



EFFORT COUNTS

Actor Payal Ghosh has been helping Covid-hit people get beds and emergency medicines

LEISURE P2



CDC ON CORONA TRANSMISSION

Exposure to respiratory fluids, fine respiratory droplets in the air carrying viruses is the main reason for contacting Covid

INTERNATIONAL P10



BFC ASKED TO LEAVE

Sports Minister of Maldives has asked BFC to leave the country for breaking Covid-19 protocols

SPORTS P12

26 states/UTs under lockdown

DATA SHOWS THAT WHILE INDIA MAY NOT HAVE NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN IN PLACE, AS MANY AS 26 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES HAVE SOME FORM OF RESTRICTIONS IN PLACE

AGENCIES
New Delhi, May 9: On April 1, India's score on the Global Stringency Index stood at 58. The score touched 74 April 30. India-specific data has not been updated since then. Once updated, the score is likely to go up given the kind of restrictions in place in most parts of the country.

- Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Sunday extended till May 17 their ongoing lockdown and corona curfew respectively
- Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Pondicherry will also have a two-week shutdown starting Monday
- Karnataka stringent lockdown-like restrictions will come into effect till May 24

The Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker has prepared a composite stringency index that uses metrics like school and workplace closures; cancellation of public events; restrictions on public gatherings and internal and external movements; stay-at-home requirements; and closure of public transport among others. Data shows that while we may not have nationwide lockdown in place, as many as 26 states and Union Territories have some form of restrictions in place. In other words, nearly 98 per cent of India's population is under some form of lockdown.



The stretch of road from Rajmahal to Master Canteen in Bhubaneswar wears a deserted look during the weekend shutdown, Sunday

Kerala, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra have full lockdown in place. Even in other states such as Gujarat, Telangana, Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh, there are restrictions in place. But they are not as stringent as full lockdown.

Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Sunday extended till May 17 their ongoing lockdown and corona curfew respectively. Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Pondicherry will also have a two-week shutdown starting Monday, while in Karnataka stringent lockdown-like restrictions will come into effect till May 24. On Saturday, Kerala came under a nine-day complete lockdown. In the Northeast, Mizoram govern-

Covid 3rd wave to strike India in Oct: Study

KANPUR: A study by IIT Kanpur scientists has predicted that after a peak in Covid-19 cases in the first week of May, the number of positive cases will begin decreasing. The mathematical study conducted in different parts of the country also predicted that India may face the third wave of Covid-19 infections in October. However, the impact of this third wave cannot be predicted. The IIT Kanpur scientists led by Professor Maninder Agarwal further claimed that the Covid-19 situation in Maharashtra has already peaked and will begin to see a decline in cases while Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat and West Bengal are currently at peak and will start receding soon. The study also said that at their respective peaks, Uttar Pradesh may report up to 35,000 daily cases, Delhi may see up to 30,000 daily cases, 11,000 in West Bengal, 10,000 in Rajasthan and 9,000 per day in Bihar.

ment has imposed a seven-day complete lockdown from Monday and Sikkim has lockdown-like restrictions till May 16. While states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have been giving cash

handouts and food packets to the ration cardholders, other states are yet to announce welfare schemes to cushion the blow of lockdown on the vulnerable sections of the population.

COVID CRISIS

FPIs WITHDRAW ₹5,936CR FROM EQUITIES IN MAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Foreign investors have pulled out ₹5,936 crore from the Indian equities in the first week of May amid worries over the intense second wave of coronavirus infection and its fallout on the economy.

Foreign investors had pulled out ₹9,659 crore in April after infusing money in the preceding six months, according to the depositories' data. If fears of Covid-19 persist among overseas investors, then further redemptions cannot be ruled out, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, stated. According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net sum of ₹5,936 crore from Indian equity markets during May 3-7. Prior to April's outflow, FPIs had been infusing money in equities since October. They invested over ₹1.97 lakh crore in equities during October 2020 to March 2021. This included a net investment of ₹55,741 crore in the first three months of this year. "The nervousness among FPIs with regards to the second wave of coronavirus pandemic in India was visible in the flow numbers for this week," Srivastava said. Alok Aggarwala, Chief Research Officer, Bajaj Capital, said the pullback by FPIs is consistent with a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases in India, state-wide lockdowns and the consequent slowdown in growth. In addition, a weak currency added to the outflows by FPIs, he added. Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO of Groww, opined that the recent withdrawal could be due to profit booking. "FPIs had started investing heavily around April 2020. Since then, the markets have climbed significantly and many of the stock picks made by them have given good returns over the same period," he said. He further said that many FPIs are starting to book profits they have made over the last one year and that could be the reason why we are seeing an outflow of money.

Chinese scientists discussed weaponising nCoV: Report

AGENCIES
Beijing, May 9: A document by Chinese scientists and health officials before the pandemic in 2015 states that SARS coronaviruses were a "new era of genetic weapons" that could be "artificially manipulated into an emerging human disease virus, then weaponised and unleashed", reported Weekend Australian. The paper titled "The Unnatural Origin of SARS and New Species of Man-Made Viruses as Genetic Bio-weapons" suggested that World War III would be fought with biological weapons. The document revealed that Chinese military scientists were discussing the weaponisation of SARS coronaviruses five years before the Covid-19 pandemic. Peter Jennings, the executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), told news.com.au that the document is as close to a "smoking gun" as we have got. "I think this is significant because it clearly shows that Chinese scientists were thinking about military application for different strains of the coronavirus and thinking about how it could be deployed," Jennings said. "It begins to firm up the possibility that what we have here is the accidental release of a pathogen for military use," Jennings added. He also said that the document may explain why China has been so reluctant for outside investigations into the origins of Covid-19. "If this was a case of transmission from a wet market it would be in China's interest to co-operate... we've had the opposite of that." Robert Potter, a cyber security specialist who analyses leaked Chinese government documents, was asked by The Australian to verify the paper. He says the document definitely isn't fake, reported news.com.au. "We reached a high confidence conclusion that it was genuine... It's not fake but it's up to someone else to interpret how serious it is."

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, sir. There is no shortage of anything. Everything is available in abundance... in black market!

Raghunath Mohapatra succumbs to Covid



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Rajya Sabha MP and noted sculptor Padma Vibhushan Raghunath Mohapatra succumbed to Covid-19 while undergoing treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here Sunday. He was 78. AIIMS-Bhubaneswar superintendent Sachidanand Mohanty told the media that Mohapatra passed away at 3:49pm Sunday. People from several walks of

life, including Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, condoled Mohapatra's death. Mohapatra will always be remembered for his profound contribution to Odisha in the field of art and heritage. I extend my deep sympathy to the bereaved family. May his soul rest in peace," Patnaik tweeted in Odia. The Chief Minister said that Mohapatra's last rites will be done with full state honour Monday. Notably, Mohapatra was admitted to AIIMS April 22 and shifted to ICU of the healthcare facility April 25 after his health deteriorated. He was on ventilator support, Mohanty added. Born in Puri March 24, 1943, Mohapatra was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2013, the Padma Bhushan in 2001 and the Padma Shri in 1976. Mohapatra is famous for his stone-carving work. He has trained more than 2,000 students and helped restore many monuments. P2

MOTHER'S LOVE



A woman blesses her daughter on International Mother's Day in New Delhi, Sunday

Odisha receives ₹333.8cr from Centre for RLBs

POST NEWS NETWORK
New Delhi, May 9: The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Saturday, released ₹333.8 crore to 25 states, including ₹333.80 crore to Odisha, for providing grants to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs). "The amount released Saturday is the first instalment of the 'Untied Grants' for the year 2021-22. It may be utilised by the RLBs, among other things, for various prevention and mitigation measures needed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic." The grants are meant for all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions - village, block and district, in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The amount released Saturday is the first instalment of the 'Untied Grants' for the year 2021-22. It may be utilised by the RLBs, among other things, for various prevention and mitigation measures needed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, it will augment resources to the three tiers of panchayats for fighting the contagion. The state-wise amount of the grant released is enclosed. As per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, the 1st instalment of untied grants was to be released to the states in the month of June, 2021. However, in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic situation and at the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Finance has decided to release the grant in advance of the normal schedule. Moreover, the 15th Finance Commission had imposed certain conditions for release of untied grants. The conditions include on-line availability of accounts of a certain percentage of Rural Local Bodies in the public domain. But taking into consideration the prevailing circumstances, this condition has been waived for release of the first instalment of untied grants.

