



BEATING FEAR

Actor Kangana Ranaut says nCoV is nothing but a small time flu and she will destroy it

LEISURE P2



JERUSALEM CLASHES

Heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem left more than 200 Palestinians wounded

INTERNATIONAL P10

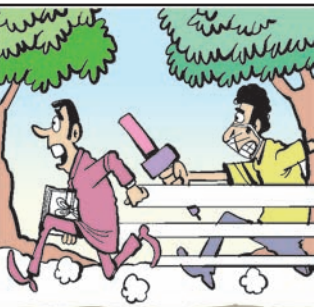


EX-ODIA CRICKETER DIES

Former Odisha cricketer Rabi Narayan Panda succumbs to COVID-19 at a hospital in Bhubaneswar, Friday

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your COVID-related queries can wait. I've a deadline to meet, that of Central Vista project!

9 KILLED IN AP QUARRY BLAST

TIRUPATI: In a tragic incident, at least 10 workers were killed while several others were reportedly injured in a blast at a quarry in Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa district Saturday. It is alleged that the quarry was being operated without proper license near Mamillapalli village in Kalasapadu mandal of Kadapa district. The blast was triggered off when the workers were drilling holes on granite to insert explosive material inside. Due to the presence of large quantities of explosive material at the site which exploded at once, about nine workers died on the spot while leaving several others injured. Villagers at Mamillapalli who heard the blast and noticed thick smoke emanating from the quarry rushed to the spot and alerted the local police who shifted the injured to the local area hospital for treatment.

NOD FOR DRDO ANTI-COVID DRUG

NEW DELHI: The Drugs Controller General of India has approved an anti-COVID oral drug, developed by DRDO, for emergency use as adjunct therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus patients, the defence ministry said Saturday. It said clinical trials of the drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) showed that it helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence. The drug has been developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a leading laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories in Hyderabad. The 2-DG comes in powder form in sachet and is taken orally by dissolving it in water.

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
TEMP MAX	39.7°C 37.2°C
TEMP MIN	25.0°C 23.0°C
Humidity	84% 71%
Rainfall	19.2mm Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky

SC Task Force to oversee O₂ sharing

- The SC has set up a 12-member National Task Force to assess availability and distribution of medical oxygen - on scientific, rational and equitable basis
- Judges spoke personally to each member of the Task Force, which is expected to begin work within a week
- Reports will be submitted to the Centre and the court, but its recommendations will be sent directly to the SC

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 8: The Supreme Court has set up a 12-member National Task Force to assess availability and distribution of medical oxygen - on scientific, rational and equitable basis - across the country.

The Task Force will also suggest measures to ensure similarly rational and equitable availability of medicines needed to treat Covid-19, and provide inputs, based on members' scientific and specialised knowledge; to meet other challenges to have been raised by the Covid pandemic.

According to sources, Supreme Court judges spoke personally to each member of the Task Force, which is expected to begin work within a week. Reports will be submitted to the Centre and the court, but its recommendations will be sent directly to the Supreme Court.



Patients' kin wait in a queue to get their oxygen cylinders refilled

Covid report not must for hospitalisation

NEW DELHI: Requirement of a positive coronavirus disease (Covid-19) report is now no longer mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility, Union Health Ministry said Saturday. The ministry's revised national policy for admission of Covid patients to various categories of Covid facilities mentioned that a "suspect case shall be admitted to the suspect ward of CCC, DCHC or DHC as the case may be". "No patient will be refused services on any count. This includes medications such as oxygen or essential drugs even if the patient belongs to a different city," said the directive which was issued to the states and Union Territories (UTs). The patient-centric measure was taken to ensure prompt, effective and comprehensive treatment of patients suffering from Covid-19.

The court has directed the Centre to provide the necessary assistance and said that all stakeholders - from state governments to hospi-

tals - must co-operate. The Task Force will have an initial tenure of six months.

The Task Force is to be led by Dr Bhabatosh Biswas, the former Vice Chancellor of the West Bengal University of Health Sciences, and will include Dr Naresh Trehan, Chairperson and Managing Director of Gurgaon's Medanta Hospital and Heart Institute.

Other members include leading doctors from Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Vellore's Christian Medical College, Bangalore's Narayana Healthcare and Mumbai's Fortis Hospital.

Setting up of the Task Force had been ordered by the top court Friday, when it called for a revamp of the Centre's allocation of oxygen to different states. The court said the Centre failed to consider factors like ambulances, lower-level Covid care facilities and patients in home quarantine.

The court had also demanded to know if the Centre was preparing for a possible third Covid wave.

'Community transmission' in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: With the continuous surge in daily Covid-19 cases in Cuttack district during past few days, a senior government official Saturday said that a community transmission-like situation has emerged in the district.

Senior doctor and state government-appointed nodal officer for Cuttack district, Dr Umesh Ray told the media Saturday that the alarming rise in daily Covid positive cases in Cuttack city and the district could be due to community transmission.

However, he said, scientists at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) can only ascertain whether or not community transmission has occurred in the district. Claiming that the Covid surge in the district will peak in next 5-6 days, Dr Ray said the daily caseload in the district will gradually come down thereafter.

Talking about the probable reasons behind the surge in daily cases, the nodal officer said hundreds of people, including migrant workers from the other districts and states, returning to the district contributing to the number of Covid patients. It may be mentioned that only 27 new Covid cases were reported in the district April 1, while the number reached 1,052, Saturday (May 8).

Meanwhile, Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) commissioner Ananya Das said the government is planning to increase the number of beds at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack and rope in more private hospitals for effective treatment of Covid-19 patients.

21 more succumb to Covid in state

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Saturday reported 11,807 new Covid-19 cases, while 21 more people died in the state, a Health Department official said. The new cases were detected after 50,864 samples were tested Friday. The test positive rate (TPR) in the state stood at 23.21 per cent, indicating that one in every 4.3 people undergoing Covid tests is being found positive. In some districts, the TPR is nearly 50 per cent, the official said. There are 90,335 active cases in the state at present.

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Vaccination of 18+ in four more cities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The state government plans to start a vaccination drive for people in the age group of 18-44 years in four cities of Odisha in the next few days.

This comes in the wake of the state receiving the first consignment of one lakh Covishield doses directly from the Serum Institute of India, Pune.

According to the state Health department, these vaccine doses would not be dispatched to the rural areas but will be sent to high burden urban areas to inoculate people in the 18-44 years age group.

"We have received 1 lakh doses of Covishield Saturday. We are now preparing a micro-plan to distribute them in areas beyond Bhubaneswar. In Bhubaneswar we are providing Covaxin. We have decided that the new stock of Covishield will be diverted to four high burden municipal areas," Dr Bijaya Panigrahy, Director, state Health and Family Welfare, told **Orissa POST**. The official further said



that these vaccine doses will be sent to Cuttack, Berhampur, Rourkela and Sambalpur, adding that the current stock is limited and would not last long.

The Health department, however, is not aware about receiving any new consignment of vaccine doses from either Serum Institute or Bharat Biotech.

The department is yet to dispatch the new supply and is now working on a detailed plan to send the vaccines to the four urban areas. When asked about the number of persons between 18 and 44 years in Odisha who have registered themselves for vaccination on the Co-WIN app, the department said that they have not received any information on this.

Mamata accuses EC of directly helping BJP

AGENCIES

Kolkata, May 8: Speaking on the first day of the Assembly after returning to power for the third time in a row, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday stroked a major controversy by accusing the Election Commission of India of directly helping the BJP during the recently-concluded Assembly polls in the state.

She also alleged that unable to accept the mandate of the people, the saffron brigade was inciting violence in the state.

"I can challenge that had the Election Commission not helped them (BJP) directly, they would not have won even 30 seats. In this election, rigging took place in some places under the watch of the poll panel. There should be electoral reforms made immediately, else

I can challenge that had the Election Commission not helped them (BJP) directly, they would not have won even 30 seats

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

the democratic fabric of the country will be jeopardised," Banerjee said during her speech on the floor of the Assembly.

Warning stern action against the BJP for 'inciting' violence in the state, the Chief Minister said, "For the last six months, they have not done anything but pushing the country to the brink of destruction. They had only one target and that was to capture Bengal and now they (BJP) cannot accept the mandate of the common man. So they are trying to incite violence."

VACCINATION ON WHEELS



A beneficiary receiving an anti-Covid jab at Esplanade Mall, which opened its basement for 'drive in vaccination', in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

India and EU to resume talks for FTA after 8 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: India and the European Union have agreed to resume talks for a balanced, ambitious and comprehensive trade agreement and also launch negotiations for a stand-alone investment protection pact, the External Affairs Ministry said Saturday.

These decisions were taken during a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the heads of state or government of all the 27-member states of the bloc with a focus on expanding overall cooperation in areas of trade, investment and connectivity.

The two sides also launched a sustainable and comprehensive connectivity partnership; the ministry said and described the summit as a "watershed" moment in the ties.

The leaders also exchanged views on the Covid-19 pandemic and healthcare cooperation.



The India-EU leaders' meeting is hosted by Prime Minister of Portugal Antonio Costa. Portugal currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

"We are opening a new chapter in #EUIndia strategic partnership at the meeting of EU Leaders with PM @narendramodi," tweeted Charles Michel, President of the European Council.

Modi was scheduled to visit Portugal for the leaders' meeting but it was called off in view of the coronavirus crisis and both sides decided to hold the deliberations virtually. A strategically important grouping, the EU as a whole was India's largest trading partner in 2018. **MORE P11**

Online speech shield under fire as Trump Facebook ban stays

UNDER THE 1996 COMMUNICATIONS DEGENCY ACT, DIGITAL PLATFORMS HAVE LEGAL PROTECTION BOTH FOR CONTENT THEY CARRY AND FOR REMOVING POSTINGS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, May 8: Lurking beneath Facebook's decision on whether to continue Donald Trump's suspension from its platform is a far more complex and consequential question: Do the protections carved out for companies when the Internet was in its infancy 25 years ago make sense when some of them have become global powerhouses with almost unlimited reach?

The companies have provided a powerful megaphone for Trump, other world leaders and billions of users to air their grievances, even ones that are false or damaging to someone's reputation,



knowing that the platforms themselves were shielded from liability for content posted by users.

Now that shield is getting a critical look in the current climate of hostility toward Big Tech and the

social environment of political polarisation, hate speech and violence against minorities.

The debate is starting to take root in Congress, and the action this week by Facebook's quasi-inde-

pendent oversight board upholding the company's suspension of Trump's accounts could add momentum to that legislative effort.

Under the 1996 Communications Decency Act, digital platform companies have legal protection both for content they carry and for removing postings they deem offensive. The shelter from lawsuits and prosecution applies to social media posts, uploaded videos, user reviews of restaurants or doctors, classified ads - or the doxing underworld of thousands of websites that profit from false and defamatory information on individuals.

Section 230 of the law, which outlines the shield, was enacted when many of the most powerful social

media companies didn't even exist. It allowed companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google to grow into the behemoths they are today.

Republicans accuse the social media platforms of suppressing conservative voices and giving a stage to foreign leaders branded as dictators, while Trump is barred. Democrats and civil rights groups decry the digital presence of far-right extremists and pin blame on the platforms for disseminating hate speech and stoking extremist violence.

"For too long, social media platforms have hidden behind Section 230 protections to censor content that deviates from their beliefs," Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the senior Republican on the Senate

Commerce Committee, has said.

On this, Trump and President Joe Biden apparently agree. Trump, while President, called for the repeal of Section 230, branding it "a serious threat to our national security and election integrity." Biden said during his campaign that it "immediately should be revoked," though he hasn't spoken about the issue at length as President.

Facebook, with a strong lobbying presence in Washington and a desire to have an input into any changes, has stepped out in favor of revisions to Section 230. Congress should update the 1996 law "to make sure it's working as intended," CEO Mark Zuckerberg has said.

leisure



'HAVING THREE SONS IS LIKE UFC FIGHT NIGHT ALL DAY'

Hollywood star Megan Fox says having three sons is nothing short of watching a UFC fight night throughout the day. Megan has three boys -- Noah (eight), Bodhi (seven) and Journey (four) with her former husband Brian Austin Green.

MY HEART GOES OUT TO INDIANS: BARRYMORE

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore has urged everyone to help India amid the Covid-19 second wave. The actress addressed the issue on her popular talk show, *The Drew Barrymore Show*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you are in the mood to be alone, go ahead and indulge, says Ganesh. No need for friends and no need for music. Rush to the outskirts and mingle with nature. If you deal in money matters, says Ganesh, there may be some money coming your way.

TAURUS
Today, you will probably achieve your short term goals, says Ganesh. There will be no dip in the amount of work pressure you will be facing but you will find yourself ready for every challenge. It is time to shift gears and set your eyes on your long-term goals now.

GEMINI
Your enemies could try to harm your person or image. You need to avoid getting into arguments with anyone today, because small debates could blow up into explosive confrontations. The later half of the day will see you able to unwind and in a much better frame of mind, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will decide to expose certain unreasonable conventions and traditions, and you will be able to do so successfully, predicts Ganesh. In the afternoon, you may incur the displeasure of your bosses.

LEO
You will desire to do some creative work today. You will try to bring your inner creativity to the fore. The matters in which you lag behind people will be brought into focus today. You need to be more active in dealing with these issues to progress in life, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You obviously provide all the basic necessities of life to your family, but today you will remain preoccupied with the thoughts of how to provide them some luxurious things too. At work, try to adopt a new line of thought.

LIBRA
Ganesh sure hopes that you packed your kit right and are ready to take on anything, as today promises to be an action-packed day. Most of this action might concentrate around your family members.

SCORPIO
Armed with a good sense of judgement, you will make a number of encouraging changes in your behaviour today, foretells Ganesh. Habits die hard, but all the effort that you put in to refine your routine will pay off brilliantly by the end of the day. Close friends and family will be pleasantly surprised by your efficiency and decisions.

SAGITTARIUS
You shall push your limits to make sure your authority goes unquestioned. Colleagues and seniors will give you a round of applause for your commitment. Expect your bank accounts to soar as unexpected monetary gains is on the cards, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You like being a part of the social circuit. Today, as new people are added in your team and family, you will be expanding your social circle as well, predicts Ganesh. During the second half of the day, you will spend time reading books and widening your knowledge.

AQUARIUS
When you are least expecting, you may find the one from your dreams. You will be love struck today and barely concentrate on work or studies. You will be unable to identify your emotions and probably spend most of the day gazing in the sky, smiles Ganesh.

PISCES
The day will start on a great note and some news of success or profit will bid a smile on your face early during the day. If you are working or conducting a business then be willing to take risks. You will begin to plan ways to increase your wealth and expand your business today.

'Staying home has become a hobby'

Mumbai: Sonakshi Sinha Saturday added a dash of wit on Instagram saying she has reached the point when staying home has become a hobby. She urged all to get vaccinated and drive Covid away. "Reached that point where staying home has become a hobby. #coron-abhagao #get-vac-

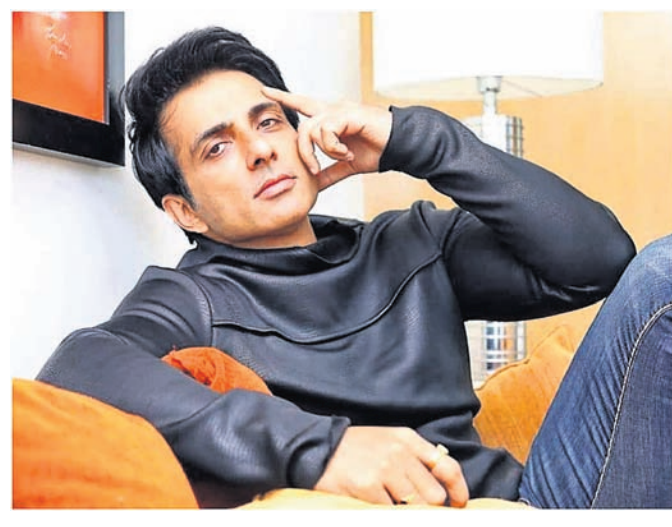
inated," she wrote alongside a selfie she posted. Sonakshi recently announced her upcoming project *Bulbul Tarang*, which will have an OTT release. She will also be seen in *Bhuj: The Pride Of India*, co-starring Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi, and is gearing up for her web series debut in *Fallen*, which casts her as a cop. IANS



Covid +ve Kangana says it's 'small time flu'

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut Saturday shared the news that she has tested positive for Covid-19 and has quarantined herself. The actress posted the health update on Instagram, along with a picture that shows her performing Sukhasana. "I was feeling tired and weak with slight burning sensation in my eyes for past few days, was hoping to go to Himachal so got my test done yesterday and today the result came I am covid positive," she wrote in the post. The actress urged everyone not to be scared, calling the disease "nothing but a small time flu."

"I have quarantined myself, I had no idea this virus is having a party in my body, now that I know I will demolish it. If you are scared it will scare you more, come let's destroy this Covid-19 it is nothing but a small time flu which got too much press," she wrote. IANS



Sonu hails Sara as 'hero'

Mumbai: Sonu Sood Saturday thanked Sara Ali Khan for her contribution to his foundation. Sara had recently contributed to the Sood Charity Foundation for Covid-19 relief amid the second wave of the virus. "Thank you so much my dear Sara Ali Khan for your contribu-

tion to the @soodfoundation! Extremely proud of you & keep on doing the good work. You have inspired the youth of the nation to come forward and help during these difficult times. You are a hero @sara_ali_khan95," he wrote on Twitter. Earlier in the day, Sonu took to social media to post a note about the death of a young Covid patient named Bharti. A few days ago, Sonu had helped in airlifting the critically ill Bharti from Nagpur to Hyderabad for advanced treatment. "Bharti, a young girl from Nagpur whom I airlifted on an air ambulance to Hyderabad passed away last night. Rest In Power My Dear Bharti. You fought the last month like a complete tigress on an Ecmo machine. You'll Always hold a very special place in my Heart," wrote the *Dabangg* actor. IANS



Make your mom feel special this Mother's Day

SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A 'HEARTFELT CONVERSATION' CAN BRING A WIDE SMILE ON A MOTHER'S FACE.

Mothers are often taken for granted. We don't realise that even a smallest gesture can bring a smile to their face. As you're all cooped up in the house, try to give a personal touch to the gift with which you intend to pamper your mom this Mother's Day. Here are a few gifting options you can explore.



Strike a conversation
Loneliness is proven to be a major problem in mothers. In normal working days, most of us often forget to sit down with our mothers and just talk. Something as simple as a 'heartfelt conversation' can bring a wide smile on your mother's face. You can talk on any topic which you or your mother would want to, like their college

days, favourite memories, cooking, gardening and your childhood or theirs.

Relax and rejuvenate
You can look up for some exercises, meditation videos or download apps that have guided medi-

tation to help relieve stress and anxiety. An hour of these exercises and yoga can stimulate physical and mental health, immunity and improve their sleep cycle.

