus. The Lombardy side had not won

Serie A since Jose Mourinho's historic Champions League, Serie A and Coppa Italia treble in 2010. Their last trophy was the Coppa Italia in 2011 and they missed out on the Champions League for six seasons before Luciano Spalletti returned them to Europe's top club competition in 2018.

Conte is the 13th coach since Mourinho to sit on the 'Nerazzurri' bench and the club have changed hands twice over the past decade.

Inter targetted Conte to pull off what he had done at Juventus, who had finished seventh in the two previous seasons before his arrival in 2011. In addition to Conte's reported annual salary of 12 million euros (\$14.4 million) Inter splashed nearly 220 million euros on transfers in 2019 after his arrival.

"In coming here, I made the toughest decision," said Conte. "It's a new planet for me. I tested myself, I love big challenges. I'm convinced that I've always given my all for the teams that I coach," he added.

## Man U promises action against 'criminal' activity

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, May 3: Manchester United will work with police to identify the fans who forced open an Old Trafford door before invading the pitch in protests that forced the cancellation of a Premier League game against Liverpool, the club said Monday. The game was scheduled to be played Sunday.

The club said they would not seek punishments for those fans who protested peacefully, including those outside the stadium.

"Many fans wanted to exercise their right to protest and express their opinion peacefully," Man U said in a statement. "However, some were intent on disrupting the team's preparation and the game itself, as evidenced by activity at the Lowry Hotel and at the stadium," the club added.

Man U officials said that the 'club have no desire to see peaceful protestors punished, but will work with the police to identify those involved in criminal activity'.

The first details of the investigation were released as United said speculation floated by the Manchester United Supporters' Trust that protestors were able to access the stadium through a gate left open by club staff was 'completely incorrect'. "Some of the protestors broke doors to invade the field," Man United said.

# Warner not the only one stripped of IPL captaincy



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 3: The recent sacking of David Warner from the SunRisers Hyderabad's (SRH) skipper's chair must have come as a surprise and shock to many of the Australian's fans. Warner was not only sacked from captaincy, he did not also feature in the playing XI in the game against Rajasthan Royals played Sunday. It led to SRH's Director of Cricket Tom Moody saying that 'Warner is shocked and disappointed'.

IPL cricket is all dependent on the owners of the various franchises. A string of losses is enough for any player to lose his place in the team hierarchy. This edition of the IPL has indeed been miserable for Warner and SRH. The Australian opener is out of form with the bat

while SRH have managed to win only one of the seven games they have played so far. It was enough for the team management to drop him from the scheme of things. If sources are to be believed, then Warner has probably played his last game for the Hyderabad franchise.

However, Warner is not the only cricketer in the IPL to have suffered the fate of losing captaincy midway through the tournament. There have been others also. It should be stated here that Warner had been leading SRH since 2015. Under him, SRH also won the IPL title in 2016. Warner has also bagged the Orange Cap (highest run-getter) thrice during his tenure with SRH. Here's a look at others who were stripped off captaincy.

**DINESH KARTHIK:** The KKR wicket-keeper-batsman was stripped of captaincy mid-way through the tournament last season. He was replaced by Eoin Morgan. However, it did not change KKR's fortunes.

He won four of the seven games he led the side in. Morgan after taking over managed to win only three games. This year it has been worse, with KKR just managing two wins in their seven games.

**AJINKYA RAHANE:** The Mumbaikar was named skipper of Rajasthan Royals (RR) during the 2019 edition of the IPL.

However, he was stripped of captaincy after RR managed only two wins in the eight games that he led

the side. Steve Smith was named captain of the team.

**DAVID MILLER:** The South African was named captain of Kings XI Punjab in 2016. However, Miller failed to perform both with the bat and in the leadership segment. KXIP lost five of the six games under Miller's captaincy and he scored 76 runs from six innings. He was replaced by Murali Vijay.

**SHIKHAR DHAWAN:** The left-handed opening batsman was named skipper of SRH in 2014. However, it seemed to be a burden on him as he only scored 215 runs in 10 outings.

Wanting to get more out of Dhawan as a batsman, the SRH management replaced him with Darren Sammy.

# Messi keeps Barca in La Liga title race



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Lionel Messi celebrates with Antoine Griezmann after scoring against Valencia, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, May 3: Lionel Messi came through for Barcelona again, keeping the Spanish league's title race wide open. Messi scored two second half goals Sunday - including his 50th of the season from a free-kick - as Barcelona came from behind to beat Valencia 3-2 and get within two points of leader Atletico Madrid ahead of their key match at the Camp Nou next weekend. A win will give Ronald Koeman's team the lead in the league points table for the first time this season.

Antoine Griezmann also scored for Barcelona, who are tied on points with second-place Real Madrid with four rounds to go. Madrid have a better head-to-head tie-breaker against both rivals at the top. Sevilla also remain in the title race. They can move within three points of the lead if they beat Athletic Bilbao at home Monday.

Barcelona made the trip to Valencia under pressure after both Atletico and Real Madrid won their matches Saturday. The Catalan

club were coming off a shock 1-2 home loss to Granada Thursday, when they could have grabbed sole possession of the lead.

"It was an important win to keep us in the fight after that unexpected loss," Barcelona captain Gerard Pique said. "We'll try to win next weekend and take the lead. It's in our hands."

The pressure increased Sunday after Valencia took the lead at the Mestalla Stadium with Gabriel Paulista scoring in the 50th minute. However, their joy was short-lived.

Messi equalised in the 57th in the fallout of his own penalty kick after his poor shot from the spot was saved by Valencia goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen. Then Griezmann netted the go-ahead goal six minutes later for Barcelona to breathe easy.

Messi's second goal came with a beautifully struck free-kick that curled over the wall and hit the post before going into the net in the 69th minute. Valencia pulled one closer with a long-range strike by Carlos Soler in the 83rd but they couldn't find the equaliser.

## India slip 1 place in ODI rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 3: India retained their second place in the ICC Twenty20 team rankings but dropped a rung to third in the ODI chart following the annual update carried out Monday. India are trailing top-ranked England (277) by five rating points in the T20 team rankings.

During this period, England drew a three-match series against Pakistan 1-1, defeated Australia 2-1 and South Africa 3-0 before losing an away series to India by a 2-3 margin.

New Zealand have also gained in the annual T20i update, moving up from fifth to third after series wins over the West Indies, Pakistan,

Australia and Bangladesh. Australia have moved the other way, down from third to fifth.

In the annual update of the ODI team rankings, India dropped a place to third behind Australia and new table-toppers New Zealand. The Kiwis have replaced reigning World Champions England as the No.1 ranked side in the ODI rankings.

New Zealand, who defeated Bangladesh 3-0 in their only ODI series in the past year, have advanced two slots after gaining three rating points to reach an aggregate of 121. Australia are second with 118 points while India and England are both on 115, with the former ahead on decimal points.