WHO reveals what led to Covid catastrophe in India

SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN WARNED THAT "THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL FEATURES THAT WE SEE IN INDIA TODAY DO INDICATE THAT IT'S AN EXTREMELY RAPIDLY SPREADING VARIANT"



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Geneva, May 9: A Covid-19 variant spreading in India is more contagious and may be dodging vaccine protections, contributing to the country's explosive outbreak, the World Health Organization's chief scientist said Saturday. In an interview with AFP, Soumya Swaminathan warned that "the epidemiological features that we see in India today do indicate that it's an extremely rapidly spreading variant". India on Saturday for the first time registered more than 4,000 Covid-19 deaths in just 24 hours, and more than

400,000 new infections. Swaminathan, a paediatrician and clinical scientist, said the B.1.617 variant of Covid-19, which was first detected in last October, was clearly a contributing factor to the catastrophe unfolding in her homeland. "There have been many accelerators that are fed into this," the 62-year-old said, stressing that "a more rapidly spreading virus is one of them". The WHO recently listed B.1.617 - which counts several sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics - as a "variant of interest". **Resistant to antibodies?** But so far it has stopped short of adding it to its short list of "variant of concern" - a label indicating

it is more dangerous than the original version of the virus by being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past vaccine protections. Several national health authorities, including in the United States and Britain, have meanwhile said they consider B.1.617 a variant of concern, and Swaminathan said she expected the WHO to soon follow suit. "B.1.617 is likely to be a variant of concern because it has some mutations which increase transmission, and which also potentially could make (it) resistant to antibodies that are generated by vaccination or by natural infection," she said. But she insisted that the variant alone could not be blamed for the dramatic surge in cases and deaths seen in India, lamenting that the

country appeared to have let down its guard down, with "huge social mixing and large gatherings". But even as many in India felt the crisis was over, dropping mask-wearing and other protection measures, the virus was quietly spreading. **'Taking off vertically'** "In a large country like India, you could have transmission at low levels, which is what happened for many months," Swaminathan said. "It was endemic (and) probably gradually increasing," she said, deprecating that "those early signs were missed until it reached the point at which it was taking off vertically." "At that point it's very hard to suppress, because it's then involving tens of thousands of people and it's multiplying at a rate at which it's very difficult to stop."

State to release 300 prisoners on parole

BHUBANESWAR: Following a Supreme Court directive for the immediate release of prison inmates from overcrowded jails due to the Covid-19 situation, Odisha government has decided to soon release over 300 prisoners from 86 jails on parole.

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	37.0°C 37.2°C
MIN	26.0°C 24.8°C
Humidity	61% 62%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Flow with the tide today. This is Ganesh's tip pertaining to your relationships. You are assertive as a general rule but you can save it for later. Today is the day to be generous and accede to the wishes of your beloved. You may even propose to him/her.

TAURUS
This day you will be compelled to be resigned to your fate. Ganesh does not see your own will power in operation today. Though you would be surrendering yourself to the whims of destiny, do not expect anything good to come out of it. You are likely to take wrong decisions and go of course. This is one of those days when you are liable to feel extremely lost and lonely. Have no fears. The day will pass, like any other day.

GEMINI
You will end up having an argument with people owing to your aggressive nature. These people could slander your reputation on account of your enmity. However you will be able to defeat them. They will have to give up against your intellectual superiority. Be wary, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You are known for your ability to set the ball rolling. Once you set your mind to do something, it is generally considered done by your peers. Today, you are eyeing a few accomplishments on the monetary front. Most part of your day will go in dealing with financial transactions, and importing and exporting goods.

LEO
The desire and passion for learning is a life-long quest, says Ganesh. It may be that you love to learn, but dissipating the knowledge you have acquired is equally important. So on this day, it is through teaching that you shall learn just how fascinating and frustrating children can be. Give them time and space and you shall find yourself filled with pride as they scale greater heights. Ganesh believes that now is the time to master some extracurricular activities.

VIRGO
Expenses will mount uncontrollably today, and they will be mostly wasteful in nature. However, positive energies are gathering momentum, and Ganesh says you would do well in making full use of them, both in your personal and professional spheres.

LIBRA
Sometimes, you lend a helping hand and people end up taking the entire arm. Well, that's kids for you! So beware, because young ones around you may try to take undue advantage of your sympathetic nature today, hints Ganesh. Minor issues and problems may dampen the high spirits that you are in today.

SCORPIO
It is more than likely that you will be in high spirits today, says Ganesh. All your energy and exuberance may not yield expected results. That is no reason to lose heart though. Keep up the effort from your end and you will eventually taste success in the days to come.

SAGITTARIUS
You will find yourself rubbing shoulders with Lady Luck today. Sharpen your multi-tasking skills as you will keep busy and have only occasional moments of respite. Good will and green print, you might find them both with ease and in abundance, predicts Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Patience is tested when one is in trouble; your patience could be tried today. The trick is in keeping your composure, says Ganesh. Avoid getting into an argument or scuffle with those around you, as luck may not be on your side.

AQUARIUS
Be sure of your strengths and decisions, and Ganesh guarantees you success. You don't care what others think about you, but don't be so indifferent that you ignore their choices, preferences and comforts completely. The smile of your sweetheart will work like a charm and you will forget all your worries, feels Ganesh.

PISCES
For those in the creative fields of marketing or advertising, today is an extraordinary opportunity to tweak your marketing mix into bringing in maximum profits with bare minimum efforts. Your health interests will also take priority now, and you will find yourself spending more time in the gym, says Ganesh.



Chisel falls silent

AS A LEADING CONTEMPORARY STONE SCULPTOR, RAGHUNATH MOHAPATRA, WINNER OF ALL PADMA HONOURS, BECAME A CULTURAL ICON BECAUSE OF HIS DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRADITIONAL STYLE OF SCULPTING IN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

POST NEWS NETWORK

The shocking demise of leading sculptor Raghunath Mohapatra has created a huge void in the art and culture firmament of Odisha. A cultural icon in Odisha, Raghunath never studied beyond Class III but his uncanny instinct for *Shilpa Shashtra*, the science of art and craft, made him the 'tallest' among his contemporaries.

Orissa POST takes a look at the life and achievements of Raghunath who was known as an artist 'rooted in indigenous forms of sculpture'. Born in Puri, Odisha, in 1943, Raghunath started his journey as an artist at the age of eight, and there was no looking back ever since. He did not complete his formal education but began sculpting at an early age, winning a national award by the time he was 22.

On several occasions, Mahapatra claimed that his ancestors were involved in construction of the Sun Temple at Konark and the



Receiving Padma Vibhushan award from former President Pranab Mukherjee

Jagannath Temple at Puri. No wonder, more than 2,000 students learnt at his training centre in Odisha, and about 25 to 30 percent of them went on to win state or national awards. Raghunath became an icon on stone carving not just because of the magic he wielded with his hands and a chisel, but also because of his deep knowledge of the traditional style of sculpting in temple architecture.

His best works include a six-foot-high statue of the Sun God carved in grey sandstone at the Central Hall of Parliament, New Delhi, a wooden image of Buddha at the Buddha Temple, Paris, two white Dholpuri stone lamps in the Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi, the decorative central circle and pillars in Park Street, Kolkata, and a 15-foot-high Mukteswar Gate in

red sandstone at Surajkund, Haryana.

This apart, he was the chief architect behind several modern monuments including Jagannath Temple in Bangalore, eight temples on the premises of IFFCO plant, Tara Tarini Temple in Ganjam, another Jagannath Temple at Balagopal Pur (Balasore) and a granite temple at Raipur.

Mohapatra was awarded Padma Shri in 1976 and Padma Bhushan in 2001. He went on to receive Padma



Jagannath Temple at Balagopalpur, sculpted by Raghunath Mohapatra

His famous body of works

- A six-foot-high statue of the Sun God carved in grey sandstone at the Central Hall of Parliament, New Delhi.
- A wooden image of Buddha at the Buddha Temple, Paris.
- Two white Dholpuri stone lamps in the Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi.
- The decorative central circle and pillars in Park Street, Kolkata.
- A 15-foot-high Mukteswar Gate in red sandstone at Surajkund, Haryana.

Vibhushan in 2013 and in 2018, he was among four personalities nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the President of India.

In the year 2017, it was reported that Raghunath would build a 'Second Konark Temple' on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. He also repeatedly requested government agencies to give nod to the project. With no green signals coming from any quarter, he bought a patch of about 90 acres of land near Sakhi Gopal to build the temple by himself spending about Rs 350 crore, it was learnt.

However, later he clarified that it was not the 'Second Konark Temple' but Aditya Narayan Mandir, a temple of Sun God. His aim was to give visitors a glimpse of the true glory of the original Sun Temple, built in the 13th century at Konark which was in a dilapidated state, explained Raghunath.

He served as a senior instructor and superintendent of Handicraft Training & Designing center, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar since 1963. He was also nominated by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India as a Member of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in 2000.

Raghunath has also worked towards the preservation of traditional sculpture and ancient monuments, such as the Sri Jagannath Temple at Puri.