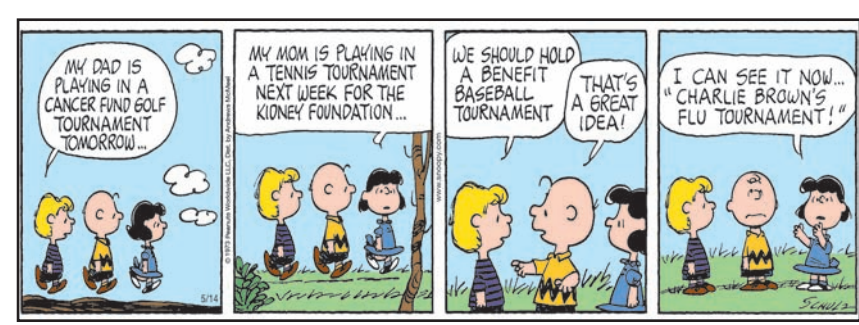
Gift 'me-time'
Help your mother revive a hobby

that she has long forgotten. Help her invest some time in activities that make her happy. Bring out those old photo albums and encourage her to relive those moments.

Cook her favourite meal
Pamper your mother by cooking a special meal for her and decorate your balcony with fairy lights along with some of her favourite music in the background. This way you would not only make her feel special but you would also spend some quality time with her.

E-gifts for her
An E-Gift voucher for your mother from her favourite brand would not only add the personalised touch but would also give her the freedom to pick the gift of their own choice. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



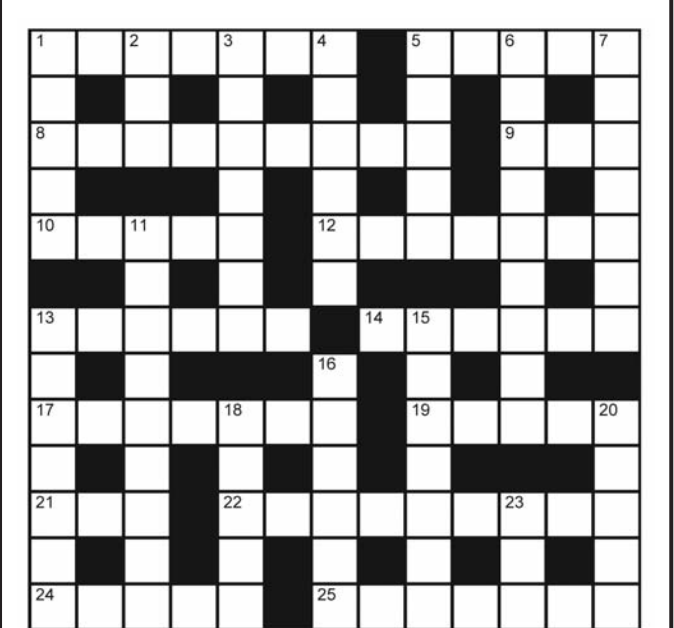
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



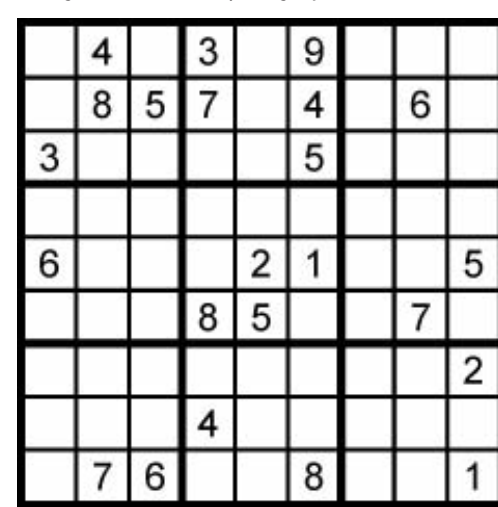
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Alternative to cash
 - 5 Socked away
 - 8 Greek Goddess of love and beauty
 - 9 Convent dweller
 - 10 Lustrous fabric
 - 12 Tropical melon-like fruits
 - 13 Bout of boozing
 - 14 Hazy
 - 17 Lodgings for infants
 - 19 Bird sanctuaries
 - 21 Kimono sash
 - 22 Government takeover by force (4,5)
 - 24 War horse
 - 25 Kind of penguin
 - Down**
 - 1 Compote fruit
 - 2 Cigar residue
 - 3 Beat decisively
 - 4 Great apes
 - 5 Blind followers
 - 6 Winery farms
 - 7 Ming was one
 - 11 Excite or tease with the unobtainable
 - 13 Summons
 - 15 Queued (5,2)
 - 16 Sharp as a tack
 - 18 Crystal clear
 - 20 Ravi Shankar's instrument
 - 23 Rocky peak

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



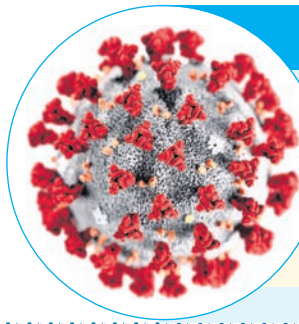
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



HELPING HAND

Volunteers distribute cooked food among the needy at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar during the weekend shutdown, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	15,79,91,953	13,54,65,390	32,91,006
India	2,18,92,676	1,79,30,960	2,38,270
Odisha	5,24,207	4,39,322	2,161

1 in every 4 Covid positive

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The state Saturday reported 11,807 new Covid-19 cases, while 21 more people succumbed to the virus, a Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The state tested 50,864 samples of which 11,807 were found Covid-19 positive, Friday

Of the new infections, 6,613 were reported from different quarantine centres and the rest 5,194 are local contact cases

At present, there are 90,335 active cases in the state

The new cases were detected after 50,864 samples were tested Friday. The test positive rate (TPR) in the state stood at 23.21 per cent, indicating that one in every 4.3 people undergoing Covid tests is found positive.

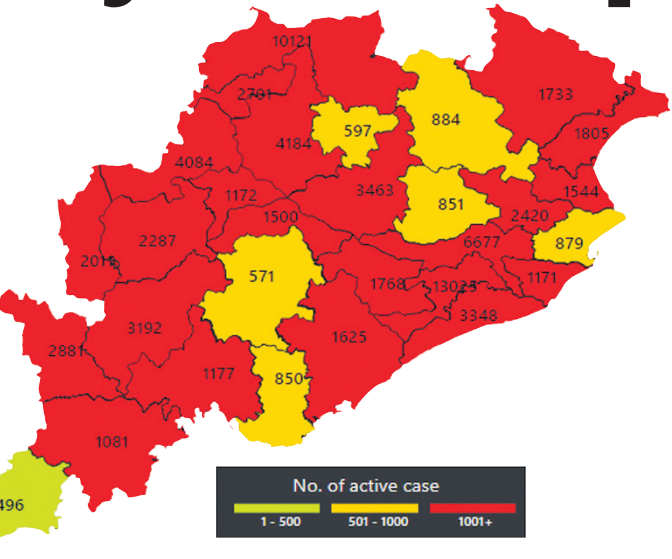
In some districts, the TPR is nearly 50 per cent, the official said. At present, there are 90,335 active cases in the state.

Odisha has so far reported 5,24,207 cases, while the death toll was at 2,161.

Of the new infections, 6,613 were reported from different quarantine centres and the rest 5,194 are local contact cases.

Sundargarh reported the highest 1,922 new cases, followed by Khurda (1,510) and Cuttack (1,052). Barring Kandhamal, Bhadrak and Malkangiri, all other 27 districts reported over 100 new cases.

In the last 24 hours, the state registered 21 deaths - the highest single-day fatality since the beginning of the pandemic.



Malkangiri only dist in green zone

Bhubaneswar: With Covid cases across the coastal state increasing alarmingly, only one district, Malkangiri, has remained in green zone under Covid-19 classifications. Currently, there are 496 active cases in the district.

Malkangiri was earmarked as orange zone district till Saturday morning as active cases were over 500-mark.

However, following the recovery of 31 Covid patients, the district again came back to green zone in the evening.

Out of 30 districts, 23 districts including Khurda, Cuttack, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj have remained in red zone with the reporting of more than 1,001 active

cases while six districts come under orange zone with the reporting of 501-1,000 active cases.

Highest 13,025 active cases are in Khurda while 10,121 active cases are in Sundargarh and 6,677 cases in Cuttack.

Similarly, the active cases in Sambalpur stand at 4,184, followed by Bargarh with 4,084 cases, Angul (3,463), Puri (3,348), Kalahandi (3,192), Nabarangpur (2,881), Jharsuguda (2,701), Jajpur (2,420), Bolangir (2,284), Nuapada (2,011), Balasore (1,805), Nayagarh (1,768), Mayurbhanj (1,733), Ganjam (1,625), Bhadrak (1,544), Boudh (1,500), Rayagada (1,177), Jagatsinghpur (1,171) and Koraput (1,081), as per government data.

While Kalahandi district reported four deaths, two deaths each

were reported by Angul, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Sundargarh.

Naveen wishes speedy recovery to politicians

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday wished speedy recovery and good health to several political leaders of the state who have tested positive for Covid-19.

Senior BJD leader and Bhandaripokhari MLA Prafulla Samal has recently tested positive for the novel coronavirus and is undergoing treatment. Besides, Gunupur MLA Raghunath Gomango, former minister Bijayshree Routray and Panchayati Raj Minister Pratap Jena have also contracted the virus.

Naveen took to his Twitter handle and wished them speedy recovery in a series of tweets.

"I got information that MLA Prafulla Samal has been infected by Covid. I wish him speedy recovery and good health," one of his tweets in Odia read.

Notably, the Covid-19 situation in Odisha is getting grimmer by the day.

One patient each died in Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Kendrapara, Khurda, Nuapada and Puri. So far, 4,31,658 patients have recovered from the disease.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Pratap Jena said that he has tested positive for Covid-19.

400 take nCoV jabs at drive-in hub on Day 1



A woman receives the second dose of Covid vaccine at the first ever drive-in vaccination facility in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: More than 400 people Saturday took their second dose of Covid vaccine at the drive-in vaccination facility launched by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) at Esplanade Mall here.

Two vaccination points at the basement (parking area) of the mall served the citizens of 45-plus age group who came for their second dose. The drive-in centre was well-marked as the lanes were separated for registration, vaccination, waiting space and exit passage. The drive began at 8:45am Saturday

The drive began at 8:45am Saturday and ended at 6pm with a break of two hours from 1pm to 3pm

and ended at 6pm with a break of two hours from 1pm to 3pm.

"I had to stand in a long queue when I took my first dose and was not very excited for my second dose. As I have arthritis, standing for a longer period aggravates pain. However, the new initiative of drive-in vaccination has helped me a lot. My son drove me to the centre for

my final shot," said 60-year old Subranshu Nayak.

It can be mentioned here that this is the first drive-in vaccination centre after the civic administration was inspired by Mumbai model of vaccination, aiming to improve the vaccination drive along with decongesting the hubs. While 400 slots have been made available for May 8, around 500 slots would be available from May 10 to 15 on a daily basis, sources said. Meanwhile, Subrat Kumar Panda, Covid observer for the city visited the centre and interacted with beneficiaries, the BMC team and authorities of Esplanade Mall.

Respite from heat as City sees showers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The denizens of Bhubaneswar got the much-needed respite from the sweltering heat when moderate rainfall lashed the Capital city, Saturday. The city has received a rainfall of 19.2 mm during the day.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), thunderstorm activity will continue in the state for another two days.

Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph is very likely to occur at one or two places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sonapur, Sambalpur, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Boudh and Nayagarh districts, Sunday.

Similarly, a few places in Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Cuttack and Dhenkanal districts will also experience thunderstorm, Monday. However, light to moderate rainfall is likely to continue till May 13 morning, the Met department said.

NHAI exempts O₂ tankers from toll

PNN/AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, May 8: A day after the Odisha government urged the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to waive toll on trucks carrying liquid medical oxygen (LMO), the latter Saturday announced exemption of charges on such tankers and containers at toll plazas on the national highways across the country.

Keeping in view the current unprecedented demand for LMO across the country due to Covid-19 pandemic, containers carrying the life-saving gas will be treated at par with other emergency vehicles such as ambulances for a period of two months or till further orders, the NHAI said in a statement.

"In order to provide uninterrupted passage for tankers and containers carrying Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) across national highways, the user fee for such vehicles at toll plazas has been exempted," the highways authority said.

Although toll plazas have nearly zero waiting time after implementation of FASTag, the NHAI



said it is already providing priority passage to such vehicles for quick and seamless transportation of medical oxygen.

"Instructions have also been issued by NHAI to all its officials and other stakeholders to assist the government and private efforts to fight the pandemic in helping them in pro-active manner," it said.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has created huge demand for LMO across the country.

"During the ongoing crisis, the timely delivery of LMO to hospitals and medical centres is of paramount importance to save lives of

patients critically affected by Covid-19," the NHAI said adding, exemption of payment of user fee at toll plazas will ensure faster movement of medical oxygen on the national highways.

Notably, the state Works department additional secretary, Hemanta Kumar Dutta, had written a letter to the chief general manager (technical), NHAI, Odisha, in this regard Friday.

Dutta, in his letter, said, "Take necessary action for exemption of charges at the toll gates under NHAI at the state to facilitate smooth transportation of the ve-

PROMPT ACTION

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Instructions have been issued by the highways authority to all its officials and other stakeholders to assist the government and private efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in a pro-active manner

icles carrying medical oxygen in tankers or cylinders to the treating hospitals/Covid Care Centres (CCCs) in view of the Covid pandemic."

India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 4,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals in several states are reeling under the shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

COPS BUST BURGLARIES AT CHOUDWAR TEMPLES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, May 8: Nearly six months after separate incidents of burglary in Dakshineswar Kali temple and Byagravahini temple at Choudwar township near here, the police Saturday claimed to have solved the twin temple thefts.

In a release, Cuttack Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh said, a 30-year-old person from the neighbouring Kendrapara district confessed to his crime during custodial interrogation.

Singh said, the Choudwar police recovered most of the stolen items from the accused, Bijprakeshari Samantray alias Hari, a habitual offender, having cases pending against him in at least seven police stations of the state.

"More arrests in these two cases cannot be ruled out," the DCP said.

Hari was arrested by the city police April 14, the DCP said.

After his arrest, he was taken in police remand, and during custodial interrogation, Hari reportedly admitted to his involvement in the twin temple thefts in



Choudwar police recovered most of the stolen items from Bijprakeshari Samantray alias Hari, a habitual offender in the area

November last year, police sources said. He was booked for allegedly having stolen valuables from the temples.

The police recovered at least nine stolen items from his possession, including a gold mangalsutra, five silver crowns of the deities, and several brass utensils of the temples.

TAKEN OFF GUARD



A scooterist caught up in the Nor'wester rain in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Fewer carpenters for this year's Rath work

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 8: Preparations for this year's Rath Yatra and Chandan Yatra of Srimandir deities are going on in full swing even though the 12th century shrine has been shut for devotees till May 15 to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.

The seventh batch of logs for construction of chariots for this year's Rath Yatra reached the Holy City, Saturday, said sources in the SJTA.

"A truck carrying eight logs from Boudh forest range reached the Holy City today. We have so far received a total of 245 logs in seven batches from Nayagarh and Boudh forest ranges. This apart, altogether 509 logs have been sent to a mill in Cuttack for sawing," said an official of SJTA.

According to the official, the carpenters require 865 logs for the construction of chariots for this year's Rath Yatra. "There were 69 surplus logs from last year's Rath Yatra. The temple administration has taken steps to arrange the remaining 796 logs from Nayagarh and Boudh forest divisions," he said. It is learnt that the SJTA is plan-



Repair work under way at Srimandir in Puri, Saturday

OP PHOTO

ning to engage only a limited number of carpenters and workers to construct chariots. The temple administration would also take steps to vaccinate the carpenters ahead of the chariot construction work.

"Covid tests would be done on all carpenters and workers. All artisans engaged in chariot construction may be asked to stay in isolation," said SJTA sources. Meanwhile, Puri Collector

The SJTA would take steps to vaccinate the carpenters ahead of the chariot construction work

Samarth Verma Saturday convened a virtual meeting to take stock of the preparation for the Chandan Yatra, which is scheduled to commence May 15.

The temple administration had earlier held a meeting to discuss various issues related to the summer ritual. The meeting had given its nod for organising this year's Chandan Yatra at Narendra pond here. However, a final decision in this regard would be taken at a meeting of Srimandir Chhatisha Niyog, the apex body of servitors, May 11, SJTA sources said.

"SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar had asked Puri Collector to make all arrangement for holding Chandan Yatra at Narendra pond in strict adherence to Covid norms. It was decided in today's meeting that only 10 servitors would be allowed to perform the summer ritual," said a temple source.

State to revamp Chilika, Satkosia tourism hubs

ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING AGENCY WILL BE ENGAGED IN PREPARATION OF INTEGRATED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE TWIN SITES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The state government is continuing its work for development of tourism in the state despite Covid-19 pandemic.

The state government has decided to redevelop two important destinations—Chilika Lake and Satkosia—to attract domestic and foreign tourists to the sites in the post-Covid scenario, official sources said Saturday.

The Tourism department has decided to engage architecture and urban planning agency for preparation of integrated tourism development plans for the two sites. Once the plan is approved, the department will take steps to implement it, the source said.

As per the department's plan, a comprehensive tourism master plan will be prepared for Rambha cluster and Satapada-Sipakuda cluster of Chilika Lake and the entire Satkosia area. Though there are four clusters



of Chilika Lake, two clusters namely Rambha and Satapada-Sipakuda will be developed in the first phase while Khallikote and Mangalajodi clusters will be taken up in later phase.

Chilika Lake is the largest brackish water lake in Asia and is a great attraction for tourists for activities like fishing, bird watching and boating. The lake has immense potential for development of eco-tourism. The sites within Chilika

Lake are not yet developed to their full potential and remained untapped in attracting enough tourists, the sources said.

In Rambha cluster, the government has planned to execute integrated development of islands, development of Somolo Island as tourism node, eco-friendly hospitality units (hotels/resorts) and water based & island-based tourism infrastructure. It will also have accommodation zone, water sports

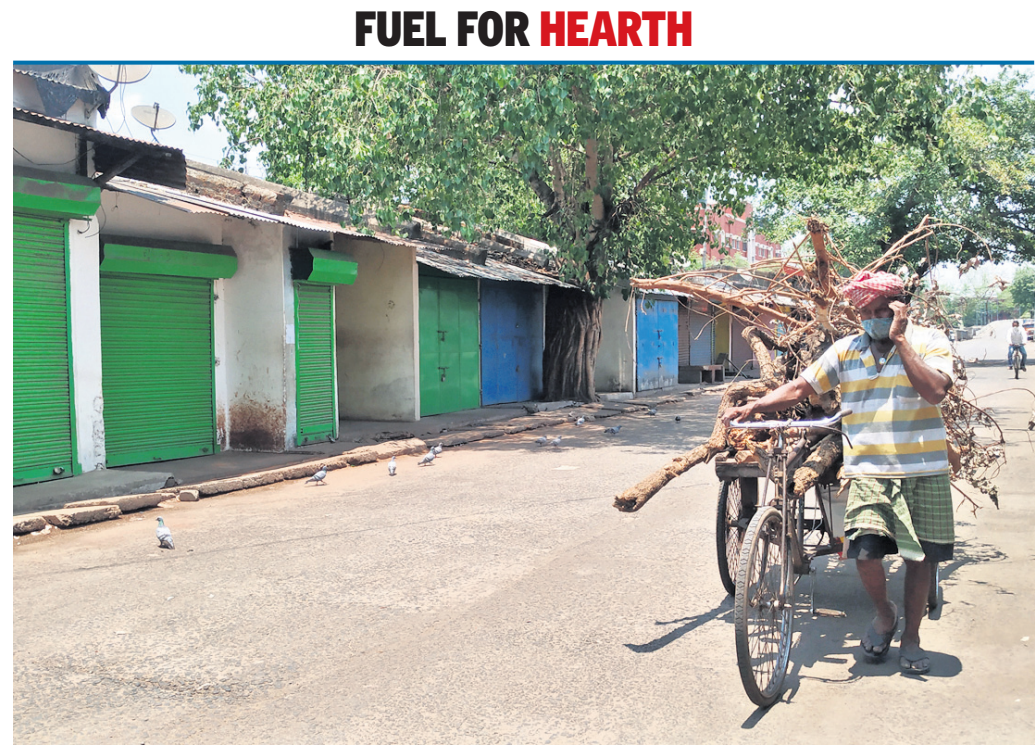
zone and recreation zone.