The dreaded disease may have curtailed the life span of Raghunath Mohapatra, but his body of works will keep him alive for many years.

Payal pitches in to help out Covid-hit people

Mumbai: Actress Payal Ghosh, has been working with volunteers to help find beds and other emergency medicine for those who are suffering from Covid-19.



own eyes. I needed to do something about this and hence I spoke to some people that I knew, and slow and steady we started getting people help," Payal said.

The actress added that she is happy that she can be of help, and hopes people follow protocols.

"There have been cases when we arranged an ICU bed and the patient had passed away by then. It makes me sad, but then I pick myself up and work again. I hope everyone is staying indoors as much as possible. It's a time to save ourselves and our near ones," she added.

YouTuber Rahul Vohra succumbs to Covid-19

Mumbai: Actor and YouTube star Rahul Vohra has reportedly breathed his last owing to Covid-19 complications. He was 35.

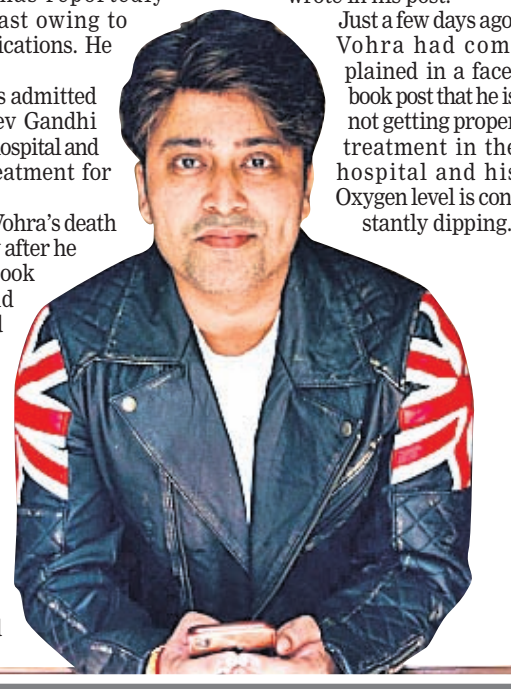
The actor was admitted to Delhi's Rajeev Gandhi super specialty hospital and undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

The news of Vohra's death comes just a day after he posted on Facebook saying he could have been saved had he received proper treatment and he will be born again soon.

"Had I received proper treatment, then I could also be saved. I will be born again soon and do good

work. I have given up hope," he wrote in his post.

Just a few days ago, Vohra had complained in a Facebook post that he is not getting proper treatment in the hospital and his Oxygen level is constantly dipping.

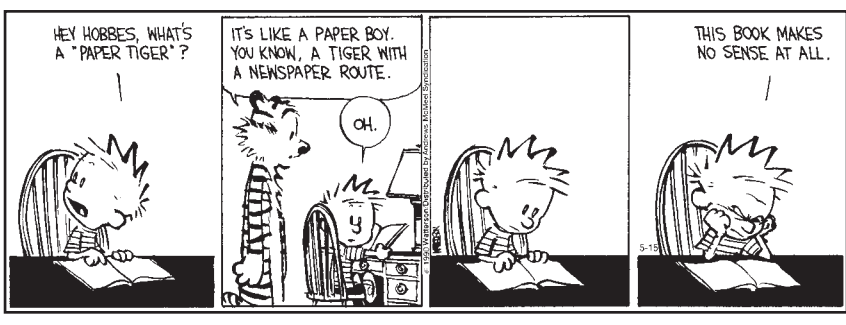


FUN post

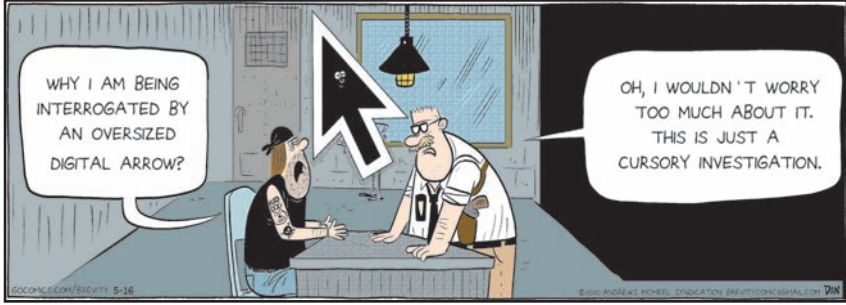
PEANUTS



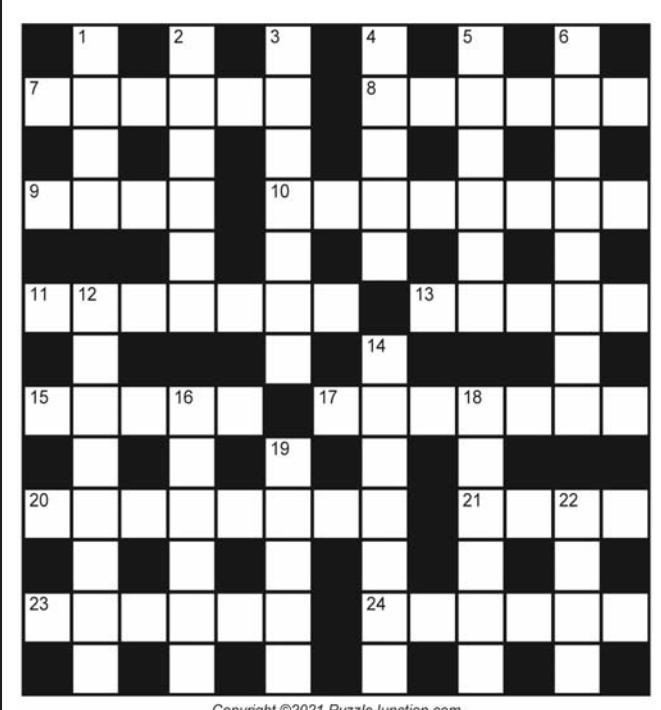
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



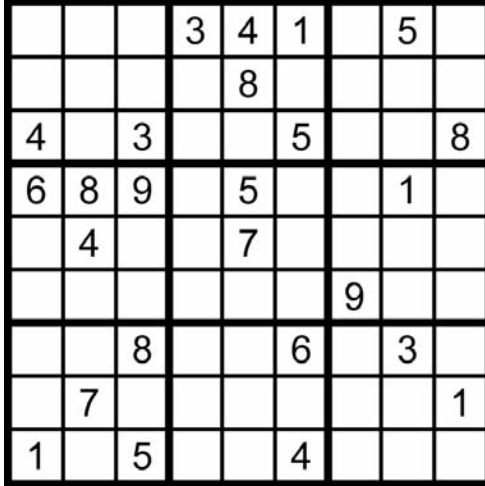
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Periphery
 - 8 Sudden
 - 9 It's active in Sicily
 - 10 Octopus appendage
 - 11 Treeless plain
 - 13 Goddess of love
 - 15 Leporine leapers
 - 17 Broken butterflies
 - 20 Brush-footed
 - 21 Lackluster
 - 23 Crown covering
 - 24 Bank features
- Down**
- 1 Stick-to-itiveness
 - 2 Turkish capital
 - 3 Poseidon's counterpart
 - 4 Short trip
 - 5 Polished
 - 6 Ovation
 - 12 Forsakes
 - 14 Really large
 - 16 Conundrum
 - 18 Fervour
 - 19 Add up
 - 22 Italian wine region

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



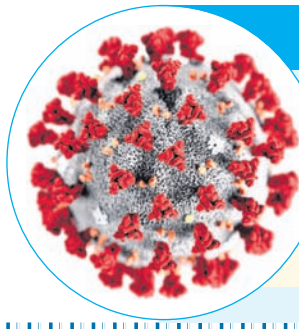
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CAR FEST PREP