In the Satapada-Sipakuda cluster, the hospitality hub will be re-developed while it was also planned for day cruise operations and establishment of an iconic tower and marine park in the area.

Similarly, the department has planned to develop the Satkosia region as tourist hub with all required facilities, services and amenities. Budget and luxury hotels will be set up in the region while efforts will be made for operation of houseboats and cruise services.

Basic infrastructure like development of entrance points, access roads, toilets, food outlets, shops, etc will be taken up. There is also a plan for development of waterways connecting both northern and southern sides of the wildlife sanctuary, they said.

The master plans will be chalked out considering all existing laws, rules and regulation in force in the green zones, the source added.



A man pulls a firewood laden trolley rickshaw on the deserted Old Malgudwn Road in Cuttack during the weekend shutdown, Saturday

Private firms asked to share employees' lists with cops

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: In an attempt to check rampant misuse of official identity cards by private sector workers, the twin city Police Commissioner, Saumendra Priyadarshi, Saturday directed the heads of the private firms providing essential services to submit the lists of their employees allowed to attend the office. The Commissionerate Police issued an advisory in this regard, Saturday.

The state government has allowed some sectors like Information Technology (IT), IT-enabled services, plantation and other industries to operate with a maximum 50 per cent staff during the lockdown and weekend shutdowns. Similarly, the corporate offices have been permitted to run the offices with only 33 per cent staff in compliance with all Covid-19 guidelines.

Meanwhile, the police did not issue any passes for these em-

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Similarly, the corporate offices have been permitted to run the offices with only 33 per cent staff in compliance with all Covid-19 guidelines

However, many employees from these sectors including those instructed to work from home are spotted roaming freely across the city misusing their identity cards issued by the heads of the organisations and industrial establishments. The cops are finding it very hard to properly enforce the lockdown and weekend shutdowns.

As a result, the Commissionerate Police issued the advisory directing the heads of private industries, organisations, and financial establishments to submit the employees' list at the office of DCP positively. The authorities have also directed the organisations to issue authorisation papers to their employees mentioning the details regarding their movement between their respective offices and residences.

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No steroids for Covid sans doc's consultation: Experts

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 8: Doctors treating Covid-19 infected diabetic patients opined that over-the-counter procurement of steroids and other class of drugs for Covid treatment without the consultation of doctors could cause more harm than good.

"Diabetic persons are more prone to Covid-19, especially those who have higher sugar levels. Studies have shown that uncontrolled diabetic persons can face more severe form of Covid-19. Therefore, they need to take special measures to maintain their sugar levels in order to avoid complication," said Dr Sandeep Sahu, a diabetologist from the city.

A diabetic person, taking steroids without consultation, can face increased blood sugar levels and reduced immunity

He also said that the patients need to take special care in their diet during the infection phase. They must shun food with high glycaemic index like sugar, potato, rice, breads and others.

"Some set of drugs can actually aggravate the disease in the diabetic persons and they should never take any Covid medicine without the consultation of doctors,"

another diabetologist Dr Siba Dalai said.

He also added, "A diabetic person, taking steroids without consultation, can face increased blood sugar levels and reduced immunity. They should also never use any drug used for blood thinning. Besides, anti-viral drugs like Remdesivir should never be taken without the advice of doctors."

The Union government had already declared diabetes as a prime comorbidity which could put bigger impact on people infected with the virus and prioritized vaccination for the diabetics.

Experts also claimed that in diabetic persons, organs like kidney, eyes are also expected to be affected from the infectious diseases.

61.4 LAKH GOT JABS IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The state Health and Family (H&F) department Saturday said that it has vaccinated a total of 61,48,532 persons till now in the ongoing vaccination drive against Covid-19.

The department said that with the supply of more Covishield doses, the state was able to vaccinate a total of 67,078 persons against the virus.

The vaccination drive was undertaken at 352 sites across the state Saturday out of which 42 sessions were of Covaxin alone.

A total of 52,142 persons belonging to 45-59 age group were given their second dose, Saturday. Similarly, 6,717 people in the age group of 18 to 44 years were given their first dose during the day.

FEW TAKERS FOR CP'S DOORSTEP FIR SERVICE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The doorstep FIR service launched by the Commissionerate Police recently seems to be having poor response as many denizens are reportedly reluctant to convey their grievances over phone.

Earlier, the Commissionerate Police had urged the citizens to avoid visiting police stations and contact the local police over phone to lodge their complaint amid a surge in Covid-19 cases. The cops had also been asked to record complaints at doorsteps of the complainants.

Police sources revealed that cops at various police stations in the Capital city received 14 calls Wednesday and 10 calls Thursday from complainants. Meanwhile, Kharavel Nagar and Jatni police stations received two complaints Saturday. The FIRs have been sent on their respective WhatsApp numbers.

Meanwhile, some police officials cited three factors responsible for less number of calls from the complainants—lack of awareness, less incidents due to lockdown, and people seeking police help in property dispute cases where a compromise before police is preferred.

Will follow SC order on decongesting jails: Prisons DG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: Expressing grave concern over the alarming Covid situation in the country, the Supreme Court Saturday instructed the high-powered committees established in various states to consider releasing prisoners in order to decongest the prisons. The danger of Covid-19 looms large over the prisons in Odisha too.

Speaking to Orissa POST, the state Prisons DG Santosh Kumar Upadhyay said that the high-powered committee, under the chairmanship of Justice Sanju Panda, will go through the judgement and act as per the apex court's directions.



The state prisons directorate had also recently asked the authorities to ensure RT-PCR test of the accused persons before producing them in courts. However, several jail staffers and inmates have been found positive for Covid-19 while one under-trial prisoner

(UTP) has reportedly succumbed to the virus.

According to jail sources, 16 inmates in sub-jail of Rairangpur and nine from Gajapati were tested positive for Covid-19 in April. Around 22 prisoners in Salipur sub-jail, Cuttack were found Covid-19 positive few days ago.

Recently, the Prisons directorate, in a letter to the Registrar General of Orissa High Court, informed about the lodging of 1,163 UTPs in jails in connection with offences with maximum punishment upto seven years. The directorate has requested the Registrar to 'issue suitable instructions to the courts and police authority for decongestion of jails in view of resurgence of Covid-19 pandemic.'

The decision to shift 85 inmates from Jharpada jail to Banapur sub-jail is yet to be implemented as the proceedings at Khurda sessions court are suspended following detection of Covid among the staff and lawyers.

Murder accused shifted to Dhenkanal jail

BHUBANESWAR: One more hardcore criminal has been shifted from Jharpada jail to Dhenkanal district jail to stop the inmates from engaging in illegal activities inside the prison by developing camaraderie with others. Earlier, gangster Usman Ali alias Tito was shifted to the Circle Jail at Berhampur Tuesday. The under-trial prisoner, who was shifted Saturday, has been identified as Sangram Patra alias Ricki who was facing trial in a murder case. Patra has been shifted to the district jail of Dhenkanal. Following the dramatic escape of dreaded gangster Sk Hyder with the alleged help of jail staffers of Sambalpur, the Prisons directorate has instructed jail authorities to shift such criminals to other jails at regular intervals.

STRICT VIGIL



Passengers register their details after reaching Bhubaneswar railway station through Ajmer-Puri Express, Saturday, as Odisha witnessed a steep rise in Covid cases recently

IIM-Sambalpur joins admin in nCoV war

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The IIM-Sambalpur Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the district administration to tackle the unprecedented crisis created by the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic in the area. The MoU was signed in the presence of IIM-Sambalpur Director Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal and district Collector Subham Saxena.

A release issued by the institution said, "India is currently undergoing unparalleled circumstances that have not been witnessed before for generations." The brutal second wave of the pandemic has left the country crippling and the healthcare system overwhelmed, it added. With over 37 lakh active Covid-19 cases, the country needs immediate solutions to address the crisis.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Mahadeo said, "While the government is doing its very best to mitigate the catastrophe, it is also important for all of us to offer solutions



and assist the government in its endeavour. We believe we can offer a scientific approach in areas such as supply chain, logistics, operations, modelling and manpower management. IIM Sambalpur has created task forces with our faculty and experts on efficient management of health infrastructure supply chain such as hospital beds,

doctors, oxygen, medicine and effective Citizen Engagement-Social Communication in the district to begin with and to be rolled out nationwide based on its success."

The MoU signed with the district Collector's office will focus on areas such as ensuring effective citizen engagement and efficient health infrastructure supply chain

The pact will focus on areas such as ensuring effective citizen engagement and efficient health infrastructure supply chain management to deal with Covid-19 pandemic

management to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, enabling research and solution frameworks for governance such as impact evaluation and creating new class of applications and solutions that focus on optimising the delivery of government services in identified areas."

The technical areas of collaboration include areas like development of tourism in and around Sambalpur; public health, handloom and handicraft development, Mission Shakti, indigenous knowledge documentation among others.

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Waiting for treatment, Covid +ve woman dies in front of hospital



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, May 8: A Covid-positive woman breathed her last in front of the district headquarters hospital here while waiting for the treatment Friday. Even her daughter's cries for help failed to move the medical authorities who did not attend to the patient leading to the woman's death.

The incident, which has been a talk of the town, has laid bare how miserably Covid patients are being mistreated in hospitals even as the government has been laying emphasis on making all possible help available to Covid patients.

While the health workers engaged for Covid patients are regarded as 'frontline Covid warriors', the incident proves to the contrary. The incident has been a classic example of how these 'frontline Covid warriors' caused a patient's death by allegedly not providing her required treatment. The deceased has been identified as a resident of Joranda area.

According to sources, the victim's daughter had brought her to the DHH after her health condition deteriorated. Her antigen test reports came out positive for Covid-

19. She expressed her desire to undergo treatment at home. After taking medicines, they came out of the DHH. But, hardly after travelling two kilometres, her condition further deteriorated. She was again brought to the DHH. Her daughter crying all the while pleaded with the medical staff to provide immediate treatment to her mother. But none came forward thanks to the fear associated with the disease. Finally, she breathed her last in front of the hospital.

On being informed, chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Sujatarani Mishra reached the place and got the body shifted to the morgue. When contacted, CDMO Mishra said the woman had tested positive for Covid-19. The doctors had advised her to get herself admitted in the hospital. But, she had expressed her desire to undergo treatment at home.

While going home in an auto rickshaw, her condition deteriorated and she was again brought back to the hospital.

Termining the allegation of mistreatment as baseless, the CDMO said, "The auto driver left them outside the hospital and left the place. This led to her death."

Sharp dip in milk offtake leaves dairy farmers in lurch

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 8: Milk farmers in the district are a worried lot as there was a sharp drop in procurement of milk from farmers by the dairy companies, courtesy Covid-19 curbs. Moreover, a sharp rise in fodder and medicine prices for cattle has added to their woes.

This has sparked resentment among farmers as they fear if the government does not alleviate their problems, they will lose their livelihood. Reports said various dairy companies and the state-owned OMFED have reduced their milk quotas from farmers after the enforcement of lockdown and shutdown.

OMFED lifts 35,000 litres of milk daily from farmers while Pragati Dairy at Ramiaganj lifts 30,000 litres. The Odisha Dairy at

COVID CURBS



Marshaghai Crossing lifts 10,000 litres while Milky Moo Dairy lifts 25,000 litres daily from the primary cooperative societies of farmers in the district.

This apart, various sweetmeat shops and tea stalls lift around 50,000 litres of milk daily from the farmers. Moreover, 10 quintals of cheese are transported to various

districts. A single household having three cows earns Rs 6,000 per month from milk sale.

Various dairy companies have already announced their decision before, OMFED announced it Friday. The state-owned entity said it would purchase only four lakh litres of milk, leaving milk farmers of the district clueless.

The shutdown has stopped sale of milk products with all hotels, sweetmeat shops, restaurants and tea stalls lying closed. Various milk producing farms have either stopped buying milk from farmers or reduced their daily quotas of milk purchased from them.

The district being an agricultural district, cattle and buffalo rearing is the prime occupation of over 2 lakh people here. People here have been

holding onto their occupation despite a shrink in pasture land.

These two lakh people alone hold over 310,000 cattle from which they produce milk and various milk-based products. These farmers have borrowed heavily for cattle rearing but they find it impossible to repay their loans.

Out of the total cattle population, over 170,000 are of indigenous varieties while 130,000 are hybrid. Similarly, the buffalo population in the district is over 10,000. While cattle rearing is the main occupation of people in various blocks, buffalo rearing is mainly done in Mahakalapara and Marshaghai blocks. Milk farmers Niranjana Parida, Jagdish Pati, Sk Asikuddin, confectioner Kailash Sahu and social activist Amarbar Biswal said Covid restrictions have hit the milk farmers of the district hard.

SHARP VIGIL



Talchua marine police station officials conduct patrolling to preempt influx of people from West Bengal and Bangladesh through the sea route following a rise in Covid positive cases in Kendrapara district

Watch tower for tourists functional after 25 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Buguda, May 8: A watch tower built by the forest department 25 years ago at Buguda in Ganjam district for tourists was made operational recently.

Buguda is known outside for its conservation of endangered black bucks. A large number of tourists visit the area throughout the year. Due to lack of upkeep and maintenance, the watch tower had turned into a safe haven for tipplers and anti-social elements. Some media reported about it a few days ago.

Taking note of the reports, Ghumusar divisional forest officer Satyanarayan Behera directed Buguda ranger to take necessary steps for operationalisation of the watch tower.

Forest officials cleared bushes



and creepers around the facility at Subudhipalli pond while a forest official was deployed at the tower.

"The watch tower will facilitate tourists coming here to enjoy free movements of black bucks in the locality," said the ranger.

BDO, sarpanch carry bier, earn accolades

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, May 8: Donning PPE kits, Chhendipada block development officer (BDO) and local sarpanch Saturday carried the bier of an elderly man to the cremation ground and performed his last rites here in Angul district.

According to sources, Govind Majhi -- a resident of Majhi Gohirapasi village under Bahalasahi panchayat under Chhendipada police limits of Angul district -- breathed his last Friday night. His sudden death left the family members and villagers in fear. Suspecting Covid-19 to be the possible cause of Govind's death,



neither his relatives nor the villagers came forward to carry the body to the village cremation ground. As a result, the body was

lying there till 11 am Saturday. On getting information, Bahalsahi sarpanch Narayan Behera and some local journalists reached the

village and tried to persuade the villagers to perform the rites. But the villagers were in no mood to listen.

Later, Chhendipada BDO Sanjay Kumar Acharya and officials of the panchayat office including extension officer and executive officer reached the village. They held discussions with the family members and villagers but failed to persuade them.

With no options left, the BDO, sarpanch, panchayat extension officer and executive officer donned the PPE kits, carried the bier to the cremation ground and performed the last rites.

The villagers and locals are heaping praises on the officials.

JHARSUGUDA GANGRAPE

One arrested, others at large

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, May 8: Police Friday arrested a man in connection with a gangrape that had taken place Thursday at a deserted building near the bus stand here in Jharsuguda town.

The accused was identified as Hemraj Besan (29), a resident of Naxapali village under Laikera police limits. The police have launched a manhunt for other accused involved in the heinous crime.

Lanes and by-lanes in Jharsuguda town wore a deserted look May 6 due

to the lockdown. The police were busy enforcing the lockdown guidelines. Taking advantage of the police being busy on roads, some youths gangraped the young woman inside a deserted building that belongs to the railway department.

It was when she cried for help, some youths came to her rescue. Seeing them, the perpetrators fled from the spot.

However, the incident came to light when the video of the incident went viral. While no report was lodged in this regard at the police station even after two days,

chairperson of District Child Welfare Committee, Anandini Padhy took the matter up with Jharsuguda GRP and demanded stringent action against the accused.

Similarly, chairperson of Samaleswari Maa Ghar Charitable Trust, Padmini Singh condemned the incident and demanded action against the perpetrators.

Following a direction from Jharsuguda SP, Bikas Das, a team led by Town police station IIC Sabitri Bal conducted raids and arrested Hemraj. He was handed him over to GRP police.

Siblings die from snakebite

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 8: A minor boy and his sister died from snakebite late Friday night at Gobindapur village under Aul police limits in Kendrapara district.

According to sources, the deceased was an 11-year-old boy and his sibling was a three-year-old girl. The brother and sister died after a venomous snake bit them while they were fast asleep at home. The deceased were identified as Abhisek and his sister Bhumika. They were sleeping along with their mother when the snake bit their legs.

The minor boy suddenly started screaming following which his mother woke up and inquired about the cause. Later, she noticed her



son's and daughter's legs bleeding profusely, the source added. The worried mother alerted other family members. They found a snake moving inside their bedroom.

The family immediately rushed the injured to a hospital for treatment. However, doctors at the hospital referred them to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack but it was too late.

Man dies by suicide, wife succumbs to Covid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bijepur, May 8: A man from Bargarh district Friday ended his life after his wife tested positive for Covid-19. A few hours after being shifted to a Covid hospital, the woman breathed her last.

The shocking news was reported from Satabandha village under Bijepur police limits in Bargarh district. Police said, 'Nishtha Parivar', a Bargarh-based social organisation, cremated the bodies Saturday.

Arjun Meher and his wife Chahal Meher were not keeping well and visited Bijepur CHC Friday. Arjun tested negative for the infection while Chahal's report came out positive, sources added.

Sonepur road project hits land hurdle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, May 8: The four-laning work of a major road project in Sonepur has remained incomplete over the years due to land hurdles and other bottlenecks. The administration has failed to acquire land for it.

According to reports, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid the foundation stone for the four-laning of the bypass road from Mahanadi bridge to Kunja Chhak in February, 2019.

ThePWD had awarded the contract to a super class contractor at a cost of Rs 6.79 crore in August, 2019. Apart from the four-laning of the 3.26 km long road, the



project entails a divider and 20-metre wide drains on either side.

It is said that the expansion work has failed to make much progress due to land hurdles.

Patches of government, private and endowment lands are to be acquired for the road project.

However, the problem is people have encroached upon govern-

ment lands while the administration is taking no steps to remove the encroachments.

Earlier, 1,165 trees were cleared in the area to make space for the road expansion work. But, when it came to removing the encroachments, the revenue department and the local civic body got into a tug of war and stepped back from the task. Since then, the work has been stalled.

When contacted, executive engineer of the PWD, Damodar Kaibartya said the work has been caught in a deadlock due to problems centred around land acquisition. "Efforts are on to settle the issue to carry forward the work," he added.