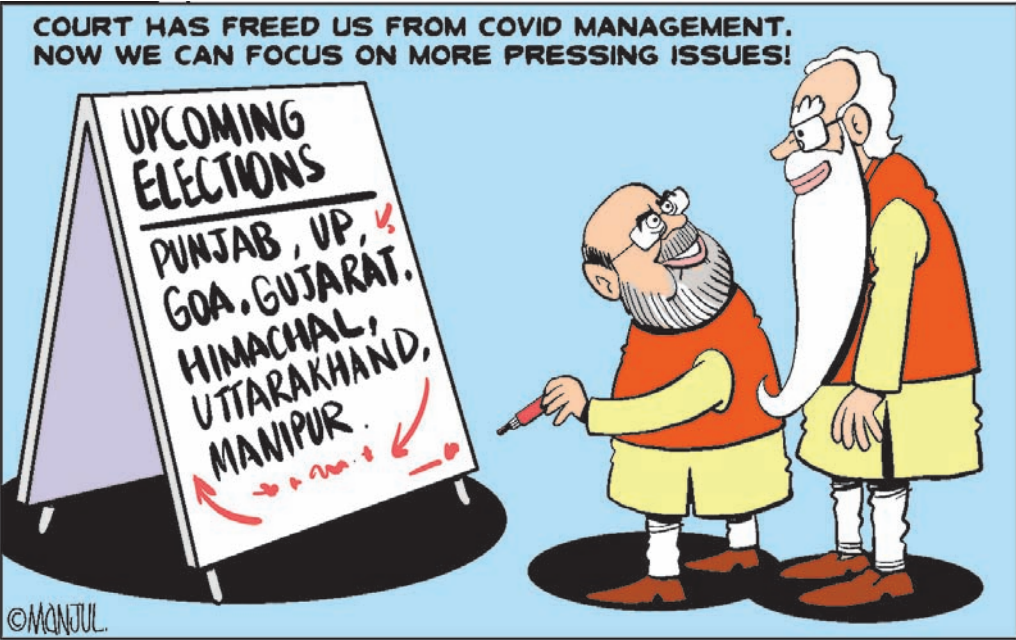
A shed being erected for the construction of chariots for this year's Rath Yatra in Puri, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	15,84,20,614	13,59,34,769	32,99,060
India	2,22,96,414	1,83,17,404	2,42,362
Odisha	5,34,842	4,47,863	2,180

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Distress calls overwhelm state's Covid-19 helpline

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 9: With the surge of cases in the second wave of the pandemic, the dedicated 104 Covid helpline in the state is being flooded with distress calls, much more than the first wave.

The officials managing the dedicated call centre of Covid assistance said that every day a large number of calls are received by the centre which runs the 24x7 helpline to give hand holding support to Covid patients, their caregivers and other information seekers.

"Every day we are witnessing around 16,000 distress calls made by patients or their caregivers. Some days, the numbers go up to 23,000. We have observed that there are more panic calls during the second wave of the pandemic in comparison to the first wave," said Sabyasachi Biswal, state head of Ziqitza Private Limited, the agency which manages the 104 Covid helpline.

The helpline is supported by state Health department and the National Health Mission (NHM). He also added that adequate number of doctors has been arranged for the helpline service while trained call centre executives are taking care of the information and treatment needs of the callers by connecting them with the doctors and health experts.

"We have at least 26 doctors for giving free telemedicine consultations to the patients. They are taking stock of the health conditions of the patients under home isolation and prescribing authentic drugs required for the treatment," Biswal said.



THE 24X7 HELPLINE CONNECTS THE PATIENTS WITH RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS OF RESPECTIVE DISTRICTS WHO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED MEDICINES TO THE INFECTED PEOPLE

Adequate number of doctors has been arranged for the helpline while trained call centre executives are taking care of the information and treatment needs of the callers

With a well defined structure for Covid management, nodal officers of each district are also contacted for the medical assistance to the infected people

As per the guidelines, the 104 helpline connects the patients with rapid response teams of the respective districts who prescribe the required drugs for the treatment of Covid-19 infections.

With a well defined structure for Covid management, the nodal officers of each district are also contacted for medical assistance to the infected people. "On several occasions, we get calls which require coordinated efforts from the district-level officials. We pass on the messages to the nodal officers of districts for quick response in this regard," Biswal added.

they are also sharing information regarding the availability of beds at various hospitals with the patients and their caregivers. The management has allowed work from home option for many employees of the call centre, including female staffers, to reduce the chance of contracting the disease at workplace.

It is learnt that the helpline is also getting several prank calls. "We are also getting several prank calls. Some mischievous persons often try to keep the helpline number busy by making prank calls. This is affecting our work to some extent," said a female executive of the 104 helpline.

CM allocates ₹60L to feed stray animals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday announced allocation of Rs 60 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to feed the stray animals in different parts of the state.

"In the view of the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has allocated Rs 60 lakh from CMRF to feed the stray animals," the CMO said.

It also added, "This amount will be spent to provide food for animals in five municipal corporations, 48 municipalities and 61 notified area councils (NAC)."

Last year also the state government had allocated funds to feed the stray animals.

Job seekers duped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Several job seekers have lodged complaint with the Khandagiri police seeking action against a person for duping them of Rs 12 lakh. Police Sunday started investigation into the matter by detaining the accused at the Khandagiri police station.

The accused was identified as Priyabrata Das of Sijua area under Khandagiri police limits. He is an employee at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar.

Das allegedly told the complainants that he would provide jobs to them as attendants at AIIMS by using his contact with higher authorities. He has allegedly collected as much as Rs 50,000 from each of the aspirants for the same.

One of the complainants from Khurda said that he had given Rs 45,000 to Das who promised to get him a job at AIIMS September 27, 2019, but to no avail.

Man 'kills self' Vax drive for 18+ to go beyond City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: A 38-year-old man allegedly committed suicide in Old Town area under Lingaraj police limits here late Saturday night, an official said.

The deceased was identified as Bijay Patra. According to police sources, Patra worked as an office boy in a private firm in the City. Patra's wife frequently quarrelled with him as he used to spend a large chunk of his salary in liquor. "Saturday, Patra came home drunk and picked a quarrel with his wife. In a fit of rage, he left home and hanged himself from a nearby tree with a towel," said a police official quoting a few locals.

Locals spotted a lifeless Patra and informed the police which reached the spot and recovered the body.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: The state Health department is likely to expand the vaccination drive of persons between 18 years to 44 years of age beyond Bhubaneswar from this week.

The department, after procuring around 1 lakh doses of Covaxin directly from Serum Institute of India, is set to distribute it to four identified cities in the state. As per the department officials, the inoculation drive is likely to start anytime this week.

The vaccination drive has been planned for the first time in Rourkela, Cuttack, Sambalpur and Berhampur from this week. The selection of these cities has been done based on the burden of Covid-19 cases there. The department

will expand the drive in other areas too.

At the same time, private hospitals in state capital have also tightened their belts to roll the vaccination drive of the said age group from this week.

According to the managements of Bhubaneswar's premier private hospitals i.e. AMRI, Apollo, CARE and others, they were waiting for the government to supply the vaccines. In case they receive it by Monday morning, vaccination drive can be started from Monday itself.

Health department Additional Chief Secretary PK Mohapatra said that private hospitals had been given a set of norms to start vaccination of people in the 18+ age group without charging any fees except the service charge of Rs 100.

State loses 19 more lives to Covid

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Odisha Sunday registered 10,635 fresh Covid-19 cases, pushing the caseload to 5,34,842, while the death toll rose to 2,180 with 19 more fatalities, a senior Health department official said.

Of the 10,635 new cases, 6,012 were reported from various quarantine centres and the rest detected during contact tracing, the official stated.

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the highest number of new cases at 1,564, followed by Sundargarh at 943 and Cuttack at 887.

Barring Kandhamal and Malkangiri, other 28 districts reported more than 100 fresh cases, the official added.

"Regret to inform the demise of nineteen Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals," the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department tweeted.

Of the 19 fatalities, three each were recorded in Khurda and Kalahandi. One patient each succumbed to the infection in Angul, Bolangir, Bhadrak, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Puri, Rayagada, Sambalpur, Sonepur, and Sundargarh districts.

Odisha currently has 93,287 active cases, while as many as 4,39,322 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease. The coastal state's positivity rate stands at 5.09 per cent, the official said.

Over 1.05 crore sample tests have been conducted in the state thus far, including 48,757 Saturday, added the official. Sources said ever since the lockdown was imposed in the state May 5, there has been a slight decline in the number of new Covid cases while the recovery has indicated a rising trend.

On May 6, the state witnessed a record 12,238 Covid positive cases which have declined to 11,807 May 7 and a further 10,635 May 8.

The recovery rate, on the other hand, has shown an upward trend from 6,176 May 5 to 6,854 on the subsequent day and 6,900 May 7 and finally 7,664 May 8.

As far as active cases are concerned, nine of the 30 districts have together accounted for more than 61 per cent. Khurda has the highest active cases of 14,586 followed by Sundargarh (11,063), Cuttack (7,564), Sambalpur (4,824) and Bargarh (4,527).

As many as 24 of the 30 districts have active cases of over 1,000, while the rest six districts have active



Civics officials collect the details of passengers upon their arrival at Bhubaneswar railway station, Sunday

RSP sets record

The Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has registered the highest single-day dispatch of 474.16 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to Odisha and other states of the country May 7 last, an official said Sunday.

This includes 72.33 tonnes of LMO sent to Haryana by the Oxygen Express operated by Indian Railways, according to a RSP release.

The surge in Covid cases in the country has resulted in a sudden increase in the requirement of medical grade oxygen—LMO.

Responding to the need of the current demand of LMO, RSP has geared up its oxygen-making units to maximise the production and dispatch of LMO to different parts of the country.

RSP sources said that in the first seven days of May 2021, 2,405 tonne of LMO has been supplied from RSP to different states, including Odisha.

Since April 2021, more than 5282 tonnes of LMO have been dispatched from RSP. The RSP has been working closely with the authorities and making every possible effort for the efficient and smooth loading as well as the dispatch of LMO.

The steel plant has mobilised all the resources for optimising the production, quick refilling and dispatch of the precious ingredient.

IN A NUTSHELL

10,635 fresh Covid-19 cases pushed the caseload to 5,34,842	Odisha currently has 93,287 active cases, while as many as 4,39,322 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease
Death toll rose to 2,180 with 19 more fatalities	The coastal state's positivity rate stands at 5.09 per cent
Over 1.05 crore sample tests have been conducted in the state thus far, including 48,757 Saturday	

cases between 500 to 1,000.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said that Odisha has set a zero-wastage milestone in Covid vaccination for the skill and dedicated

work of health workers and nurses.

More people have been inoculated using the vaccine provided by the Central government for people over the age of 45, Patnaik said.

Tripathy takes stock of situation in Sundargarh

A high-level team led by AK Tripathy, the principal adviser to the Chief Minister, visited Sundargarh district, which comprises the steel city of Rourkela, and reviewed the Covid-19 situation Sunday.

"There has been an alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in Sundargarh. At least 90 ICUs and 120 oxygen beds will be added to the existing facilities in the district. I thank the central public sector undertakings such as the RSP and NTPC for supporting the fight against Covid-19 in the district," Tripathy said after a review meeting, also attended by the National Health Mission director (Odisha) Shalini Pandit.

Sundargarh happens to be among the worst-affected districts of Odisha.

The district, at present, accounts for 11,063 active cases, and the figure is likely to increase in the next cou-



ple of days, Tripathy said, further giving assurance that vaccination for people in the age bracket of 18-45 years will start in Rourkela from Tuesday.

Efforts are also underway to enhance the ICU capacity in Bargarh

district, Tripathy said. "An RT-PCR testing facility will be set up in Bargarh soon. Also, problems due to oxygen shortage has been sorted out," Tripathy pointed out.

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Solve issues of people affected by projects in Koraput: NHRC

6 PAIRS OF TRAINS CANCELLED

POST NEWS NETWORK



Bhubaneswar, May 9: As per the guidelines issued by the government of Odisha and to break the chain of Covid-19 infection, ECoR has decided to cancel six pairs of local passenger/MEMU trains on 10th & 11th May (Monday & Tuesday).

These trains are Bhubaneswar-Kendujharghar-Bhubaneswar Special, Bhubaneswar-Bhadrak-Bhubaneswar Special, Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, Cuttack-Paradeep-Cuttack Special, Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, and Visakhapatnam-Raipur-Visakhapatnam Special.

Earlier, due to shut down enforcement in Odisha, it had been decided to cancel 11 pair of Special Trains running on Saturdays & Sundays from 8th to 16th May.

These included Bhubaneswar-Keonjar-Bhubaneswar Special, Puri-Angul-Puri Special, Bhubaneswar-

Bhadrak-Bhubaneswar Special, Puri-Cuttack-Puri Special, Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, Cuttack-Paradeep-Cuttack Special, Visakhapatnam-Raipur-Visakhapatnam Special, Bhubaneswar-Palasa-Bhubaneswar Special, Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, Bhubaneswar-Bangiripoi-Bhubaneswar Special, and Rayagada-Sambalpur-Rayagada Special.



Thousands of victims suffer due to lack of livelihood and bare necessities of life leading to serious human rights issues

the ground realities.

Considering the gravity of the issue as highlighted by Tripathy, the NHRC directed to investigate the issues through its Special Rapporteur so as to know the ground realities and steps taken by state functionaries to address the grievances so far.

Tripathy stated that he has personally visited some areas where the affected people have been languishing while deprived of their legitimate rights in many projects, including Upper Kolab.

The petition also urged the NHRC to ensure potable drinking water, Right to Food under NFSA, primary education and healthcare facilities in the area and time bound implementation of the recommendation of the commission with tangible impact and submit the details with documentary evidence before the commission on quarterly basis.

The commission asked the Special Rapporteur of Eastern Zone, Vinod Agrawal, to enquire the matter thoroughly and submit the report to the commission within eight weeks.

However, due to the ongoing pandemic, the investigation could not be carried out and finally the commission directed the Chief Secretary to look into the grievances of the affected persons sincerely and take appropriate remedial measures at the earliest.

Bhubaneswar/Kendrapara, May 9: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Chief Secretary to take appropriate measures in order to compensate, rehabilitate and resettle people affected by various projects in Koraput district.

The direction came in response to a petition filed by rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy.

In his petition, Tripathy had informed the commission that Koraput is worst hit district in the country as more than 50 per cent of it is affected due to execution of various projects, including Machkund, Nalco, HAL, UKHEP and Kolab, causing large scale internal displacement and consequent problems.

The displaced people, he said,

have been deprived of land rights. Most of the victims, the petitioner said belonged to poor ST and SC communities.

Tripathy also alleged that proper survey has not been conducted by the government citing petty reasons like lack of staff.

Thousands of victims suffer due to lack of livelihood, bare necessities of life leading to serious human rights issues and being forced to die

without remedies.

In pursuant to the complaint, the District Magistrate of Koraput informed the rights body that many steps were taken for rehabilitation of the persons displaced due to several projects, including Machkund, NALCO, HAL, UKHEP and Kolab.

Challenging the report submitted by the state authorities, Tripathy said that the report is contrary to

Indoor stadium to turn vax site today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 9: With an intention to speed up the vaccination drive, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has taken steps to turn Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium as an inoculation centre.

People eligible for the second dose of Covid vaccine can take the jabs at the indoor stadium. The new vaccination centre is all set to begin its work Monday, said an official of CMC.

"Around 1,000-1,500 people can avail the second doses of Covishield vaccine at the indoor stadium every day. The stadium is spacious and it would be easy to follow the Covid-19 protocols at the new vaccination centre," said the official.

The CMC, meanwhile, urged the beneficiaries to follow the Covid-19 protocols at the vaccination centres in the city.

A team of officials from the CMC, including deputy commissioners Samita Sarkar and Sanjibita Ray, have been engaged to oversee vaccination drive at the new centre.

Sources, meanwhile, claimed that the vaccination drive is going on at full pace at all inoculation centres in Cuttack district.

"The vaccination drive for people within the age group of 18-45 will be launched in Cuttack Monday. The inoculation drive will be conducted at 16 government and 19 private vaccination centres," said Cuttack district Covid nodal officer Umesh Ray.

WEEKEND SHUTDOWN & CITIES



KALINGA STADIUM ROAD IN BHUBANESWAR

Roads, traffic junctions and market places in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri wore a deserted look due to the Covid-19 restrictions, Sunday. The state government deployed several platoons of police personnel to enforce the weekend shutdown in urban areas



JAYDEV VIHAR SQUARE IN CAPITAL



THE GRAND ROAD IN PURI



DOLAMUNDI-BAJRAKABATI ROAD IN CUTTACK

Odisha Day celebrated in Oman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Odisha Day was celebrated by the Odia wing of Muscat based Indian Social Club, Oman Saturday through virtual mode.

Food Supply & Consumer Welfare, Cooperation Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain addressed the celebration and expressed his best wishes to the Odias living in Oman, and lauded their effort in improving Oman-Odisha relation.

Swain said that since its formation as a separate state, Odisha has made rapid progress both in agriculture and industrial sectors. The state is now considered as a favourite destination for investors.

He paid homage to Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev, Sri Ramchandra Bhanjdeo and other luminaries for their efforts and sacrifices for the formation of Odisha.

Swain expressed his pleasure that a small but strong Odia diaspora is working in Oman and contributing in its own way for the development of the country. He hoped that it would help improve bilateral relations between India and Oman. In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, Odisha is playing an important role in supplying vital medical oxygen to other states, mentioned Swain.

Cops raid to nab estranged lover for blackmailing girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Commissionerate Police Sunday conducted raids at the village of an estranged lover for making viral the obscene videos of his ex-girlfriend. However, the accused managed to give the cops a slip.

Earlier, the victim's would-be sister-in-law had lodged a complaint with the Lingaraj police here Saturday evening. She had alleged that the accused youth, Ramakanta Khuntia of Niali in Cuttack, had been pressurising the victim's family to call off the wedding as he had a relationship with her for the last five years.

Also the accused has allegedly sent some objectionable videos of the girl to the complainant's mobile recently. He has been threatening the family of dire consequences if they don't change their decision.