Millet Mission strikes roots in Sundargarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, May 8: In a bid to boost nutrition levels of people, the state government will introduce millet cultivation in three more blocks of Sundargarh district. The government has taken up a five-year action plan to encourage farmers to grow millet in Lahunipada, Lathikata and Gurundia blocks.

Funds will be allocated from the district mineral foundation (DMF) for the

purpose. A tripartite agreement to this effect was signed among the DMF authorities, the agriculture and farmers' empowerment department and Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at the DMF office here.

It was in 2018 Sundargarh was included among districts having potential to grow nutritious crops. In the first phase, farming of millets and other nutritious crops was taken up in Kutra, Nugaon, Kuanrunda and


Rajgangpur blocks. In 2020, Millet Mission was expanded to four more blocks in the district. Farmers of Tangarpalli, Hemgiri, Lefripada and Balishankara were provided financial assistance from the DMF to go in for millet farming.

Millets and other nutritious crops are now produced in eight blocks. As this farming is more lucrative than paddy, more farmers are keen to take up millet farming. Owing to its nutritional value, demand for millet is also going up in the district as well as in the state.

Significantly, millet has been added to the menu of schemes like Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDM), supplementary nutrition programme (SNP) under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Anganwadi Centres.


In view of this, the district administration had earlier proposed to the state government to promote millet farming in three more blocks. The government has given a go-ahead to the proposal of the district administration.

PRAGATI PATHE HATADIHI BLOCK, DISTRICT: KEONJHAR



MGNREGS

FINANCIAL	
Target for the Year - 2020-21	: 4830.00 (Rs. in Lakh)
Achievement	: 3438.19 (Rs. in Lakh)
PHYSICAL	
Target for the year - 2020-21	: 1030127 (Persondays)
Achievement	: 1060182 (Persondays)



ଜୟଦେବ ଦାସ
ବ୍ଲକ୍ ଉନ୍ନୟନ ଅଧିକାରୀ

Employment Provided	: 24608
House Hold	: 557
100 Days Completed	: 1508
Project Taken up	: 1210
Project Completed	: 09
Rural Park Taken up	: 02
Rural Park Completed	: 02
RURAL HOUSING	
For the year 2019-20	
PMAY-G Completed	: 1369
For the year 2020-21	
PMAY-G Completed	: 2579
AMA GAON AMA BIKASH	
Project Taken up	: 308
Project Completed	: 295

Sd./- Block Development Officer, Hatadihi

FOCUS PANDEMIC RESPONSE

TARGETED LOCKDOWNS



More nuanced lockdowns are needed along with cash transfers to get out of the pandemic

spite lockdowns. A paper in the Wiley Clinical Practice journal has emphasised that lockdowns are more likely to succeed if people are taken into confidence rather than imposed from the top. I recall that last year towards the beginning of the pandemic, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo used to hold one-hour long press briefings every day and informed people of the true state of the pandemic and the facilities that he was trying to arrange. I believe that had a great impact on compliance by the public. Even I sitting in India was impressed. On the other hand, even during the strict lockdown last April, the ministers in Uttarakhnad were nowhere to be seen and officials were issuing passes to one and sundry. The holding of public meetings and family functions without social distancing in the presence of leaders sends exactly the opposite message. A daily press briefing by our Minister of Health would help clear a lot of misinformation that may be circulating. I recall that Lal Bahadur Shastri had asked the people of the country to fast one day a week to save food grains. I was only 15 years old at that time and was encouraged to follow the advice.

A study by Harvard University has said that direct cash transfers to poor must be made while imposing strict lockdowns. A paper published by the scholars of the London School of Economics has said that helping small industries and affected people to manage through the pandemic by giving loans may not work. The borrowers will be burdened by debt and, in absence of quick revival of economic activity, will not be able to repay the debt. That may necessitate write-offs and further impose costs on the economy.

We need to shift gears. More nuanced lockdowns are needed along with cash transfers to get out of the pandemic.

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

We are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea in respect of imposition of lockdowns. According to a paper published by the Frankfurt School of Finance, not imposing a lockdown leads to higher numbers of deaths which, in turn, leads to lower economic growth. On the other hand, imposition of lockdown leads to a direct reduction of economic activity and lower economic growth even though some improvement takes place after a time. According to Financial Firm Jeffries, three states of the United States namely, Arizona, Texas and Utah, did not impose lockdowns. The result was greater spread of Covid and the economy of these states was more impacted negatively than other states. In other words, economy is not better if lockdown is not imposed. This same study describes the different trajectories of two Scandinavian countries Sweden and Denmark. Lockdown was not imposed in Sweden and people were encouraged to follow social distancing and wearing of masks voluntarily. Lockdown was imposed in Denmark. It was found that the rate of death in Sweden was five times higher than in Denmark. This underscores the fact that lockdowns are necessary. Two papers published by the University of Oxford and Wiley Clinical Practice, said that late imposition of lockdown in United Kingdom led to higher death rate and a negative impact on the economy. These studies indicate that lockdowns have necessarily to be imposed. Not imposing lockdown may seem to help economy by not prohibiting economic activity immediately but that does not save the economy because then the higher death rate soon impacts the economy.

We have to understand the recommendation of the World Health Organisation to avoid imposing lockdowns in this background. David Nabarro of WHO has said that lockdowns are very harsh on the poor and should therefore be

imposed only as a last resort. He has also said that the poor are left without food which leads them to breaking the lockdowns. That leads to greater spread of the virus and makes the lockdown unsuccessful for rich and poor alike. We have seen how the huge movement of migrant labour in the first lockdown had taken place and added to the infections.

It is clear that imposition and non-imposition of lockdown—both have a negative impact on the economy. The way out is to impose a lockdown but fine tune it to reduce the economic hardship. The Economist Today has suggested that construction workers could be required to stay within the boundaries to reduce possibility of infection. The same could be done for manufacturing industries and software parks. Another suggestion is to segregate workers in two groups and place them in alternate shifts so that, in case infection takes place, it affects only one-half of the workers and production does not come to a standstill.

It is also necessary to determine on which activities to impose, and on which activities not to impose a lockdown. Economists calculate the costs and benefits of various projects. The costs and benefits of locking down various activities can be calculated separately. For example, the costs and benefits of lockdown in schools, bus travel, rail travel, international



Bharat Jhunjunwala

THOSE ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE HIGH COSTS AND LOW BENEFITS CAN BE LOCKED DOWN WHILE OTHERS CAN BE ALLOWED



Aakar Patel

It serves the immediate purpose of the government to pretend that the official number is low because it makes it appear less incompetent and helpless than it is

The great are strongest when they stand alone. A God-given might of being is their force.

SRI AUROBINDO



Come Clean

The world is worried about its Vishwaguru as our mismanagement of corona has become a global story. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, an independent research centre in the United States, has estimated that by September, which means four months, another 10 lakh Indians will die. And this is based on the official numbers, which are difficult to accept given what has been revealed by the scenes in the crematoria and also by the numbers that newspapers have put out. A newspaper in Gujarat reported on May 6 that 17,822 bodies had been cremated or buried with Covid protocols in one month in the state's seven major cities: Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Baroda, Surat, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar. But the government had acknowledged only 1,745 deaths officially from Covid, or 10 per cent. And remember that these cities are only about a third or less of the state's total population. In the villages the chances of those being tested and treated are even fewer.

This is not only about Gujarat of course. On May 3, a newspaper reported that Bhopal had acknowledged 104 deaths from Covid while reports from crematorium and cemetery spoke of 2,557 Covid patients among the total of 3,811 who were cremated or interred. That is a ratio of 1:25.

A report on May 4 from Haryana said the difference between the official death toll and the number from crematoria was 1:2. This is similar to the number reported for Bangalore for last month (1,422 official toll versus 3,104 cremated with Covid protocols). In Uttar Pradesh, a report from Meerut said the difference was 1:7.

If we remove the outliers and look at the data it seems like a figure of twice and perhaps three times the official is not unreasonable. If we take that into account, our official death toll of 2.3 lakh, the third highest in the world, actually looks like 5.6 lakh or more than 7 lakh and easily the highest in the world. This will not surprise anyone and has been borne out by the saddening and shameful and horrific visuals that the entire world has now seen from India.

I should clarify that the fudging of the numbers is not entirely because of government fraud. It has happened in part because most people are dying at home, unable to access medical facilities or unable to afford them and they are not tested. Secondly, how a death is classified depends on the state government and the people making out the certificate. A person who has Covid but also has another disease can be classified as a Covid death or not. It serves the immediate purpose of the government to pretend that the official number is low because it makes it appear less incompetent and helpless than it is. But hiding the number and not actively promoting the fact that things are worse is dangerous for us all.

The first reason why the government should come clean and say that its numbers are an undercount is public safety. If people are fed nonsense like "recovery rate" (a meaningless number for a disease that has no cure) then they will be less alert and more prone to carelessness on masking and social distancing. If they knew that many more people are dying after being infected especially because the government cannot manage hospitals at this point in time they would not think they were personally safe.

The second reason is our shortage of oxygen. After Delhi, now two BJP-run states, Gujarat and Karnataka, have said that they are not getting enough oxygen from the Modi government. Gujarat has said it needs 1400 tonnes a day and will need 1600 tonnes a day by May 15 but is currently getting only 795 tonnes. Karnataka had asked for 1200 tonnes instead of 962 tonnes allotted by the Centre.

The Centre says it has enough oxygen but this is untrue. We will make our jobs more difficult if we continue to be in denial. The third reason is credibility. The world is reporting the Indian numbers and saying that these cannot be believed. And the world cannot be blamed for feeling this, because it is true based on what our own media is reporting. The damage to India has already been considerable in terms of reputation but that is not important. What will happen is more countries banning Indian travellers. Already that list is quite large. In time the wave will recede but another is likely to come. At that point, the world will look at our official numbers and try and add a factor of their own to arrive at the real number if they think we are still fudging. This will harm Indians on work visas, families who are separated and Indian business in general.

That is why in our self-interest we should actively make attempts to find out the real fatality rate as the first step for trying to curb this pandemic.

WISDOM CORNER

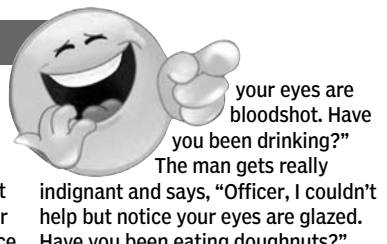
- Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth. OSCAR WILDE
- It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit. HARRY S TRUMAN
- What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything? VINCENT VAN GOGH

WORDSWORTH

Mulct
Is this word said as much? No, the c is hard, like the effect on the person being mulcted. It derives from classical Latin, in which multa or mulcta meant a fine or penalty. The c was probably introduced as the result of confusion with the verb mulcare, to handle roughly or damage, an unsurprising association of ideas. But many centuries passed before the change became general. Both Anglo-Norman and Middle French had multer, to pay a fine. It came into English in the fifteenth century as mult and it was a century before the c became wedged permanently into place. (The same thing happened in French, in which mulcter evolved from multer at about the same time, though the verb has disappeared from the modern language.) Mulct remains in English, though in its original sense it is now restricted to the world of lawyers and judges. Elsewhere, it has shifted to refer to the illegal extraction of money through fraud or extortion. Since it appears in phrases such as "mulcting the poor taxpayer", we may assume people subject to some legally sanctioned mulct came to regard it as excessive. The [energy supply] industry is quick to pass on price increases, and damnably slow to give customers the benefit of today's tumbling costs. It is no good urging these hardfaced profiteers. The only thing they understand is the brute force they use to mulct their customers (Daily Mirror, 12 Dec. 2008). Scots once had a related term, multure, based on the older spelling of mulct, which can be traced back to the early thirteenth century for a charge or toll made by a miller, a multerer, for grinding corn.

LOL

Were you drinking?



A policeman pulls a man over for speeding and asks him to get out of the car. After looking the man over he says, "Sir, I couldn't help but notice your eyes are bloodshot. Have you been drinking?" The man gets really indignant and says, "Officer, I couldn't help but notice your eyes are glazed. Have you been eating doughnuts?"

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Taiwan and the ghosts of history



Ian Buruma

WHETHER THE US WOULD STILL FIGHT A WAR OVER TAIWAN HAS BECOME A QUESTION SUBJECT TO WHAT HENRY KISSINGER LONG AGO TERMED "STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY"

Would the US be prepared to risk a catastrophic war with the People's Republic of China to protect the Republic of China, better known as Taiwan? President Biden laid out his vision clearly last week. He sees the rivalry between the PRC and US as a global conflict between democracy and autocracy, and the ROC is unquestionably one of Asia's most successful democracies.

In 1954, President Eisenhower threatened to use nuclear weapons after China shelled a rocky islet near Taiwan's coast, when the ROC was still a military dictatorship. But things were different then. The US was treaty-bound to defend Taiwan. This changed after 1972, when President Nixon agreed that Taiwan was part of "one China," and President Carter nullified the defense treaty in 1979. Whether the US would still fight a war over Taiwan has become a question subject to what Henry Kissinger long ago termed "strategic ambiguity."

As a result, American military commitments in the East China Sea are peculiar. A defense treaty with Japan obliges the US to defend a few uninhabited rocks called the Senkaku Islands (or the Diaoyu Islands in Chinese), but not democratic Taiwan and its 23 million people. There are practical reasons why a Chinese military attack on Taiwan

might still provoke a war with the US. China's control of the East China Sea would be a threat to Japan and South Korea. Allowing that to happen could start a dangerous nuclear arms race in East Asia. Taiwan also has highly advanced computer technology, which the US and its democratic allies would prefer not to see in the PRC's hands.

Then there is the long hand of history. We are not determined by the past, but we ignore it at our peril. At the core of contemporary Chinese nationalism is the idea of national humiliation redeemed by renewed greatness. According to this narrative, for at least one hundred years, between the Opium Wars in the 1840s and the brutal Japanese invasions in the 1930s and 1940s, China was degraded, bullied, and occupied by foreign powers. Only the national revival overseen by the CPC will ensure that this never happens again.

This lesson is taught throughout the country, in patriotic museums, memorials, movies, books, musicals, and of course, history textbooks. One reason for the current dominance of revanchist nationalism in official Chinese rhetoric is the weakening of Marxist-Leninist or Maoist ideology in China. With so few Chinese, even Communists, still believing the old dogma, the Party needed a new justification for

its monopoly on power. Redemption of the humiliations of the past has become a powerful one.

It is irrelevant that emperors of China never cared much about Taiwan. Nor is it important that it was not the Chinese people who were humiliated, or even China as such, but rather the Qing Dynasty's empire, ruled by Manchus, which the Chinese Revolution in 1911, led by Han Chinese, brought down. None of that matters: the Party regards restoring or keeping the Qing imperial possessions, like Taiwan and Tibet, as a sacred patriotic duty. Americans are affected by a different history – for which they weren't even directly responsible. It was Britain's Neville Chamberlain who signed the Munich Agreement in 1938, allowing Hitler's Germany to begin dismantling Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain's name would be associated forever with cowardly appeasement, while Winston Churchill emerged as the great war hero.

But the Munich Agreement has haunted American foreign policy, possibly even more than Britain's, like a vengeful ghost. Presidents and prime ministers have been terrified of being compared to Chamberlain and have dreamed of being heroic Churchills. When the British refused to send troops to Vietnam to help the French fight against Ho Chi

Minh in 1954, Eisenhower accused Churchill, of all people, of "promoting a second Munich." And so it has continued. In Vietnam again during the 1960s, Richard Nixon, among many others, warned of another Munich. More recently, in the US-led wars against Saddam Hussein, both Presidents Bush, father and then son, compared the Iraqi dictator to Hitler, and fancied themselves in the role of Churchill. On the eve of that war, British PM Tony Blair read Chamberlain's diaries as a lesson in what not to do.

It may be that in today's world, when a superpower conflict could destroy much of mankind, China and the US will avoid a war over Taiwan. So far, China appears to be playing a game of chicken, probing Taiwanese defenses, flying into its airspace, stepping up naval patrols, engaging in military practice runs for an invasion, and making provocative statements about "not ruling out the use of force." This is met on the American side with more arms shipments to Taiwan and tough talk about a new cold war.

Being in thrall to the ghosts of history makes it harder to back down. If both sides refuse to do so in a crisis, everyone will lose.

The writer is an editor and author of numerous books. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Pandemic scavengers

Sir, In these trying times when philanthropy is at its peak, there are some morally-bankrupt entities who are profiteering from the agony of hapless victims. In the absence of any price capping mechanism, costs of lifesaving equipment have jumped manifold. Though some prices can be reasoned with inflation, Chinese products like pulse oximeters which come with no price tags are sold overpriced. Private hospitals bribe health workers to refer patients to them and demand exorbitant sums upfront for their admission. People are cheated over oxygen supplies, ambulance services charge more than ₹30,000 to ferry patients within the city limits and pharmacies attached to hospitals sell lifesaving drugs at three times the MRP. Added to the problem are duplicate Remdesivir and other lifesaving drugs circulating in the open market. On one side we have auto-rickshaw drivers, recovered victims and middle class senior citizens selling their wives' jewellery, giving up their vehicles and spending their lives' earning to aid Covid victims and on the other side we have these pandemic scavengers doing everything possible to decimate the humanitarian efforts. From last month the world has been pouring in supplies of live savers to aid an ailing India. Did our healthcare system improve? If not then who is to blame, pandemic scavengers or the government in power? Aryaputra Parthasarathi Das, BHUBANESWAR

Musical wizard

Sir, In legendary music director Vanraj Bhatia's demise the Indian music world has lost a genius, a virtuoso who with his outstanding knowledge of music took Indian music to great heights. The most amazing fact about Bhatia was that unlike other composers who focussed only on one genre he gave his best in almost everything that needed music - be it commercial films, art movies, advertisement jingles, serials and what not. Bhatia carved a niche for himself with his distinct notes and soul stirring tunes in the seventies and the eighties in the art cinema circuit and Indian TV serials. He composed music for movies including classics like 36 Chowringhee Lane, Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron, Manthan and Ankur. The song 'Mero Gaam Katha Parey' from Benegal's Manthan is an example of this music wizard's outstanding skills. The song and the tune was also used in a brilliant ad for Amul later which was also composed by him. Some of the most popular television shows like Wagle Ki Duniya, Khandaan, Naqab, Lifeline, Banegi Apni Baat and Tamas had music by this great composer. M Pradyu, KANNUR (KERALA)

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Battling Covid & govt denial in rural UP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Moradabad, May 8: People in India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh are fighting not just a raging pandemic but also a prickly local government that many say is in denial.

The state authorities insist there are no shortages and take a dim view of those "spreading fear". But the virus is clearly wreaking havoc as it spreads beyond big cities into the towns and villages not only of Uttar Pradesh, home to 240 million people, but elsewhere in India's colossal hinterland.

Brijesh Pandey spends hours every day in the hot sun jostling with others for medical oxygen for his brother-in-law, who is now at home struggling to breathe.

The government is lying that there is no crisis...These burning pyres prove that there is a crisis and the government is just trying to cover-up

PAVAN SINGH

Even though his relative clearly needs hospital treatment, he was unable to get a bed because of government red tape.

"We could only get a rapid antigen test done which is not accepted by hospitals for admission," Pandey told AFP as he waited outside an oxygen cylinder filling station in Moradabad district.