Police sources revealed that efforts are on to apprehend Khuntia at the earliest.

KISS GETS NEW CHANCELLOR, OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Several eminent personalities from Odisha, who have brought pride to the State at national and international stages, have joined in different top positions at Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) here, institute sources said.

Satya S Tripathy, a former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), has taken over as the Chancellor of KISS Deemed to be University. Tripathy, who hails from Cuttack district, has 40 years of rich and varied experience, which includes key positions in the UN. He is also acting as the Secretary-General of the Global Alliance for a sustainable planet. Upendra Tripathy, who had served as the Secretary in the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has joined as the Pro-Chancellor of KISS. Tripathy, a native of Ganjam district, had also been the first Director General of the International Solar Alliance, the first treaty-based International Organisation headquartered in India.

Deepak Kumar Behera, an in-

ternationally acclaimed anthropologist, has taken charge as the Vice-Chancellor of KISS. Prior to joining KISS, he had served as the Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University, Berhampur University and Rajendra University in Bolangir. Behera has the distinction of being the only anthropologist in India to become the Vice-Chancellor of three different universities. He was a Fulbright Visiting Professor at California State University.

Pitabasa Sahoo, Dean, Department of Development Studies at Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Tamil Nadu, has joined as the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of KISS on deputation. Hailing from Keonjhar, he has 20 years of research experience in the domain of tribal development, regional studies, rural development, sustainable development and social sector development, KISS sources said.

Kanhu Charan Mahali, an IPS officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, has joined as the director general of KISS after his retirement as the Additional Director General of police.

Land survey for Odia University at Satyabadi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sakhigopal, May 9: The process for establishment of the much awaited Odia University at Satyabadi in Puri district moved a step further with authorities recently surveying the land purchased by the state government for the project.

Senior engineers of Odisha Bridge & Construction Corporation Limited (OB&CC) Saturday surveyed the land purchased for the project. OB&CC executive engineer Sundar Madhab Padhi, assistant executive engineer Girija Nayak and Satyabadi assistant revenue inspector Kshitish Kumar Nayak surveyed the land with reference from the map.

"Our engineers have surveyed the land allocated for the proposed Odia University. A portion of the land is under encroachment. The issue would be discussed with the senior officials of the state government. Now, soil testing is being done for the construction work," OB&CC sources said.

The heritage cabinet of the state government, formed to propagate and preserve the heritage and cul-



ture of Odisha and enrich Odia language in 2017, had decided to set up the university at Satyabadi where Satyabadi Vana Vidyalaya had been established by the famous Panchasakha - Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Krupasinidhu Mishra and Godavarish Mishra.

The proposed university would offer postgraduate courses in Odia

language and promote research.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid the foundation stone for the proposed university at Satyabadi 'Bakulabana' on the occasion of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das's 141st birth anniversary October 9, 2018.

It was then decided that the university would be set up on the land of Satyabadi Gopinath Deb for which 28.74 acre land at Phula Alasha mouza was earmarked.

Since the owner of the land is Satyabadi Gopinath Deb, the state government had applied before the Endowment Commission to buy the land. The application was made in accordance with Section-19 of Odisha Hindu Endowments Act. But the residents of Satyabadi opposed the move as Bakulabana has been deeply associated with rituals of Sakhi Gopal temple and Srimandir in Puri. They had requested the Puri Collector to save Bakulabana.

Subsequently, a meeting was convened and it was decided that Bakulabana would be excluded from the original layout and the university would be set up on the remaining 9.60 acres of land.

The Higher Education department had purchased the land from Satyabadi Gopinath Dev temple trust at a cost of Rs 11, 33, 58,000 in 2019, sources said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had approved a design for the university in February this year. The design was prepared by the Works department. The state government has engaged the OB&CC to carry out the construction work for the university.

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Pesticide-laced poultry feed sparks concern



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, May 9: Poultry feed allegedly being prepared by mixing prawn heads and pesticides near Sandhakuda slum in this port town have kicked up a row with the stench emanating from it. People are finding it extremely difficult to live a normal life due to the foul stench, a report said.

The poultry feed is manufactured on an islet in between Kansaripatia river and the sea close to this town. This has sparked concern in the port town for two reasons. First the stench is unbearable. Secondly, it has been alleged that these pesticides also may lead to life-threatening diseases for peo-

ple. These pesticides are consumed by chicken. So when one eats meat the same enters the human body. It is apprehended that people consuming poultry meat may get affected by incurable diseases in future, district food inspector Anita Rout informed.

Several cases have been filed before the civic body and police stations in the area. Action has also been taken against the manufacturers in past. However, the unscrupulous traders are quick to run their business with impunity.

Reports said Paradip accounts for annual production of 200 to 300MT of marine and gheri prawns. The prawns caught here are exported to other countries after the

peeling of their heads and shells. The leftover prawn heads is called as 'Matha' by local fishermen and fish traders. Later, these leftover prawn heads and shells are sold to poultry feed traders and used in manufacturing of preparing food.

The preparation of poultry feeds involves various stages and is a money-minting business. The leftover prawn heads and shells are first left to rot and then dried under sun. Later, these are crushed to make a powder in which pesticide is mixed in proportions to prepare poultry feed. The manufactured feed is then supplied to various poultry farms which uses it feed their poultry stock.

A labourer engaged in the business said that earlier pesticides were not used to in manufacturing of poultry feed on conditions of anonymity. However pesticide is now being used to give longer shelf life to the poultry feeds as it gets infested by insects after remaining for a longer period.

Rout said it is the Fisheries and Animal Resources Development department which has to curb such illegalities. When contacted, Manas Ranjan Sahu, assistant director, state Fisheries department said a proper verification has to be made to unravel the wrongdoing.

SHORT TAKES

Minister Sarangi injured in mishap

Balasure: Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Pratap Chandra Sarangi had a narrow shave Sunday afternoon. He escaped with minor injuries in a road accident in Nilagiri block of Balasure district involving his car and a tractor. According to a source, Sarangi was travelling in his car en route to a programme. As the car was nearing Podasula Chowk, a tractor hit it, leaving the Minister, his PA and driver injured. The Minister was immediately rescued and rushed to Balasure district headquarters hospital (DHH). However, he is said to be out of danger. Meanwhile, police have seized the tractor and detained its driver. A detailed investigation is underway, it was learnt.

Baby among three drown in Koraput

Koraput: Three people including a three-year-old child drowned in two separate incidents in Koraput district in the last 24 hours. A three-year-old baby slipped into a check dam in Chanabada village of Dasamantpur block. The incident was an outcome of carelessness, a police official said. In another tragic incident, a mother and daughter died after drowning in a pond Saturday evening. 30-year-old Chanchala Chalan and her daughter Sanamati Chalan (11) were cleaning utensils on the bank of a pond in Purunapani village under Ramgiri police limits. The girl slipped into the pond. The woman also drowned while rescuing the child in the pond.

Hearse fails to turn up, man carries father's body in auto-rickshaw

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, May 9: A man reportedly carried the body of his father in an auto-rickshaw due to non-availability of a hearse at the district headquarters hospital here in the wee hours of Sunday. Sources said, Chaitanya Meher, 65, of Bisipalli village under Harbhanga block was experiencing breathing problems and was admitted to the hospital in critical condition Saturday. He was undergoing treatment but succumbed to his ailment at 2.00am early Sunday morning.

Later, his son went to the ticket counter and requested for a Mahaprayan van to take the body of his father to his village. The persons at the ticket counter contacted the driver over phone but the call went unanswered. Left with no option, the son carried the body of

his father on his shoulder for more than half-a-kilometre. Then he managed to hire an auto-rickshaw to carry the body to their village.

When asked, Trilochan Pradhan, the Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) rejected the charges said that the 'Mahaprayan' vehicle was on Covid duty and had returned from a cremation ground. "The vehicle cannot be used without sanitising it. Moreover, the driver was tired and reluctant to drive at late night," the CDMO said. However, when the driver reached the hospital at 5.00am the family members of the deceased had left the hospital with the body. The collector was informed and the bereaved family members were given Rs 2,000 as vehicle fare while financial assistance was given to the cremation of the body under Harsihchandra Yojana.

Malkangiri villagers seal Chhattisgarh border

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, May 9: Residents in Badaguda village under Mathili block in this district took it upon themselves and sealed the border adjoining Chhattisgarh following the alarming spread of Covid-19 in the neighbouring state.

The exercise was carried out in the presence of Mathili block chairperson Lakshmi Priya Nayak, revenue inspector Baladev Nayak and sarpanch Gupta Durua with the help of the villagers. The village lies on the fringes of Oler village in Chhattisgarh. However, as Covid-19 is taking shape of an epidemic in the Chhattisgarh, villagers have decided to prevent the entry of people from the neighbouring state by sealing the border.