"They are demanding an RT-



PCR (test), and that is not available," he said.

The 42-year-old said the family spent an astronomical Rs 40,000 to arrange an empty oxygen cylinder. "The government says that there is ample supply of medicines and oxygen. But look how hundreds of desperate people are struggling to save their brothers, sisters and parents," he said.

Police are on guard at the filling station, allowing only those with doctor prescriptions to get oxygen. The aim, authorities say, is to stop black marketeers.

"But we know many people are unable to get tested and are sick. But they can't get oxygen," said manager RK Yadav.

'GENOCIDE'

A regional court Wednesday said that deaths in Uttar Pradesh due to oxygen shortages were "criminal acts and not less than a genocide".

But complaining can land ordinary people in trouble under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, 48. Last week the firebrand monk declared that those making 'false' claims about shortages would be prosecuted and their properties seized.

At least two people and a hospital have been charged by police for "spreading rumours and fear". One was arrested for appealing on Twitter for oxygen.

Uttar Pradesh's official death toll is 14,500, about 6,000 of them since late March. But like else-

where many experts suspect this is a major underestimate.

In the state capital Lucknow, the official death toll for April is 830. But two crematoriums say they handled more than 1,900 bodies while 500 others were buried in the Muslim graveyard.

BURNING PROOF

Vivek Awasthi, founder of the non-profit Uttar Pradesh Voluntary Health Association, told AFP that villagers were sometimes treating the virus like a common cold and not taking proper precautions to stop it spreading. Their nearest hospital is also often far away.

Ramchandra Nirmal, 49, who works as a security guard in

Guj: Black fungus claims eyesight of Covid survivors



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 8: Cases of Mucormycosis, a fungal infection, affecting some COVID-19 survivors are on the rise in Gujarat which has left many patients blind, doctors and officials claimed Saturday.

Mathur Savani, chairman of Surat-based Kiran Super multi-specialty hospital, said Mucormycosis was detected in a patient who had recovered from COVID-19 disease around three weeks back.

"This number has gone up to around 50 now while 60 more such patients are awaiting treatment," Savani told PTI.

The hospital, which is managed by a trust, has been receiving several patients diagnosed with Mucormycosis who are being referred from various areas in Surat and other parts of Gujarat, he said.

"As of now, 50 Mucormycosis patients are getting treated at Kiran Hospital and 60 others are awaiting (treatment). They all came to our hospital in the last three weeks. All the patients who are suffering from Mucormycosis had recovered from COVID-19 recently," said Savani.

According to Savani, seven such patients have lost their eyesight so far. Meanwhile, considering the growing number of patients with Mucormycosis, Surat's civil hospital has set up a separate facility for their treatment, said in-charge Resident Medical Officer (RMO) Dr Ketan Naik.

He said a separate facility with the dedicated medical staff has been created which will soon start treating patients with

Mucormycosis.

In Ahmedabad, at least five patients with Mucormycosis are being operated upon every day at the civil hospital at Asarva, a senior doctor said.

"In Ahmedabad, we are receiving 5 to 10 such cases at the civil hospital, especially since the second wave of COVID-19 started. These patients are being examined on priority and operated on as early as possible," said Dr Devang Gupta, ENT doctor at the city civil hospital. He said various resources, including manpower, equipment and injection required for the treatment of Mucormycosis patients, have been provided by the government. "At least one out of the five such cases is related to eyes. Several of them (patients) are suffering from blindness," he said.

Niti Aayog Member (Health) VK Paul Friday said Mucormycosis is being found in patients with COVID-19 disease.

"It is caused by a fungus named mucor, which is found on wet surfaces. It, to a large extent, is happening to people who have diabetes. It is very uncommon in those who are not diabetic. There is no big outbreak and we are monitoring it," he had said.

According to Dr Paul, mucor attacks people with uncontrolled sugar. He had also said when the same COVID-19 patient is put on oxygen support, which has a humidifier containing water, the chances of him or her getting the fungal infection increase.

As of May 7, Gujarat's COVID-19 tally stood at 6,58,036 while the overall toll is 8,154. The total count of recoveries stood at 5,03,497.

Guj urges Centre to raise oxygen allocation to state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 8: The Gujarat government has requested the Centre to raise to 1,400 metric tonnes the allocation of medical oxygen to the state by May 12, saying that due to the shortage of the life-saving gas, it was unable to operationalise 11,500 additional beds for COVID-19 patients.

It said that the Centre's current allocation of 975 metric tonnes (MT) is way below the requirements of the state.

"The Government of India has not increased the allocation of (medical oxygen to) Gujarat beyond 975 MT, which is creating tremendous distress to the patients seeking hospitalisation and oxygen therapy, resulting in denial of medical treatment to needy despite availability of beds and qualified personnel in hospitals," Gujarat Chief Secretary Anil Mukim said in a letter to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

The letter written May 6 was annexed to an affidavit that the state government filed Friday in the Supreme Court, which was hearing a suo motu PIL on issues related to COVID-19.

There is an immediate demand of 1,190 MT liquid medical oxygen in Gujarat, Mukim said.

The total number of oxygen beds (in the state) has gone up from 53,913 April 26, when the additional allocation was sought, to 57,368, due to an increase in COVID-19 cases, the letter said.

Accordingly, Gujarat's requirement of medical oxygen has gone up from projected 1,250 MT (as on April 30), to 1,400 MT for today (May 6) and is likely to increase to 1,600 tonnes by May 15, Mukim said in the letter.

Despite mobilising additional oxygen from all ASU/PSA plants,

etc, the state is not able to meet the rising demand for oxygen and as a consequence, is not able to operationalise additional 11,500 beds, created with oxygen line, just for want of oxygen, he added.

This is causing tremendous distress in rural areas, because now the COVID-19 cases are picking up there and yet, hospitalisation with oxygen therapy is not available resulting in long wait before the hospital admission, the letter said.

"Under these circumstances, I request you to immediately enhance allocation of medical liquid oxygen under central allocation to Gujarat to 1,200 MT for today (May 6) and 1,400 MT for May 12," Mukim said. Meanwhile, in the same affidavit, the state government said that it has administered 2,24,749 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to 18-44 age group till May 5, and orders have been placed for two crore doses of Covishield from Serum Institute of India in Pune, and 50 lakh doses of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad on April 25 for that purpose.

As far as timeline for vaccination of the 18-44 age group is concerned, it depends on the availability of the vaccines, it said.

The state is maintaining continuous contact and follow-ups with the manufacturers for the early supply of vaccines, it said.

For people above the age of 45, as total of 3,95,920 doses of Covishield and 2,00,490 doses of Covaxin are available, the government said.

In terms of bed availability for COVID-19 patients, there were 1,05,701 beds across 2,446 institutions as on May 6, out of which 58,186 are oxygen beds and 13,733 are ICU beds. There are 6,407 ventilators in Gujarat.

The number of beds was 42,000 in the first week of April, it said.



QUEUED UP FOR VAX



A view of cars lined up outside the Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium for a drive in COVID-19 vaccination, in Ahmedabad, Saturday. PTI PHOTO

UP govt to hold funerals of Covid victims free of cost



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 8: With the bodies of Covid-19 patients piling up in large numbers, the Uttar Pradesh government Saturday passed an order according to which it would hold the funerals of all those persons who died of the virus without charging any money. This government order would be applicable within the Municipal Corporation limits.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced this decision after reviewing the matter with Team Nine about the exorbitant amount of money charged for a funeral following death due to Covid-19 in several districts.

Additional Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh has sent a letter to all the municipal corporations and civic bodies directing them to arrange free funerals of deceased Covid patients falling within the limits of the urban bodies. The municipal corporations will bear the expenses of funerals at all crematoriums, cemeteries and cremation grounds falling within the limits of the corporation. It has been made mandatory to follow Covid-19 protocols while conducting such funerals. The expenditure incurred on the funerals will be met by the urban bodies from their own resources or from State Finance Commission.

Engg college comes up with indigenous O2 concentrator

IT TOOK FOUR ATTEMPTS TO FINALLY CREATE THIS INDIGENOUS MEDICAL EQUIPMENT WHICH COSTS NEARLY RS 40,000

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 8: Students and faculty at an engineering college in Lucknow have created an indigenous oxygen concentrator that claims to aid those suffering from Covid-19.

Adarsh Vikram and Ambesh Pratap Singh, both electrical engineering students at Tirupati College of Engineering in Mohanlalganj in Lucknow, created this indigenous concentrator under the leadership of Project Guide and College Director Ashutosh Sharma as well as Head of the Department (HOD) of Electrical Engineering, Rajendra Dixit.

Dixit said after the shortage of oxygen during the Covid-19 crisis, people are buying oxygen concentrators from the market at exorbitant prices.

"Moved by this overcharging of people in need of oxygen, together with the help of the students, we have created an indigenous concentrator which has been prepared at half the price of a concentrator available in the market. The speciality of our oxygen concentrator is that it is completely indigenous," he said.

Dixit added, "We are doing our best to launch our oxygen concentrator in the market. We have contacted administration officials. This concentrator operates at a capacity of nearly 10 litres per



minute. It is capable of delivering 93 to 95 per cent pure oxygen by separating oxygen and nitrogen from the atmosphere. It weighs nearly 16 kg."

"We had to struggle a lot to make this concentrator. It took four attempts to finally create this indigenous medical equipment. It costs nearly Rs 40,000. Our concentrator can discharge 10 litres per minute which is quite effective in severe cases of Covid-

19," Dixit claimed.

College Director Ashutosh Sharma said that the students have made this indigenous concentrator on a trial basis.

"At present, people are in dire need of this medical equipment. If the UP government takes active interest in our project, we are ready to help in whichever way possible. If the government helps us in this initiative, people can get necessary help," he claimed.

Profiteering in pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 8: There is rampant black marketing of Covid-essentials in Gujarat. In the latest case, police arrested three people for alleged black marketing of oxygen cylinders, while three others have been nabbed for illegally storing 35 vials of Remdesivir in Ahmedabad, an official said Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off, officials from the city crime branch raided a godown in Sarkhej area and seized 39 oxygen cylinders Friday, the official said. The team nabbed three persons who were allegedly involved in selling oxygen cylinders at inflated prices to COVID-19 patients, he said. "They were selling six-litre capacity cylinders for Rs 15,000 each and the 10-litre ones for Rs 25,000 each. They did not have the permit to store or sell medical oxygen cylinders," the official said.

The police have recovered 28 six-litre capacity cylinders, five 10-litre ones, apart from six empty cylinders from the accused, he said. The accused have been booked under sections 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 420 (cheating), among other provisions of the IPC, Essential Commodities Act and Disaster Management Act.

In another development, the city crime branch arrested owners of a city-based medicine distribution company for illegally storing 35 vials of Remdesivir in their godown, medical store and office, an official said. Police arrested owners of Ahmedabad-based Anand Medicine Pharmaceutical Distributors Chirag Shah and Sandip Mehta as well as Jayesh Bhavsar, he said.

of the day quote

My fight would continue as a soldier of BJP to restore democracy in our state. I would request everyone to put the concoctions and conjectures to rest. I am resolute in my political path



MUKUL ROY | WEST BENGAL LEADER, BJP

The 'death due to other reasons' category has to be used only in exceptional cases, like when a Covid-19 patient commits suicide, dies in an accident, is murdered, is brain-dead or a fourth-stage cancer patient



DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER

The international community must and should act against Israeli aggression. We pray rich tributes to the courage and sacrifices of the Palestinians



ALI MUHAMMAD SAGOR | NC GENERAL SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

Two lionesses contract Covid

Lucknow: After eight Asiatic lions had tested positive for Covid-19 at Hyderabad zoo, two lionesses have tested positive at Etawah Lion Safari in Uttar Pradesh. Both the big cats Gauri and Jennifer have been placed in isolation. According to the safari administration, the condition of both lionesses is reportedly stable. Etawah Lion Safari Director K.K Singh said both the lionesses had been suffering from fever since April 30.

TN Assembly to meet May 11

Chennai: The 16th Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has been summoned to meet for its first session on May 11 at the Omandur Government Estate here. The newly elected Members will make and subscribe Oath or Affirmation on that day. In a statement issued here K. Srinivasan, Secretary, Tamil Nadu Assembly said the assembly has been summoned at 10 am Tuesday. The Members who have been elected are requested to bring the Certificate of Election. The election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly will be held at 10 am May 12.

Arms cache recovered

Jammu: An arms cache was recovered in J&K's Doda district during a joint operation by the police and the army. In a statement Saturday army said a joint team of Indian Army, CRPF, SSB and JKP launched a search operation in area of Chakarandi village in Doda district. During the joint search operation the security forces recovered a cache of 40 kg of high explosive, four electrical detonators, electrical wire, power sources, six heavy duty cells, insulation tape, pressure cooker IED 5 ltrs, iron pipe IED 5 inch and 1.5 kg iron splinters.

Stalin announces 2-week lockdown

Chennai: A day after he and his council of Ministers were sworn in, Chief Minister M K Stalin Saturday announced total lockdown in Tamil Nadu between May 10-24 to prevent spread of coronavirus, while exempting essential services. He also said with the impending two week lockdown from Monday onwards all shops and establishments are allowed to function from 6 am to 9 pm Saturday and Sunday.



To set up a double-engine, they pushed India to the threshold of Covid-19 destruction. In the last six months, the Central government did no work, but came to Bengal everyday to capture it

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

VAX DRIVE FOR JOURNALISTS

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Saturday announced to launch a Covid vaccination drive for all journalists in the state as they are dedicatedly rendering their services in this hour of crisis. While presiding over a review meeting of the ongoing Covid situation in the state, the Chief Minister said that during this drive, vaccine shots would be administered to every journalist



Wake up from slumber: IMA slams Health Ministry

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) Saturday slammed the Union Health Ministry, saying it is astonished to see the extreme lethargy and inappropriate actions from the department in combating the agonizing crisis caused by the devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Noting that the collective consciousness, proactive cognizance, and requests made by the IMA and other professional learned colleagues are put into the dustbin, the association said the decisions are taken without realizing the ground realities. In the last 20 days, an IMA state-

ment said, the association has been insisting on the need for complete, well-planned pre-announced national lockdown rather than few states declaring lockdown ranging for 10 days to 15 days - so as to getting breathing time for the health care infrastructure to recoup and replenish both the material and manpower.

Lockdown will break the chain of devastating spread, said the IMA, a national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine in India.

However, it said, the Central government had refused to implement the lockdown resulting in mounting of new patients beyond four



lakhs every day and the number of moderate to severe cases is increasing to nearly 40 per cent.

Mentioning that sporadic night curfews have not done any good, the

IMA stressed Life is precious than the economy.

Wake up from slumber and respond to mitigate the growing challenges in Covid pandemic, the IMA

said. The equitable, accessible, and affordable vaccination for all above 18 years were demanded by the IMA based on scientific facts from April 6 onward and after persistent call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his innovative qualities assured the nation, the vaccination drive was started from May 1, it said.

It is unfortunate, the ministry has failed to make the necessary required roadmap and ensure vaccine stock, resulting in the majority of the places where vaccination could not be rolled out for people above 18 years, the IMA said.

When the Prime minister notification is not implemented scrupulously, who is to be blamed.

Considering differential Covid vaccine pricing system as unhumanistic, the IMA said the people of the age group between 18 and 45 years are forbidden to get the free vaccination from the central share of 50 per cent and they are placed under the mercy of the state governments.

The jeopardy of private practitioners and states to negotiate with manufacturers for pricing and stock resulted in exorbitant price rise and vaccine shortage.

Giving example of eradication of smallpox and polio in 1997 and 2014, the IMA said it could only happen by adopting the universal free vaccination and not by differential pricing system.

CBSE's 'dost for life' app to counsel students of IX to XII

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: The CBSE has launched a mobile app with the aim to solve the mental health problems of students from class 9 to 12 during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

With the help of the app, students and parents will be able to get answers to their questions on education, health and social topics. This mobile counselling app of the CBSE is named 'dost for life'.



According to the CBSE, the app is to be used to improve students' psycho-social wellness. From Monday, this app will be fully available for students.

Free live counselling sessions will be conducted for the students through this app, the CBSE said. At least 83 volunteers have already joined for live counselling. Of these, 66 are in India and the rest 17 are in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Nepal, Oman, Kuwait, Japan and the USA. The counselling sessions will be held three days a week Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm.

DCGI okays DRDO's anti-COVID drug

Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 8: The Drugs Controller General of India has approved an anti-COVID-19 drug developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) for emergency use, the Defence Ministry has said.

An anti-Covid-19 therapeutic application of the drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been developed by INMAS, a lab of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad.

Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence.

A higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid patients. The drug will be of immense benefit to the people suffering from Covid-19.

Pursuing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for preparedness against the pandemic, DRDO took the initiative of developing anti-COVID therapeutic application of 2-DG, the ministry said in a statement Friday.

In April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, INMAS-DRDO scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB),



Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits the viral growth.

Based on these results, the Drugs Controller General of India's (DCGI) Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) permitted the Phase-II clinical trial of 2-DG in COVID-19 patients in May 2020.

The DRDO, along with its industry partner DRL, Hyderabad, started the clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of the drug in COVID-19 patients.

In Phase-II trials (including dose ranging) conducted during May to October 2020, the drug was found to be safe in Covid-19 patients and showed significant improvement in their recovery.

Phase-IIa was conducted in six hospitals and Phase IIb (dose ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country.

The Phase-II trial was conducted on 110 patients.

In efficacy trends, the patients treated with 2-DG showed faster symptomatic cure than Standard of Care (SoC) on various endpoints.

A significantly favourable trend (2.5 days difference) was seen in terms of the median time to achieving normalisation of specific vital signs parameters when compared to SoC, the ministry said.

Based on successful results, the DCGI further permitted the Phase-III clinical trials in November 2020.

The Phase-III clinical trial was conducted on 220 patients between December 2020 to March 2021 at 27 Covid hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The detailed data of the Phase-III clinical trial was presented to the DCGI.

2,060 O2 concentrators, 3 O2 generation plants received as foreign aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: India received 2,060 oxygen concentrators, 30,000 vials of Remdesivir, 467 ventilators and three oxygen generation plants from US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands and Israel Friday, the government said.

An official statement of the Union Health Ministry released Saturday said that India has been receiving international donations and aid of COVID-19 relief medical supplies and equipment since April 27, 2021 from different countries and organisations.

Cumulatively, 6608 Oxygen Concentrators, 3856 Oxygen Cylinders, 14 Oxygen Generation Plants, 4330 ventilators and about three lakh Remdesivir vials have been delivered dispatched, from April 27, 2021 to May 7, 2021, it said.

Praising the global community for its support, the government said, Reflecting the solidarity and goodwill towards India, the global community has extended a helping hand in supporting efforts of India in this collective fight against COVID19. It said the government has designed a streamlined and systematic mechanism for effective allocation, and prompt distribution and delivery of the support supplies received.



This will help to supplement the medical infrastructure of the tertiary care institutions and recipient States/UTs, and strengthen their clinical management capacities for effective clinical management of the hospitalised COVID-19 patients. Effective immediate allocation, and streamlined delivery to the recipient states/UTs and institutions is an ongoing exercise. This is being comprehensively monitored by the Union Health Ministry on a regular basis, it said.