The villagers have also put up



check posts and are keeping a close watch on the border all round the day. Block chairperson Nayak has asked the villagers to jointly fight against Covid pandemic by wearing masks and by maintaining social dis-

CLAY POTTERY



A potter busy making pots at Langaleswar in Balasure district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Parking yard in jumbo corridor zone poses threats to wildlife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 9: A parking yard for mineral-carrying trucks is reportedly posing threats to pachyderms as it is built within the elephant corridor zone at Talakaipur under Bansapal block in Keonjhar district. According to reports, scores of valuable trees have been allegedly felled in the areas to make the yard.

Local residents and wildlife activists have expressed concerns over the parking yard. They pointed out that as hundreds of mineral-transporting trucks are parked there on a daily basis, it is throwing a spanner in the free movement of elephants and other wildlife in the area, apart from creating sound and air pollution for the animals. To compound the problem of the wild animals, a mineral crushing unit is also operational to create further pollution.

Voicing concerns over the ordeal of the animals, local lawyer Daitari Apat lamented that such developments are only threatening the existence of animals. However, in spite of repeated reminders and complaints, officials



of the Forest department are turning a blind eye to the issue. Daitari urged the district administration to take necessary steps to ease the free movement of animals in the corridor zone.

It has been alleged that rampant mining is being conducted in pockets of the forest. The use of bright lights explosive blasts, industrial growth, movement of railway wagons and transportation of minerals have taken a toll on several elephant corridors in the district. With their habitats in tatters, elephants often head for human settlements, leading to man-animal conflict.

Others pointed out that the increasing human intervention in

forests has hampered the peaceful existence of the animals. Hence they are leaving their usual place of shelter and causing mayhem in villages.

Roads passing through the forests do not have underpasses for animals. In the absence of such passes, the animals face threats from vehicles. In the past, elephants have died after being hit by trucks on NH-20, NH-520 and NH-49 passing through Keonjhar district.

Environmentalist Harekrushna Mohant said that projects that create hurdles for pachyderms should not be allowed. He pointed out that the number of elephants is dwindling in Odisha.

Hit by goods train, tusker succumbs to grievous injuries

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 9: A 35-year-old tusker was killed after a goods train hit it when the animal was crossing the tracks near Sagadapata area under Anandpur Wildlife Division of Keonjhar district, Sunday.

The incident took place at about 8.30pm Saturday in Deogaon forest range area about 70 kms from this town. After getting information, Anandpur divisional forest officer Ajit Satapathy along with other officials went to spot and rescued the injured elephant. The elephant had sustained grievous injuries on the front leg and was not able to stand. Despite the best efforts and treatment by officials, it died at about 2.30am Sunday.



Satapathy said, "Despite treatment, we could not save the animal. A case under wildlife protection act has been lodged in Deogaon forest range. One assistant conservator of forest will look into the incident. After the inquiry, details on the accident could be said and action will be taken accordingly."

According to the sources the lone tusker had been moving in that area since the last few days. This is the first elephant accident incident on rail reported in Anandpur wildlife division.

To avoid accidents in that area, a trench near the railway tracks has been dug. The length of the trench is approximately 500 metres. Also signboards have been put up besides tracks asking loco pilots to blow horn when they pass through the area. They have also been asked to decrease speed.

Earlier several elephants have been killed in accidents in Keonjhar railway division.

INTENSE HEAT WAVE



A man struggling to carry iron bars on his bicycle amid rising temperatures in Angul town

OP PHOTO

MGNREGS, Mukta Yojana in doldrums

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, May 9: Frequency of lockdowns and shutdowns during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic has left the economic backbone of the people in tatters in Ganjam district. Keeping in view the difficulties of people, the government has implemented a host of income-generating and labour-intensive schemes in the district to ensure that there would no dearth of work.

However, some schemes like MGNREGS and Mukta Yojana are progressing at a tardy pace in Bhanjanagar sub-division, a report said.

According to the report, the administration has set a target to create 10,000 workdays under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for people in each panchayat under Bhanjanagar sub-division. However, most of the projects under the rural job scheme have made little progress.



FILE PHOTO

In urban areas, the state government has also launched Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpara Yojana (Mukta Yojana) to ensure scope to work for the people at the time of pandemic. Under the scheme, the government aims at promoting activities associated with expansion of green cover, creation of community centres, storm water drainage, rainwater harvesting, sanitation and peripheral development around water bodies.

This scheme is also being implemented in Bhanjanagar NAC. However, it was alleged that the number of jobs the project should have generated has not materialised due to shutdown restrictions.

Engineer of the NAC, Sushant Kumar Sahu said that the scheme has been launched and it is being executed by self-help groups.

Under the scheme, three rainwater conservation projects will be built in each ward on an exper-

imental basis. Aside from that, paintings will be done on boundary walls of government offices. Such activities will generate scope of earnings for the people. However, it has been alleged that people are unwilling to work at this time.

Bhanja Pradhan, a representative of Sanakodanda panchayat, said that many people are, in fact, reluctant to work because of fears of Covid transmission. As result, many projects are not being completed as per scheduled. He added that this scheme is being executed where people are interested.

Krushna Swain, the representative of Dadaralunda panchayat said that the administration is insisting on achieving the target. "Another problem is that due to delay in clearance of wages by the Central government, daily wagers and job card holders fail to get salaries on time. This has resulted in failure on part of the administration to achieve the target," Swain informed.



A day passed without accomplishing a good action is a day without soul.

THE MOTHER



Bone-Apart

History is a tricky entity. It is essentially a record of past events, as observed by an individual or a group of individuals with the abilities to write in whichever script, that a later generation may desire to know to understand the driving forces that made it what it is and how it can forge ahead to create a new history. The problem is not so much with the facts or the events as with the mind(s) that records history, later superimposing on them new perceptions that were, most likely, not valid in the past. France is now facing this problem as it has begun to observe the bicentenary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte who died on fifth day of this month in 1821 in a surprisingly small bed in exile in a damp and reportedly rat-infested house of the British island of St Helena.

France is now divided over according honour to Napoleon known as "the child of the revolution (French Revolution of 1789)" who illustrated, with his own life, the principle of "la carriere est ouverte au talent" (career is open to talent). During his school days he used to be mocked at for his lower social standing but later he became the general of the French army and then emperor through a coup.

And this transformation is what splits the French nation into two. There are people who regard Napoleon as a destroyer of the new order ushered in by the French Revolution and also those who set him on a high pedestal, an iconic figure representing some of the best things that France stands for.

President Emmanuel Macron has sought to make a fine balance between the two extremes with aplomb. With just a year to go for the next Presidential election he has taken a position neither "to deny" (Napoleon's positive contributions) nor "to repent" (for his abominable acts). He needs such a stance as the far right party of Marine Le Pen is eulogising Napoleon. She is getting such traction now that many experts believe she has the potential to defeat Macron in the next Presidential election.

Even two hundred years after Napoleon's demise, the cause of his death is still shrouded in mystery just as his career and life continue to cause a schism in his own country. To some, he was a brilliant military and political strategist, to others he was nothing but a warmongering despot. For the Right wingers he is a national hero whose leadership and legacy put France on the map. The Left, on the other hand, brands him as an autocrat who supported the restoration of slavery in the French colonies in 1802 after the hideous system had been abolished in 1784.

Macron said Napoleon Bonaparte's reinstatement of slavery was a "betrayal of the spirit of the Enlightenment." But in his speech under the dome of the Institute of France, he said that "Napoleon is part of us" and France "must look our history straight in the eyes." Even his Equality Minister Elisabeth Moreno, admitted Napoleon was "a great figure in French history" but he was also "one of the great misogynists".

With such distinctions, Macron refused to yield ground to those who condemn Napoleon outright. This is both for his political conviction and also electoral strategy as he is expected to seek reelection next year.

He sent his message loud and clear when he laid a wreath at the foot of Napoleon's tomb at Les Invalides, a gold-domed monument and site of a military hospital. His speech at the Institute of France made it clear that his intent was to "commemorate" and not "celebrate" the larger-than-life figure mired in controversy. For, he recalled how Napoleon had given France its civil code and penal code, established the system of prefects, representatives of the state in each French territory, and lycees, or high schools, among other things.

"From the empire, we have renounced the worst and from the emperor we have embellished the best," Macron said. Justifying his participation in the bicentenary the President iterated commemorating the history is but reasserting the facts "serenely," without "judging the past with laws of the present."

That is perhaps the best Macron could do without attracting controversy or alienating the electorate as some historians dig out records to show that Napoleon considered himself as "an instrument of political financiers." This view gets reinforced by his reintroduction of slavery in the French colonies to exploit the workers there.