The ministry informed that around 100 oxygen concentrators were dispatched from Delhi to Assam Saturday while a German Mobile Oxygen Production and Filling System, producing 360.0 litres of 93 per cent oxygen for medical use, and having a reserve oxygen tank of 420 litres was transported to DRDO in the morning, for use in their health facilities.

PLACID AND GLASSY



Shikaras anchored at Dal Lake during COVID-induced curfew, in Srinagar, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

Accept privacy policy or lose functions: WhatsApp

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: Facing criticism over its upcoming privacy policy, WhatsApp has said that its users will not immediately lose their accounts or face curtailed functionalities on the platform May 15, but they will have to eventually go through limited functions if they fail to accept the new norms in the due course of time.

The Facebook-owned messaging platform with more than two billion users, with over 400 million users in India, warned that failing to accept the new policy would result in users losing some functionalities after persistent reminders. After giving everyone time to review, we're continuing to



at the same time.

You won't be able to access your chat list, but you can still answer incoming phone and video calls. If you have notifications enabled, you can tap on them to read or respond to a message or call back a missed phone or video call, WhatsApp warned.

After a few weeks of limited functionality, you won't be able to receive incoming calls or notifications and WhatsApp will stop sending messages and calls to your phone.

WhatsApp, however, won't delete your account if you don't accept the update. No one will have their accounts deleted or lose functionality of WhatsApp May 15 because of this update, the company informed.

Decongest jails: SC orders re-release of all eligible prisoners

THE TOP COURT NOTED THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REQUESTED FOR RELAXATION OF HANDCUFFING OF THE PRISONERS AS DURING THE PRESENT OUTBREAK OF COVID 19 THERE IS A GREAT DANGER OF SPREAD OF THE VIRUS TO THE POLICE PERSONNEL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: In the backdrop of an unprecedented Covid-19 crisis prevailing in the country, the Supreme Court Saturday passed a slew of directions to decongest prisons and ordered forthwith release of all those prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year due to the pandemic.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana and comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Surya Kant said, "We direct that, those inmates who were granted parole, pursuant to our earlier or-



ders, should be again granted a parole for a period of 90 days in order to tide over the pandemic."

The top court noted that the Attorney General requested for relaxation of handcuffing of the

prisoners as during the present outbreak of Covid19 there is a great danger of spread of the virus to the police personnel who have to hold the hands of the accused while being escorted.

We may notice that India has more than four lakh prison inmates. It is observed that some of the prisons in India are overburdened and are housing inmates beyond optimal capacity. In this re-

gard, we may notice that the requirement of decongestion is a matter concerning health and right to life of both the prison inmates and the police personnel working, the bench noted in its order.

The bench added that the fight against the pandemic is greatly benefitted by transparent administration. The bench further added that all those prisoners who were allowed to go out on bail in March last year by the high-powered committees of states and UTs, constituted following top court's order, be granted the same relief without

reconsideration by HPCs to avoid delay.

In this regard, our attention was drawn to example of Delhi, wherein the prison occupancy is updated in websites. Such measures are required to be considered by other states and should be adopted as good practice. Moreover, all the decisions of High Powered Committees need to be published on respective State Legal Service Authorities/State Govts/High Courts websites in order to enable effective dissemination of information, said the top court in its order.

national

of the day quote

Just by folding hands, the CM of Delhi is telling people not to go from Delhi, the same drama he did last year. This is also being seen in the states of Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab. Now people are migrating from Ludhiana in Punjab, it is very sad

Lives of people can be lost, but the tax collection of the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) should not be lost

Diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines, oxygen, or augmenting health infra. Rest assured Mamata Didi, whatever West Bengal needs; Narendra Modi Ji's Government stands resolute to provide, in order to help it effectively fight Covid pandemic

SHORT TAKES

Afghan couple held with 100 kg heroin

New Delhi: The police have arrested an Afghan couple and recovered over 100 kilograms of heroin worth ₹860 crore from their possession, officials said Saturday. The accused have been identified as Mohammad Shafi (48) and Tareena (36), both natives of Kandahar in Afghanistan, they said. The police recovered 125.840 kilograms of heroin worth ₹860 crore in the international market, officials said. The heroin was kept in seven plastic bags, police said. Shafi told the police that he supplied heroin from Wazirabad to Khayala and thereafter to Punjab, they said.

Fire breaks out on INS Vikramaditya

Mumbai: A minor fire broke out onboard the Indian Navy aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya Saturday, an official said here. The duty staff observed smoke emanating from the part of ship having accommodation for the sailors. The ship's personnel on duty acted immediately to fight the blaze and there are no reports of any casualties in the incident. "All personnel onboard have been accounted for and no major damage has been reported. An inquiry into the incident is being ordered," said the official. Further details of the incident which happened in the harbour, are awaited.

K'taka to go under 14-day lockdown

Bengaluru: With the state in the grip of the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Karnataka government Friday decided to impose a 14-day statewide lockdown from May 10-24. The main objective of the 14-day shutdown is to restrict public movement as much as possible in order to prevent the virus from spreading. While there will be strict restrictions on public movement, shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish and animal fodder will be operational from 6 am to 10 am.

Hosp staffer held for selling fake Remdesivir

New Delhi: The complicity of hospital staff in the black marketing of medicines and selling fake injections amid the Covid-19 crisis has shaken people's belief in the healthcare system in the national capital. The Nangloi police have uncovered a similar nexus where a person working as a dialysis staffer at a hospital in New Delhi's Shalimar Bagh area has been arrested for selling fake Remdesivir injections.



A major obstacle we're facing is that of vaccine scarcity. If we get adequate doses, then as I have said repeatedly, we will be able to vaccinate the entire Delhi in three months
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CM OF DELHI

DOORSTEP REFILL OF O₂ CYLINDER

In an initiative to stop black marketing and streamline oxygen supply across the state, the Haryana government will soon start a door-to-door oxygen cylinder refill provision for its people. To avail this facility, the patients or their family will have to apply online



Daily O₂ production increased to 9,400 MT



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: The production of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) has been maximized to meet the present demand of Covid-19 patients and the domestic production currently exceeded 9,400 Metric Tonne per day, the government said Saturday. Giridhar Aramane, Secretary, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways informed while presenting the current scenario of LMO production, allocation and supply during the 25th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 through video-conference.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan chaired the meeting that was also virtually attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep S Puri, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, and Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI

Aayog was present virtually. At the outset, the Health Minister apprised other members of GOM about the steadily growing trajectory of daily recoveries and also observed that 180 districts have showed no fresh cases in the last seven days, 18 districts in 14 days, 54 districts in 21 days and 32 districts were bereft of any fresh cases in the last 28 days.

The number of critical cases thus far includes 4,88,861 patients who required ICU beds, 1,70,841 patients who required ventilator support and 9,02,291 patients who were given oxygen support, the Minister added. As on date, Vardhan said, 1.34 per cent of the active caseload is in ICU, 0.39 per cent of them are on ventilators and 3.70 per cent of them are on oxygen support. Vardhan informed the GoM that, the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 16.73 crore Saturday which includes nearly 23 lakh doses given Friday.

A total of 17,49,57,770 doses have been delivered to the states, out of which 16,65,49,583 doses

States/UTs to get 53L vax doses in 3 days

NEW DELHI: Over 53 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine will be provided to states and Union Territories (UTs) within next three days, which will be an addition to more than 84 lakh vaccine doses currently available with them, Union Health Ministry said Saturday. The Central government has so far provided more than 17.49 crore vaccine doses (17,49,57,770) to states and UTs free of cost. Of this, the total consumption including wastages is 16,65,49,583 doses, according to official data made available at 8 am. More than 84 lakh Covid vaccine doses (84,08,187) are still available with the states and UTs to be administered. States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as they have not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to armed forces, the Ministry said.

have been consumed and 84,08,187 doses are still available with the states, said the Minister, adding a total of 53,25,000 doses are on the pipeline and will be supplied to the states soon.

He requested the states to set aside 70 per cent of the vaccines received through GoI channel for administration of the second dose.

On the tests being conducted in India, the Health Minister noted that the country has reached a testing capacity of 25,00,000 tests per day. He informed that a total of 30,60,18,044 tests have been conducted so far in India, which includes 18,08,344 tests in the last 24 hours. From just one lab at NIV Pune, the country is presently served by 2,514 labs.

'8 Covid survivors die of black fungus in Maha'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 8: At least eight COVID-19 survivors have died due to mucormycosis, a fungal infection, during treatment in Maharashtra, a senior official said Saturday, adding the total 200 such patients are being treated.

According to Dr Tatya Rao Lahane, who heads the Directorate of Medical Education and Research (DMER), cases of mucormycosis are on the rise.

Eight out of 200 such patients treated so far in various parts of the state have died due to mucormycosis, also known as a black fungus. They survived COVID-19 infection but the fungal infection attacked their weak immune system which proved fatal, Dr Lahane told PTI. Niti Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul Friday said mucormycosis is caused by a fungus named mucor, which is found on wet surfaces. He had also said when the same COVID-19 patient is put on oxygen support, which has a humidifier containing water, the chances of him or her getting the fungal infection increase.

Dr Lahane said the fungal disease is already known but the cases

are increasing because of COVID-19 related complications, wherein the use of steroids elevates the sugar level in blood while some medicines result in suppression of immunity of patients.

In such a scenario, the black fungus infects the patient easily and spreads. If the fungus reaches the brain of the infected person, it can prove fatal. In one such case, one of the eyes of a patient had to be removed permanently to save his life, he said.

Dr Lahane said mucormycosis is a serious fungal infection that is found among people with a low level of immunity as well as among those suffering from chronic diabetes, or those who have gone through a kidney transplant among others. Though this fungus is present in the environment, people with suppressed immunity as well as who have received steroids during COVID-19 treatment are more susceptible to it.

COVID-19 patients with co-morbidities are also vulnerable and can catch the infection early, he explained. Dr Lahane said the general symptoms of mucormycosis include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion, and partial loss of vision among others.

Lakshadweep wasting max vax; Haryana, Assam follow

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: Amidst increasing Covid-19 vaccine demands in the country, wastage of the key injection has been a matter of concern for the government with reports of highest 22 per cent wastage of the vaccine in Lakshadweep followed by Haryana and Assam.

After Lakshadweep, Haryana account for the second highest state with wastage of 6.65 per cent Covid vaccine followed by Assam (6.07 per cent), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's (MoHFW) latest data said.

Rajasthan has reported 5.50 per cent wastage of Covid vaccine, Punjab reports 5.05 per cent wastage and Bihar recorded 4.96 per cent wastage. Dadra and Nagar reported 4.93 per cent Covid vaccine wastage followed by Meghalaya (4.21 per cent), Tamil Nadu (3.94 per cent) and Manipur (3.56 per cent).

Two days ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Kerala for reducing vaccine wastage. Good to see our healthcare workers and nurses set an example in reducing vaccine wastage. Reducing vac-

PURGE THE VIRUS



Sanitisation work underway to curb the spread of coronavirus, in Leh

PTI PHOTO

CB to probe recovery of O₂ concentrators from Lutyens

THE BJP HAS DEMANDED STRICT ACTION AGAINST PEOPLE HOARDING OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS AND SELLING THEM AT HIGH PRICES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 8: Even as the recovery of over 500 oxygen concentrators from the famous eatries in Lutyens Delhi has been transferred to the Crime Branch, several prominent people have come on the radar of the Delhi Police, including Navneet Kalra who owns three of those restaurants.

The BJP has demanded strict action against people hoarding oxygen concentrators and selling them at high prices amid the devastating second of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

According to senior Delhi Police sources related to the probe, the oxygen concentrators were being imported from China since October 2020 for as low as ₹12,000 to ₹20,000



and were being sold via online portals and WhatsApp between ₹50,000 to ₹70,000.

The sources said that the police has recovered several WhatsApp messages the discussing sale of concentrators.

However, it is yet not clear if

these messages were sent by Kalra.

The sources have confirmed said that it has received an audio recording where Kalra is purportedly heard saying that he cannot answer all calls as he was under immense pressure to deliver the concentrators.

A police official said that Kalra has been allegedly absconding and his mobile phone is switched off.

The police Friday night arrested Gourav Kapoor, CEO of Matrix Cellular Services Ltd, in connection with its probe into the seizure of over 500 oxygen concentrators in the last two days.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) South Delhi Atul Kumar Thakur confirmed the arrest of Khanna, a resident of Haryana's Gurugram.

Pakistan concerned over seized uranium

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, May 8: Pakistan has expressed serious concern over reports of seizure of uranium from unauthorised persons in India, stating that security of nuclear materials should be a top priority.

According to sources, the Mumbai Anti Terrorist Squad recently seized 7.10 kg radioactive natural uranium and arrested two persons in connection with the case. The confiscated material is expected to be worth at least \$2.9 million.

We have noted with serious concern the reports about seizure of more than 7 kg natural uranium from unauthorised persons in India, read a press release issued by the Pakistan Foreign Office.

Pakistan has called for a thorough investigation into the matter, hinting towards getting the state of India brought under scrutiny.

Security of nuclear materials should be the top priority for all countries. There is a need for a thorough investigation into the matter as to how such sizeable quantity of uranium could become available outside of any state control and identify the gaps which made this possible, the statement added.

Modi govt bogged by 11,424 LoC ceasefire violations in 7 yrs: RTI

YEAR-WISE, THE BORDER INFRINGEMENTS SHOT UP ASTRONOMICALLY FROM JUST 1 IN 2004 TO A STAGGERING 4,645 IN 2020 - OR A ROUGH DAILY AVERAGE OF 13 - A YEAR AFTER INDIA'S SENSATIONAL AIR-STRIKES IN BALAKOT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 8: In a glaring indicator of the growing tensions in India's immediate neighbourhood, it has now emerged that there were a whopping 11,424 Ceasefire violations (CFVs) on the border under the seven years of the NDA government, compared with just 523 CFVs during the UPAs 10-year rule.

Year-wise, the border infringements shot up astronomically from just 1 in 2004 to a staggering 4,645 in 2020 - or a rough daily average of 13 - a year after India's sensational air-strikes in Balakot (Feb 2019) and the country acquired a sleek fleet of Rafale fighter jets. (July 2020).



As per RTI replies given to Pune-based activist Prafull Sardha, the revelations largely pertain to the CFVs along the India-Pakistan borders (LoC), which has always been a super-sensitive issue with India.

However, the government has categorically refused to divulge details of CFVs on the India-China borders (LAC) including specific details of the Doklam incidents, under RTI Act, 2005, Sec 8(1) (a), in the replies furnished by Brig V K Bhat, CPIO, Indian Army Headquarters.

The government ostensibly feels such disclosures could affect India's sovereignty and integrity, her security, strategic, scientific or economic interests, relation with foreign state, etc, Sardha told IANS.

The RTI replies reveal how during the UPA government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh between 2004-2013, there were a total 523 CFVs on the border, starting with just one in 2004, 6 the next year and 3 the following year.

The CFVs entered the double-digit and kept fluctuating with ups and downs, starting with 21 in 2007, jumping to 77 in 2008, down to 28 in 2009, spelling relief.

From then, there was no looking down and the CFVs kept soaring each year, starting with 44 in 2010, 51 (2011), 93 (2012), and 199 in 2013, almost till the end of the UPA government's second term. In the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA's first couple of years, things ap-

peared bright with CFVs dropping from 199 the previous year (2013) to 153 in 2014 and 152 (2015).

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unscheduled trip to greet former Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif for his birthday in Dec 2015, things were expected to improve further, but in 2016, there were 228 CFVs...!

The following year, 2017, when Nirmala Sitharaman became the Defence Minister the borders became hyperactive and the year saw 860 CFVs. That was nearly four times compared with 228 in 2016 - when Pakistan rattled India with the Uri attacks and India retaliated with the 'surgical strikes' in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) in September that year.

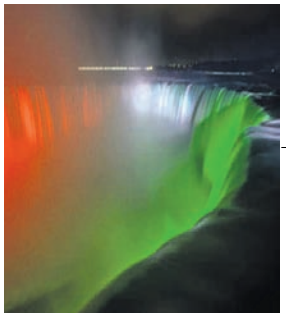
international



“A variant of this virus is closed nationalism, which prevents, for example, an internationalism of vaccines. Another variant is when we put the laws of the market or of intellectual market or intellectual property over the laws of love and the health of humanity”
POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, VATICAN CITY

NIAGRA FALLS LIGHTS UP FOR INDIA

Canadian city of Ontario illuminated Niagra falls with the Tricolour in solidarity with the people of India as authorities in Canada's Ontario province dispatched 3,000 locally made ventilators to New Delhi



of the day quote

At the beginning of the pandemic, when our hospital beds were stretched, India sent assistance. And today, we are determined to help India in its hour of need
KAMALA HARRIS | VICE PRESIDENT, US

Pakistan is resolute in its commitment to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and defense of the two Holy mosques
GENERAL QAMAR JAVED BAJWA | CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF, PAKISTAN

I promise you that we will identify those who were involved in vandalism and will bring them to justice. Law will take its own course and none will be spared here. Islam never allows any violence as it is a religion of peace
ASADUZZAMAN KHAN KAMAL | HOME MINISTER, BANGLADESH

'US should push exports to counter vax crunch'

US call to waive Covid-19 vaccine patents is no 'magic bullet', said EU leaders and urged US to lift export restrictions if they want to have a global impact on the pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Portugal, May 8: European Union leaders cranked up their criticism of the US call to waive Covid-19 vaccine patents Saturday, arguing the move would bring no short or mid-term relief.
“We don't think, in the short term, that it's the magic bullet,” said EU Council President Charles Michel on the second day of an EU summit in Portugal. French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that giving any priority to discussing intellectual property rights now, “is a false debate.”
Instead, they joined previous EU calls for US President Joe Biden to start boosting US vaccine exports to contain the global COVID-19 crisis, insisting it was the most urgent need.
“We encourage all the partners to facilitate the export of (vaccine) doses,” said Michel.
“I'm very clearly urging the US to put an end to the ban on exports of vaccines and on components of vaccines that are preventing them being produced,” Macron said. Hundreds of components can go into a vaccine.



He mentioned the Curevac company, saying it could not produce a vaccine in Europe because components are blocked in the United States.
While the US has kept a tight lid on exports of American-made vaccines so it can inoculate its own population first, and the UK has acted similarly, the EU has become the world's leading provider, allowing about as many doses to go outside the 27-nation bloc as are kept for its 446 million inhabitants. The EU has distributed about 200 million doses within the bloc while about the same amount has been exported abroad to almost 90 countries.
“First of all, you must open up,” said Macron in a call to the United States. “First of all, the Anglo Saxons must stop their bans on exports.”
The EU is trying to regain the diplomatic initiative on vaccines after Biden put it on the back foot with his surprising endorsement of lifting patent protections on Covid-19 vaccines, seeking to solve the problem of getting shots into the arms of people in poorer countries.
Macron and other EU leaders have insisted that first production capacity must be ramped up by, among other things, reconverting factories so they can quickly start producing vaccines through a transfer of technology. Developed nations should also increase vaccine donations to poorer countries.
Only after that, Macron said,

Biden steps focus on soaring US influence

President Joe Biden's decision to support waiving intellectual property rights for coronavirus shots had a broader purpose: to broadcast his administration's commitment to global leadership. More than a month of internal debate led up to Biden's decision this week to endorse international calls to strip patent protections for vaccines. The policy shift, embraced by many charitable service organizations around the world and liberals at home, wasn't new. It won't speed the manufacture of vaccines. It enraged the developers who delivered lifesaving doses in record time. Biden endorsed it during his campaign for the White House. However, the idea was the subject of pitched discussions inside the administration over how best to bring the pandemic to an end while restoring US influence abroad.

can the debate on patent waivers start having an impact.
“Today, there is not a factory in the world that cannot produce doses for poor countries because of a patent issue,” Macron said.

China urges UN states to drop 'Xinjiang event'



AGENCIES
Beijing, May 8: China has urged United Nations member states not to attend an event planned next week by Germany, the United States and Britain on the repression of Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang, according to a note seen by Reuters Saturday.
“It is a politically-motivated event,” China's UN mission wrote in the note, dated Friday. “We request your mission NOT to participate in this anti-China event.”
China charged that the organizers of the event, which also include several other European states along with Australia and Canada, use “human rights issues as a political tool to interfere in China's internal affairs like Xinjiang, to create division and turbulence and disrupt China's development.”
“They are obsessed with provoking confrontation with China,” the note said, adding that “the provocative event can only lead to more confrontation.”
The Chinese mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
The ambassadors of the United States, Germany and Britain are due to address the virtual UN event Wednesday, along with Human Rights Watch Executive Director Ken Roth and Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard.
The aim of the event is to “discuss how the UN system, member states and civil society can sup-

The aim of the event is to discuss how the UN system, member states and civil society can support and advocate for the human rights of members of ethnic Turkic communities in Xinjiang

port and advocate for the human rights of members of ethnic Turkic communities in Xinjiang,” according to an invitation.
Western states and rights groups have accused authorities in Xinjiang of detaining and torturing Uyghurs in camps, which the United States has described as genocide. In January, Washington banned the import of cotton and tomato products from Xinjiang over allegations of forced labor.
Beijing denies the accusations and describes the camps as vocational training centers to combat religious extremism.
“Beijing has been trying for years to bully governments into silence but that strategy has failed miserably, as more and states step forward to voice horror and revulsion at China's crimes against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims,” Human Rights Watch UN director Louis Charbonneau said Friday.

SHORT TAKES

Putin, Netanyahu confer bilateral ties

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed issues related to bilateral ties and exchanged congratulations on the 76th anniversary of the victory in World War II during a telephone conversation, the Kremlin said in a statement. “Russia and Israel jointly oppose attempts aimed at rewriting the history of World War II, glorifying Nazism and denying the Holocaust,” the Kremlin said.

Cyber attack on US pipeline

New York: Top US fuel pipeline operator Colonial Pipeline has shut its entire network after a cyber attack, the company said in a statement Saturday. The company transports 2.5 million barrels per day of gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and other refined products through 5,500 miles (8,850 km) of pipelines. The company learned of the attack on Friday and took systems offline to contain the threat, it said in the statement.

Nepal seeks int'l support

Kathmandu: Nepal has sought international support and cooperation in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, as the numbers of infections were skyrocketing in the Himalayan following the devastating resurgence in India. “We are trying our best to protect the lives of the people, and have taken some steps so the situation is under control,” Oli told CNN Saturday while seeking vaccine, oxygen, critical care medicines and other life saving drugs from the international community.

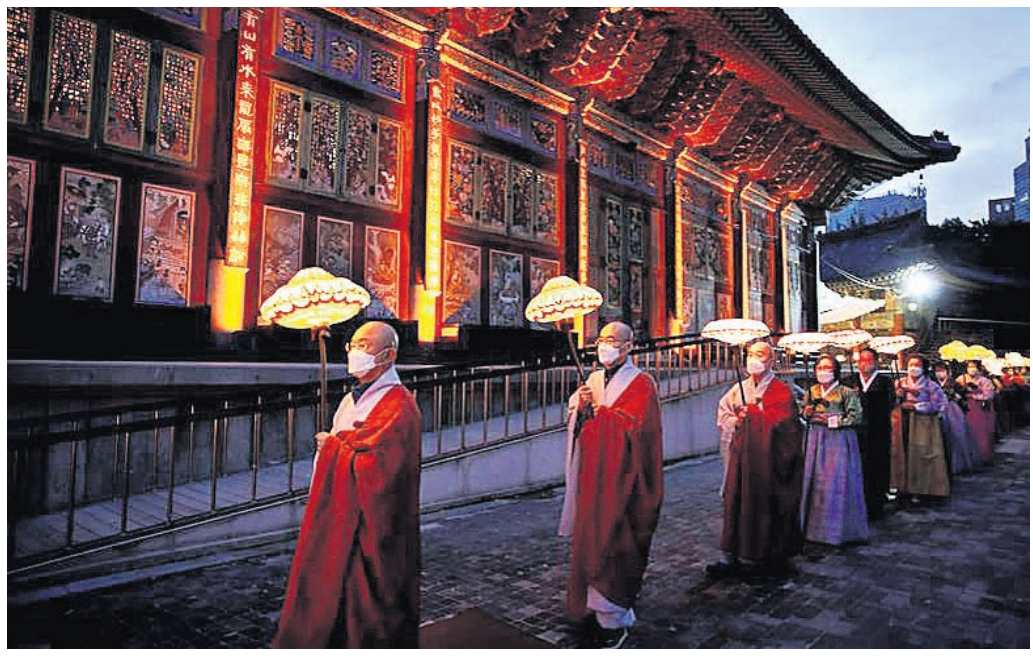
78 killed in flash floods

Kabul: At least 78 people have died in Afghanistan due to heavy rainfall and flash floods in the past week, the country's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) said Saturday. Thirty people have been wounded and another 32 are still missing, said ANDMA spokesman Ahmad Tamim Azimi. Nearly 2,600 residential houses have been destroyed, either partially or completely, and 3,600 animals have perished, Azimi added.

Blasts near girls' school claim 40

AGENCIES
Kabul, May 8: Multiple blasts at a girls' school in the Afghan capital Kabul Saturday killed at least 40 people and wounded dozens more, officials said.
A senior interior ministry official said on condition of anonymity that most of the casualties were students coming out of the Sayed ul Shuhada school.
A spokesman for the interior ministry, Tariq Arian, put the death toll at least 40 but did not specify the cause or the target.
Ghulam Dastagir Nazari, spokesman for the health ministry, said 46 people had been taken to hospitals so far.
Kabul is on high alert since Washington announced plans last month to pull out all US troops by Sept 11, with Afghan officials saying the Taliban have stepped up attacks across the country.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY



Buddhist monks and believers attend a lantern parade in celebration of the upcoming birthday of Buddha at a temple in Seoul, amid the coronavirus pandemic, in Seoul, South Korea

Washington Post says US slyly obtained reporters' records

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Washington, May 8: The Trump Justice Department secretly seized the phone records of three Washington Post reporters who covered the federal investigation into ties between Russia and Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, the newspaper said Friday.
The disclosure sets up a new clash between the federal government and news organizations and advocates for press freedom, who regard the seizures of reporters' records as incursions into constitutionally protected newsgathering activity.
In a statement published by the newspaper, Cameron Barr, the Post's acting executive editor, said, “We are deeply troubled by this

use of government power to seek access to the communications of journalists.”
The action is presumably aimed at identifying the reporters' sources in national security stories published in the early months of President Trump's administration, as federal investigators scrutinized whether the 2016 campaign had coordinated with the Kremlin to sway the election.
“While rare, the Department follows the established procedures within its media guidelines policy when seeking legal process to obtain telephone toll records and non-content email records from media members as part of a criminal investigation into the unauthorized disclosure of classified information,” department spokesman Marc Raimondi said.

Israeli police, Palestinians clash at Al-Aqsa

AT THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN IN MID-APRIL, ISRAEL BLOCKED OFF A POPULAR GATHERING SPOT WHERE PALESTINIANS TRADITIONALLY SOCIALIZE AT THE END OF THEIR DAYLONG FAST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, May 8: A night of heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and elsewhere in Jerusalem left more than 200 Palestinians wounded, medics said Saturday as the city braced for even more violence after weeks of unrest.
Nightly protests broke out at the start of the holy month of Ramadan over police restrictions at a popular gathering place and have reignited in recent days over threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinians from their homes in east Jerusalem, which is claimed by both sides in the decades-old conflict.
It was unclear what set off the



violence at Al-Aqsa, which erupted when Israeli police in riot gear deployed in large numbers as thousands of Muslim worshippers were holding evening prayers at the sprawling hilltop esplanade.
The Israeli police said protesters hurled stones, fireworks and other objects at them, wounding six officers who required medical treat-

ment. “We will respond with a heavy hand to all violent disturbances, riots and attacks on our forces,” it said in a statement early Saturday.
The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holiest site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the biblical temples. It has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.
Some 70,000 worshippers had attended the final midday Friday prayers of Ramadan at Al-Aqsa, the Islamic endowment that oversees the site said. Thousands protested afterwards, waving the green flags

Saudi and UAE condemn Israel

Saudi Arabia and the UAE Saturday condemned Israel's plans to evict Palestinians from homes on land claimed by Jewish settlers, following a night of violence in Jerusalem. The clashes at Islam's third holiest site and around East Jerusalem, which injured 205 Palestinians and 17 police officers, came amid mounting anger over the planned evictions. “Saudi Arabia rejects Israel's plans and measures to evict dozens of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and impose Israeli sovereignty over them,” the kingdom's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.
of the Islamic militant group Hamas and chanting pro-Hamas slogans.

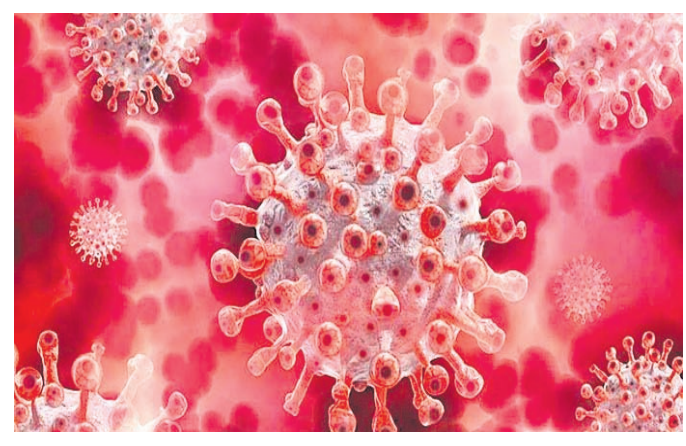
Double-mutant variant shows enhanced host cell entry, immune evasion

RESEARCHERS SAID B.1.617 PARTIALLY EVADES NEUTRALISATION BY THE ANTIBODIES INDUCED THROUGH NATURAL INFECTION OR IMMUNISATION WITH THE PFIZER-BIONTECH AND BNT162B2 VACCINE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, May 8: Double-mutant variant of severe acute respiratory syndrome SARS-CoV-2 - B.1.617 - that has emerged in India, entered certain types of lung and intestine cells with slightly increased efficiency compared with the original wild-type strain, say researchers.
The researchers, including Markus Hoffmann from German Primate Center, also reported that the entry of B.1.617 into the lung and intestinal cells was blocked following treatment with soluble an-

giotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) or the serine protease inhibitor Camostat.
However, this host cell entry was not blocked by the monoclonal antibody Bamlanivimab, which has received emergency use authorization (EUA) as a Covid-19 treatment.
Finally, B.1.617 also partially evaded neutralisation by the antibodies induced through natural infection or immunisation with the Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 vaccine, a study that appeared in the pre-print repository medRxiv, suggested. The researcher said that an-



tibody evasion by B.1.617 may contribute to the rapid spread of this variant.
The sharp rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths in India over recent weeks is thought to be caused by the novel variant B.1.617, which harbours eight mutations in the spike protein.
These include the RBD mutations L452R and E484Q, which are known to modulate antibody-mediated neutralisation.
However, the researchers said it is not currently known whether B.1.617 resists this antibody-mediated neutralization.

To test whether B.1.617 is more adept at entering cells, the researchers infected eight cell lines with pseudo typed virus particles expressing spike protein from the original wild-type virus, the B.1.617 variant, or the B.1.351 variant.
Of the eight cell lines tested, the spikes of B.1.617 and B.1.351 mediated entry into Calu-3 lung cells and Caco-2 colon cells with slightly increased efficiency, compared with the original strain.
Collectively, the study reveals that antibody evasion by B.1.617 may contribute to the rapid spread of this variant, the team noted.

business

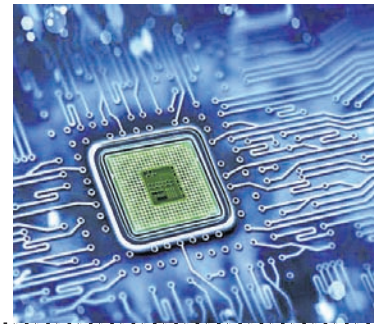


Despite the challenges brought about by the global health crisis, it has again stimulated innovation as a broad swathe of companies and consumers have embraced digitisation

KUMAR MANGALAM BIRLA | CHAIRMAN, ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

S KOREA TO EXPAND INVESTMENT

South Korea has plans to expand investment and tax incentives for the semiconductor segment in line with efforts to foster the non-memory chip industry and cope with the global supply shortages of automotive chips



of the day quote

Partnerships, technology transfers and supply of various critical equipment and materials which go into the production of COVID-19 vaccines are must for scaling up the production to cater to the huge demand

SUCHITRA ELLA | JOINT MD, BHARAT BIOTECH

Overall, the semiconductor industry remains on track to deliver another strong year of growth as the super cycle that began at the end of 2019 strengthens this year

MARIO MORALES | PROGRAM (VP), SEMICONDUCTORS, IDC

The FY 2020-21 has been a challenging year for D-Mart business as it began amid a strict lockdown post the emergence of Covid. The economy gradually opened after May and sales from general merchandise and apparel formed 22.90% of our total revenue for the year as compared to 27.31% in 2019

NEVILLE NORONHA | MD & CEO, AVENUE SUPERMARTS

Domestic biz will welcome resumption of talks: CII

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: Implementation of the proposed free-trade agreement between India and the European Union (EU) will benefit both the sides and the domestic businesses will welcome the resumption of formal negotiations on the long-stalled pact, industry body CII said Saturday.

The proposed Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) between the two sides has been stalled since May 2013 as both sides are yet to iron out differences over several issues. The BTIA is a kind of comprehensive free trade agreement being negotiated by the two

INDIA-EU FTA AGREEMENT



sides. Speaking at the EU-India Business Roundtable, CII Director-General Chandrajit Banerjee said that BTIA will really benefit the EU

with better access to the huge and rapidly growing Indian market and India with technology and innovation access.

"Several rounds (of talks) held

until 2013, but the negotiations could not be completed as differences remain over some key issues. But Indian industry will welcome a resumption of formal negotiations for the BTIA and is ready to support the negotiations in any way possible," he said. He also said that both the re-

gions need to focus on investment facilitation and protection.

Speaking at the function, Markus J Beyrer, Director General of Business Europe - Confederation of European Business, said he completely agreed with CII Director General on resuming the FTA talks.

Confederation of Portuguese Business President António Saraiva informed that CII has inked an MoU with them to increase business cooperation between the two countries.

India's exports to EU member countries stood at about USD 54 billion in 2019-20, while imports aggregated at \$52 billion.

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel reports EBITDA of \$403mn in Q1 FY'21



PNN/ AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 8: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), a joint venture between Arcelor Mittal and Nippon Steel, reported strong business performance with EBITDA of \$403mn in Q1 FY'21 (vs \$140mn in Q1 FY'20), a growth of 188%. The company's crude steel production stood at 1.8MT in Q1 FY'21 (vs 1.7MT in Q1 FY'20); annualised production of 7.3MT.

Commenting on the company's performance, Dilip Oommen - CEO, AM/NS India - said, "Our business continues to grow strongly with demand generated from domestic and export markets. The Steel industry in India remains attractive and increasing demand is giving the industry the required fillip."

The near term plans involve debottlenecking existing operations (steel shop & rolling parts) to achieve 8.6 MT capacity. In the medium term, the plan is to grow capacity at the Hazira complex in Gujarat to 14 MT. These growth plans are expected to be funded by utilising the cash the business is generating as well as its balance sheet capacity.

CBIC allows import, export without furnishing bonds

To expedite Customs clearance of goods and for maintaining balance between Customs control and facilitation of legitimate trade, the CBIC said it has approved relaxation of the requirement to submit bonds



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 8: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Saturday allowed businesses to import and export goods without furnishing bonds to the customs authorities until June-end, a move aimed at ensuring no delay or disruption in EXIM trade due to Covid.

In a circular, the CBIC said importers and exporters will have to

furnish an undertaking to the Customs authorities in lieu of the bonds till June 30.

The indirect tax body said it has received representation from traders to accept undertaking in lieu of bonds in certain cases of Customs clearance, in view of the difficulties being faced in the ongoing lockdown/constraints imposed in different regions of India.

To expedite Customs clearance of goods and for maintaining bal-

ance between Customs control and facilitation of legitimate trade, the CBIC said it has approved relaxation of the requirement to submit bonds.

"...The Board has decided to restore the facility of acceptance of an undertaking in lieu of bond by Customs formation ... Till June 30, 2021. Importers/exporters availing this facility shall ensure that the undertaking furnished ... Is duly replaced with a proper bond by July 15, 2021," the CBIC said in a circular.

Last year too in the wake of Covid pandemic, the CBIC had allowed businesses to import and export goods without furnishing bonds to the customs authorities.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said due to the resurgence of the pandemic, customs has yet again eased out certain customs procedures. "These measures would facilitate international trade and ensure continuation of business operations," Mohan added.

'Keep watch on any attempt by Cairn'



FINMIN TO PSBs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: The finance ministry has asked public sector banks (PSBs) to be on high vigil against any attempt being made to seize their overseas deposits to recover \$1.2 billion that the UK's Cairn Energy plc has been awarded against India levying retrospective taxes, sources said.

Cairn had previously stated that it can seize Indian assets abroad if it is not paid \$1.2 billion plus interest and cost that an international arbitration panel had awarded against level of retrospective taxes.

Cash of Indian banks lying in nations such as the US and the UK are said to be easy target for seizing and enforcing the arbitration award.

To guard against such cash being taken over, the finance ministry has asked PSBs to be extra vigilant and immediately report back any attempt Cairn makes to legally attach the deposits, two sources aware of the matter said.

This will allow the Indian government to quickly take legal recourse to prevent the assets from being taken over, they said adding that this has been done out of abun-

dant caution and funds with banks are not of Government of India but of public. A nodal officer has been appointed to deal with this subject in the finance ministry for escalating the matter to the competent authorities for the further action, the sources added.

The sources also said banks are keeping enough funds in their nostro account so that they can carry on activity of trade finance and other overseas businesses.

A nostro account refers to an account a bank holds overseas at another bank in the currency of that jurisdiction. Such accounts are used for international trade and to settle other foreign exchange transactions.

Last year, Cairn Energy Plc won two high-profile international arbitrations over the levy of taxes on the UK-based company using legislation that gave India power to levy taxes with retrospective effect.

The UK-based firm has already taken steps to have the arbitration award recognised in nine major jurisdictions such as the US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Singapore and Canada's Quebec province, where Indian sovereign assets have been identified.

SHORT TAKES

30 tonne O₂ plant commissioned

Hyderabad: Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd (MEIL) is currently setting up a 30 tonne per day capacity Cryogenic Oxygen Liquefaction Plant and it will be installed and commissioned at ITCs paper manufacturing unit in Bhadrachalam in a few days, sources said Saturday. The cryogenic oxygen will then be converted into usable liquid oxygen for medical purposes at the MEIL facilities, they said.

'Disruptions impacting rev'

New Delhi: Avenue Supermarkets Ltd, which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, Saturday said it is having an "adverse and severe impact" on its revenues due to "significant disruptions" of its store operations from March 2021 onwards. Besides, D-Mart may also have to face a challenge of "excess inventory" as with the receding threat of the pandemic and sales surge in the last two quarters, it had optimistically made plans.

NTPC joins fight against Covid

New Delhi: State-owned NTPC Saturday said it is helping administrations of various districts of western region with facilities like CT scan, ventilators, financial assistance, among others. In a statement, the power major said "it is rendering its support in the fight against the second wave of the Covid pandemic". The Korba station has come forward to provide CT scan machine for district Covid hospital to help in the fight against Covid, it said.

229 taxmen died of Covid: Thakur

New Delhi: MoS for Finance Anurag Thakur Saturday condoned the death of 229 taxmen in the line of duty due to Covid complications, saying the nation will always remain grateful to them. The minister said that as many as 110 officials of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and 119 officials of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) have lost their lives in the line of duty amid the pandemic.

Govt nods Credai Odisha's plea; land value to remain unchanged

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: The real estate industry of Odisha breathed a sigh of relief as the state government decided that the benchmark value of immovable properties shall remain same till the end of current financial year.

The Special Secretary to the Odisha government said in a letter, "I am directed to say that the market value of immovable properties of all districts of the previous FY (2020-21) as on March 31, 2021 shall remain in force till the end of current FY (2021-22) to give relief to the public due to second wave of Covid pandemic."

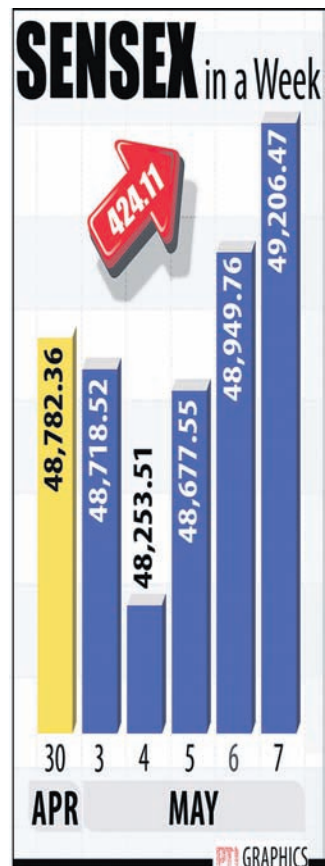
The special secretary also requested all the concerned authorities to take appropriate action on the matter immediately. The real estate industry applauded state government's decision, which was an appeal by the sector.

"We are extremely obliged that

the Odisha Government has taken cognizance of our appeal for keeping in abeyance any upward enhancement of benchmark value of immovable properties till March 31, 2022 in view of the second strain of Covid in the state," said Swadesh K Routray, Credai Odisha President.

"Government in Revenue & Disaster Management, Odisha have considered our genuine appeal, passed orders vide No.14594 of 5 May to hold up any upward valuation of immovable properties as prayed for and issued instructions to collectors & Chairmen, valuation committees," Routray added.

CREDAI Odisha Chairman DS Tripathy, Secretary Anil K Agrawal, Vice President Umesh Khandelwal, Umashankar Panigrahi Navin Kandoi in a joint statement benignly conveyed their thankfulness to the Government for such pro-people decision to address the apprehended economic jeopardy in housing sector.



Chromebooks, tablets lead global PC revival

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 8: Chromebooks with 12 million units and tablets with 39.7 million units led the PC revival in Q1 2021, posting 274.6% and 51.8% growth, respectively. HP Inc topped the market yet again, with growth of 633.7% propelling it past the four-million unit mark.

Lenovo took second place with 3.1 million units shipped, having ramped up production to help ease order backlogs from 2020. Acer, Samsung and Dell made up the rest of the top five, all shipping over 1 million units, according to latest data from market research firm Canalis.



The total worldwide PC market (including tablets) grew strongly for a fourth successive quarter in Q1 2021, with shipments up 53.1% (y-o-y) at 122.1 million units.

"Chromebooks are well and truly a mainstream computing product now. While the education sector still accounts for the majority of

shipments, their popularity with consumers and traditional commercial customers has reached new heights over the course of the last year," said Brian Lynch, Canalis Research Analyst.

Google is now in a strong position to work with its OEM partners and the channel to cement a rosy future for Chromebooks, Lynch added.

In the tablet segment, almost all the top vendors enjoyed continued shipment growth in Q1 2021.

Apple extended its lead, growing 50.3% and shipping 15.2 million units as the latest iteration of the iPad Air gained traction with consumers.

Tesla admits Musk's 'full self-driving' claim not feasible yet

AGENCIES

San Francisco, May 8: Despite tall claims made by Elon Musk over Twitter about the full self-driving technology, electric car-maker Tesla has privately admitted that such claims do not match up with the engineering reality.

Tesla vehicles are far from reaching a level of autonomy often described by Musk on social media, according to an internal memo obtained by transparency portal Plainsite.

"Elon's tweet does not match engineering reality per CJ. Tesla is at Level 2 currently," Tesla's director of Autopilot software CJ Moore told the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Level 2 technology refers to a

semi-automated driving system, which requires supervision by a human driver.

The memo shows that "Musk has inflated the capabilities of the Autopilot advanced driver assistance system in Tesla vehicles, as well as the company's ability to deliver fully autonomous features by the end of the year," reports TechCrunch.

Tesla vehicles come with a driver assistance system called 'Autopilot' that enhances safety and convenience behind the wheel. When used properly, Autopilot reduces your overall workload as a driver.

For an additional \$10,000, people can buy "full self-driving" or FSD, which Musk promises will deliver full autonomous driving capabilities.

Full Self-Driving capabilities



include navigate on Autopilot, Auto Lane Change, Summon (moves your car in and out of a tight

space using the mobile app or key), Smart Summon (your car will navigate more complex environ-

Tesla vehicles come with a driver assistance system called 'Autopilot' that enhances safety and convenience behind the wheel. When used properly, Autopilot reduces your overall workload as a driver

ments and parking spaces); Traffic and Stop Sign Control (Beta) and Autosteer on city streets (upcoming).

However, Tesla vehicles are still not driving on their own and "are far from reaching that level of autonomy".

In an earnings call in January, Musk told investors that he was "highly confident the car will be able to drive itself with reliability in excess of human this year".

Tesla, however, is unlikely to achieve Level 5 (L5) autonomy, in which its cars can drive themselves anywhere without any human supervision by the end of 2021.

"The ratio of driver interaction would need to be in the magnitude of 1 or 2 million miles per driver interaction to move into higher levels of automation. Tesla indicated that Elon is extrapolating on the rates of improvement when speaking about L5 capabilities. Tesla couldn't say if the rate of improvement would make it to L5 by end of calendar year," the DMV memo read.

CHANGE IN HOST LIKELY

Atletico draw with Barca to keep lead

ENGLAND COULD HOST CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL BETWEEN MANCHESTER CITY AND CHELSEA DUE TO NEW TURKEY TRAVEL CURBS



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London, May 8: The all-English Champions League final could be played at home after Turkey was added to England's "red list" of countries where all but essential travel is banned due to severe coronavirus outbreaks.

Chelsea and Manchester City are due to meet May 29 in Istanbul and UEFA was hoping to allow around 10,000 fans into the biggest club game of the European football season.

But the British government Friday warned supporters not to travel to Turkey after imposing the new travel restrictions, and said the English Football Association was in talks with Champions League organizer UEFA about staging the game in Britain, instead.

The most logical English venue to move the game to is Wembley with the London stadium staging eight games of the European Championship across June and July so it has UEFA's required logistics and broadcasting infrastructure already in place. Wembley was also already due to stage the

2024 Champions League final so it could be moved up three years.

While Villa Park in the central England city of Birmingham has

been floated as an option, it is an older stadium that would require significant infrastructure being installed to reach UEFA requirements.

"We are very open to hosting the final but it is ultimately a decision for UEFA," British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said.

"The UK has already got a successful track record of football matches with spectators, so we are well placed to do it. Given there are two English clubs in that final, we look forward to what they have to say."

Turkey is in the second week of a three-week national lockdown and government figures show coronavirus cases are declining but 20,107 new infections were announced on Friday and 278 deaths. The vaccine rollout in Britain meant the country recorded 2,490 cases Friday and 15 deaths.

People from England should visit only red-list countries "in the most extreme of circumstances," Shapps said. Anyone returning from them must stay in hotels for 10 days at their own expense, with meals delivered to their door. Players would also be required

to enter quarantine, unless exemptions were granted, which would impact their preparations for the European Championship, which opens June 11 and is being staged across 10 countries.

If the Champions League final was moved to Wembley, the English Football League would have to accept moving the date of the Championship playoff to determine the final promotion place to the Premier League, which is scheduled to be played at the stadium May 29.

Wembley in recent weeks has staged the only football games with fans in England in 2021 as part of test events, with the crowd for the FA Cup final on May 15 rising to 21,000 people who have to produce a negative coronavirus test.

At least 22,500 fans will be allowed into the three group-stage Euro 2020 games at Wembley in June, with the 90,000-capacity Wembley set to be half-full for the final July 11.

The pandemic already prevented Istanbul staging the 2020 Champions League final with the game moved to Lisbon to be played in an empty stadium.



Lionel Messi shouts for a free-kick after being fouled by Saul Niguez, Saturday

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Madrid, May 8: Atletico Madrid held on as leader of the Spanish league by holding Barcelona to 0-0 at the Camp Nou Stadium Saturday. Atletico remained two points in front of Barcelona with three rounds to go, still in position to win its first league title since 2014.

Atletico can be surpassed Sunday if defending champion Real Madrid defeat Sevilla at home. Madrid is three points behind Atletico but would take the lead because it holds the head-to-head tie-breaker against its city rival. Sevilla were seven points behind Atletico and remained a title contender.

Atletico played well at the Camp Nou but couldn't capitalize on their

chances, with Luis Suarez unable to break through with a goal against his former club.

Lionel Messi had some of the few chances for Barcelona, his best near the end of the first half after a great run past defenders. But his shot was brilliantly saved by Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak. Messi's 90th-minute free-kick just missed the post.

Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo had a goal disallowed for offside in the 70th. Atletico remained winless at the Camp Nou since Diego Simeone took over as coach in late 2011. The team is winless in 15 consecutive away matches against Barcelona, since 2006. However, a 1-1 draw at the stadium in 2014 was enough to clinch Atletico their last league title.

Ravinder succumbs to COVID

Zverev beats Thiem; enters final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: Former India hockey player and a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics-winning side, Ravinder Pal Singh, died Saturday morning in Lucknow after battling COVID-19 for nearly two weeks. He was 60.

Singh was admitted at the Vivekananda Hospital April 24 after contracting the deadly virus. According to family sources, Singh had recovered from the virus and was shifted to non-COVID ward Thursday after testing negative. But his condition suddenly deteriorated Friday and he was put on a ventilator.

Singh, who also played at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, did not get married and is survived by a niece, Pragya Yadav.

Singh also played in the 1979 Junior World Cup and took voluntary retirement from State Bank of India after quitting hockey. Born in Sitapur September 6, 1960, Singh excelled as a centre-half from 1979 to 1984.

Besides two Olympics, Singh had also represented India in the Champions Trophy in Karachi (1980, 1983), Silver Jubilee 10-na-



tion Cup in Hong Kong in 1983, 1982 World Cup in Mumbai and 1982 Asia Cup in Karachi, among other tournaments.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju condoled the death of the double Olympian. "I'm deeply saddened to learn that Shri Ravinder Pal Singh ji has lost the battle to COVID-19. With his passing away India loses a golden member of the hockey team that won Gold in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. His contribution to Indian sports will always be remembered," he tweeted.

Hockey India also mourned the untimely demise of Singh. "Hockey India extends its deepest condo-

lences to Ravinder Pal Singh's family. Ravinder made an immense contribution to Indian hockey and his achievements will always be remembered. May Ravinder's family and friends have the strength to pass through this difficult time," HI president Gyanendro Ningombam said.

Kaushik no more

NEW DELHI: Former India hockey player and coach MK Kaushik Saturday died after battling COVID-19 for the past three weeks. He was 66 and survived by his son and wife. Kaushik, a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-medal winning Indian team, had tested positive for COVID-19 April 17 and was admitted to a nursing home here. "He was shifted to ventilator this morning but passed away just now," his son Enshant told PTI. Kaushik had coached both the senior men and women's teams. Under his coaching, India men's team won a gold medal at the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok. Also, Indian women team had won bronze medal at the Doha Asian Games in 2006 under his coaching. He was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1998, before being bestowed with the Dronacharya award in 2002.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, May 8: Alexander Zverev followed his triumph over Rafael Nadal with a win over Dominic Thiem to reach another Madrid Open final Saturday. The No.6-ranked Zverev defeated No.4 Thiem 6-3, 6-4 to reach the final again after beating Thiem for the 2018 title.

Zverev broke Thiem's serve once in the first set and twice in the second on the Magic Box center court. The German has yet to drop a set, including against Nadal in the Friday quarterfinals. Zverev will face either No.10 Berrettini or Casper Ruud in the final.

Zverev will be trying for his second title of the year after Acapulco in March. Thiem was playing in his first tournament since March after consecutive losses in Dubai and Doha. He has mostly struggled since winning the US Open for his first grand slam title.

In the women's final later Saturday, top-ranked Ash Barty faced No.7 Aryna Sabalenka. It was a rematch of the Stuttgart final two weeks ago when Barty won her third title of the year. Sabalenka will be playing in her third final and



is seeking her second title after winning the season-opener in Abu Dhabi.

In the women's doubles final, Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova, both from the Czech

Republic, defeated Gabriela Dabrowski of Canada and Demi Schuurs of France 6-4, 6-3.

Former Odia cricketer RN Panda passes away

India to leave for UK June 2

Players will have families for company on marathon tour

NEWS IN BRIEF



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 8: Former Odisha cricketer Rabi Narayan Panda succumbed to COVID-19. He breathed his last at around 9:30pm Friday at a city hospital here. He was admitted there following COVID-19 symptoms. He was around 62-year old.

He is survived by his wife and a daughter. The passing of Panda aggravated the wounds of his family, who had lost his 31-year-old son passed away a few days back due to a liver disease. Panda's wife has also been admitted in a city hospital due to COVID-19.

Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) members expressed their deepest sorrow and condolence on the untimely demise of the for-



mer cricketer.

"The death of such a treasured person, will be a matter of enormous sadness to all of us. His contribution as a Cricketer and Sports Administrator will always be remembered. We pray to the Almighty that his departed soul May Rest in Peace and May God give immense strength to his grief-stricken family at this hour of crisis," OCA said in a statement, Saturday.

He had represented the state side at the first-class level with 30 appearances to his name where he had scored over 900 runs. He had also represented the East Zone team.

He was an employee of the Steel Authority of India Limited and was employed at Rourkela & Bhilai plant. He retired as a general manager of SAIL from Bhilai Plant.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 8: Indian cricketers will complete an eight-day hard quarantine period in Mumbai before leaving June 2 for a marathon tour of United Kingdom, where they will play six Test matches including the marquee World Test Championship final against New Zealand.

The BCCI is still carrying out negotiations regarding the duration of 10 days of soft quarantine (training allowed) for players after reaching the UK where they will be based for three and half months.

"Indian team will have eight days of hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms) in India with mandatory negative RT-PCR reports on second, fourth and seventh day required to board the flight," a senior BCCI official told this agency, Saturday.

"Since we have a bubble to bubble transfer, it needs to be seen if the duration of the 10-day quarantine can be reduced a bit. However players during soft quarantine can go for training. In any case, Hotel Hilton where the teams will be put up in Southampton, is a part of the Ageas Bowl property," the source added.

In case it's a 10-day quarantine, the Indians will be allowed to move



around the city from June 13 while the WTC final against New Zealand will start June 18.

It is also learnt that looking at the length of the tour, players' families will accompany them. However it is still not clear whether the WAGs and children will join from the start of the tour or come after the WTC final when there is a substantial gap of more than a month before the start of the Test series August 4.

The BCCI is also confident that all the players will get their first dose of vaccine before embarking on their journey to the UK. However it will be difficult for Prasadh

Krishna, who has tested positive after coming in contact with Varun Chakravarthy, to get vaccinated before leaving for UK.

If all Indian players get Covishield vaccine in India, it will be easier to get the second jabs in the UK as it's the Oxford vaccine.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah are expected to be present in Southampton for the WTC final. One could expect them having some discussions with ECB brass with regards to the option of hosting the remaining 31 games of IPL in the United Kingdom apart from various ICC policy decisions.

HAMILTON TAKES HIS 100TH POLE

MONTMELO (SPAIN): Lewis Hamilton won his 100th career pole position after barely edging Max Verstappen to the fastest time in qualifying for the Spanish Grand Prix Saturday. Hamilton pushed his Mercedes to a flying lap of one minute, 16.74 seconds. Verstappen in his Red Bull was only 0.03 seconds behind. Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas was right behind in third. Hamilton leads the F1 standings by eight points over Verstappen going into the fourth race of the season. Hamilton has won the Spanish GP five times, including each of the past four years. He will be looking to equal Michael Schumacher's six wins in Montmelo Sunday and claim his 98th career victory.

NEYMAR EXTENDS CONTRACT WITH PSG

PARIS: Neymar has signed a three-year contract extension with Paris Saint-Germain, keeping the Brazil star at the club until 2025. PSG announced the deal Saturday, posting a video of Neymar wearing a jersey with 2025 on the back and saying "Ici c'est Paris" - "This is Paris", a favorite chant of the fans. Neymar also spoke to the club's website. "I'm really pleased to continue my adventure at PSG. I'm very happy in Paris, and proud to be part of this squad," he said. The 29-year-old Neymar would have been out of contract next June, along with striker Kylian Mbappe - who has yet to re-sign and has been linked with a move to Spanish giant Real Madrid.

RAHANE, UMESH GET FIRST DOSE OF VACCINE

Mumbai: Indian Test team's vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane and senior pacer Umesh Yadav Saturday received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. "Got my first dose of the vaccine today. I urge everyone to register and get yourself vaccinated, if you're eligible," tweeted Rahane along with his picture. Umesh also tweeted about getting his first dose of vaccination. "Vaccination done. A big thank you to all our health care workers and I urge everyone to get vaccinated when you get the opportunity." Senior India opener Shikhar Dhawan received his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine Thursday. Head coach Ravi Shastri has got both his doses. He got his first jab in the first week of March, when vaccination was made open for all senior citizens. In order to ramp up the coronavirus vaccination drive in the country, the Centre had last month announced a 'liberalised and accelerated' Phase 3 strategy of COVID-19 vaccination from May 1.