Macron's appeal for dispassionate reappraisal of history without using the yardsticks of the present should resonate in countries such as India where the Right wing has been glibly attributing to ancient Indian civilisation, without evidence, the credit of making nuclear missile and plastic surgery as "revealed" to them through various inferences and images.

India is notorious for its scant regard for making meticulous record of its history. Thus enabling mischief-makers to falsify history to suit their vested interests. The prime reason, for not making detailed descriptive records, is the absence of any script that was accessible to a large part of society. Education and therefore script or writing remained bound by the stringent laws of the caste system. The upper castes preferred to pass on knowledge, or information, to the next generation mostly verbally. This secretive method failed if an offspring was a retard or a weak learner. That knowledge line perished at that stage. Ashoka, for instance, had used Pali as a script and recorded many events of that era in his stone edicts but later generations decided to kill that language to enable growth of Sanskrit. This greatly damaged India's history keeping abilities. What we make out today as history is mostly myth, often exaggerated and usually unverifiable.

WISDOM CORNER

- We must not allow other people's limited perceptions to define us.** VIRGINIA SATIR
- We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses.** CARL JUNG
- It takes considerable knowledge just to realize the extent of your own ignorance.** THOMAS SOWELL

WORDSWORTH

Mullered

This British slang term came to wide public notice in the early 1990s, though it has certainly been around for much longer in the spoken language. Jonathon Green, in his Chambers Dictionary of Slang, suggests that one sense, to be badly beaten up, has been in UK prison slang since the 1950s. In modern usage it has the two senses you give. When it refers to objects, it doesn't so much mean simply broken as extensively damaged or even totally destroyed ("At the end of a massive traffic queue there was a gorgeous Ferrari that had been absolutely mullered. Mullered I say. One side of the car had completely disappeared and one of the wheels was about 200 yards down the road." — in a BBC sports blog, 12 June 2008). In sports it has a somewhat less catastrophic sense of being badly beaten, outclassed or outplayed by the other team ("Predictably, the scrum was mullered, the ball turned over and a Quins try was the result." — in the Irish Independent, 20 October 2008). The drunkenness sense is less common in print, though it's well known, especially in Scotland and the north of England ("Ok, so we can't afford her clothes, her lifestyle or get mullered and still look fresh as a daisy the next day." — Daily Record, Glasgow, 13 September 2008). Where it comes from is disputed. Jonathon Green suggests it's a variant form of an older regional verb mull, to grind to powder, pulverise or crumble. He also notes that an alternative spelling is mullahed, suggesting some vaguely perceived Islamic connection, which the Oxford English Dictionary argues is a folk etymology. In its recent revision of the term, the OED's editors argue for a separate origin for the drunkenness sense from that of being beaten or destroyed. However, they suggest that the latter sense is from the British dialect of the gypsy language Romani, in which there is a stem mul-, derived from the verb "to die" (which, by the way, can be traced directly back to the Sanskrit origins of the Romani language). As matters stand, this is the best we can do.

SPECTRUM ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

States reject Centre's economic model



Shivaji Sarkar

A HAWAI CHAPPAL AND WHITE SARI DONNING MAMATA BANERJEE HAS VIRTUALLY CHALLENGED THE DAZZLING DEVELOPMENT MODEL THAT HAS PUT INDIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR ON SALE

The recent election results reflect more than politics. Indian voters have larger issues and economy at the core of their concern. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal have separately endorsed a new economic course for the nation.

Bengal definitely remains at the centre. A hawai chappal and white sari donning Mamata Banerjee has virtually challenged the dazzling development model that has put India's public sector on sale and entered into a visual extravaganza of over Rs 30,000 crore (actually may be over Rs 50,000 crore) to change Delhi's central vista. Nobody explains why that should be a priority instead of creating a strong health sector, and hospitals capable of producing their own oxygen. Nobody has tried to change that since the massive failure at the Gorakhpur hospital, where oxygen failure claimed 1317 lives in 2017 or the beginning of SAARS infections since 2002.

Populism of Mamata's largesse for women and youth, welfare policies of DMK in TN or Left alliance in Kerala studied closely virtually refutes the "aggressive privatised development" model of the Centre. All these states have

voted against farm bills, that seek to create large house monopolies, junk scrapping policy of poor man's vehicles, high fuel prices, fares, tolls, taxes and so called user charges.

The vote endorses that the country has more poverty to address than create cosmetic central vista that serves none but a few large corporate houses. They have together rejected the Mammoanomics — that is causing political disaster for its proponent, the Congress, and their followers the BJP. The people are pitted against the disinvestment of prime banks, LIC, other financial institutions, defence establishments and others with a target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore in 2021-22. This is lower than Rs 2.1 lakh crore it hoped to garner from divestment in 2020-21 — an admission of failure of government bid. This failed economic concept is rejected now by the voters.

While in TN the change was inevitable, Kerala not very surprisingly voted for the Left government that in their perception has been delivering. The voters perceived that Congress-led UDF was incapable of opposing the BJP's onslaught for privatisation, now a national concern. The massive

vote surge in Bengal for TMC was not possible had not the people perceived a grave threat to the economic policies being pursued by the Centre. It has also busted the myth that Bengal votes in communal terms. The wash out of the Left and Congress for its alliance with highly communalised ISF is the testimony.

India is not against private companies. Many have contributed significantly; many enjoy trust and set standards. The nation, however, is against overt domineering by any group. The present elections have bared that. The country wants private neither at the cost of the public sector nor wants to get it enslaved to any private player. It wants private to serve the social cause without hurting a system the country built during the last 70 years. That is where the BJP's desperate bid to capture Bengal did not succeed.

The loss of the centrist party, which gained significantly for a supposed nationalist approach during 2019 Lok Sabha election, should now reorient Indian economy if the party led by Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani wants to survive. Else it may be the beginning of a regression endorsed also

conditions. In Greece, for example, more than 70,000 asylum-seekers are being excluded from the national vaccination programme.

Persecuted minorities, such as Myanmar's Rohingya population and India's Dalits are also at high risk of being overlooked. And coordination in conflict zones, such as in Syria, may pose a challenge, with governments potentially even ignoring people in these territories.

In-country vaccination programmes must include clear protections for the most vulnerable groups, with the World Bank using its leverage to prevent discrimination in the implementation of its projects. Any vaccine funding must be made contingent on its fair and safe distribution. Moreover, there must be supervision and monitoring of these projects, as the Bank's own board recently urged.

For this to work, the World Bank must engage directly with marginalised groups. Their perspectives are essential to determine how best to spend the pledged funds and to ensure accountability by challenging misuse of resources and misallocation of vaccine doses.

The global vaccine rollout is a critical test for an institution whose stated mission is to "end extreme poverty and advance shared prosperity." Fortunately, there is reason to hope that the World Bank will pass. Its president, David Malpass, has called the COVID-19 crisis a "pandemic of inequality," one of its hallmarks being unequal access to vaccines.

But simply throwing money at the problem will not be enough to solve it. Only a transparent, inclusive, and well-designed strategy that explicitly protects the interests of the most vulnerable and gives them a way to sound the alarm when things go wrong can do that. That would be money well spent.

The writer is a team manager in the financing division of the Open Society Foundation's Public Health Programme.

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FOCUS PANDEMIC RESPONSE

VACCINE EQUITY



The combination of export bans, hoarding, and supply shortages has meant that COVAX has so far managed to deliver only one in five of the Oxford-AstraZeneca doses that were supposed to arrive in countries by the end of this month

In March, South Sudan received its first batch of COVID-19 vaccines. While that is good news, it came almost four months after the first doses were administered in the United Kingdom, highlighting the wide disparities in global vaccine distribution. If these gaps are not narrowed soon — with international bodies leading a transparent and equitable global vaccine rollout — the entire pandemic response will be compromised.

South Sudan received its doses thanks to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility, which has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines worldwide. Institutions like the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and UNICEF have supported these efforts.

But rich countries are hampering progress by continuing to hoard supplies. In the United States, more than 2.1 million doses are being administered per day; South Sudan has administered around 1,000 vaccines in total. Overall, residents of high- and middle-income countries have received 83 per cent of the 1.2 billion vaccine doses delivered so far.

In fact, the combination of export bans, hoarding, and supply shortages has meant that COVAX has so far managed to deliver only one in five of the Oxford-AstraZeneca doses that were supposed to arrive in countries by the end of this month. At this rate, advanced economies will be able to vaccinate their entire populations before many low-income countries even begin their vaccine rollout.

To accelerate progress, international development banks have committed considerable funding to help poor countries purchase and distribute vaccines, tests, and treatments. The World Bank alone has promised to contribute \$12 billion. But the details of its pledge are getting lost, raising the risk that this much-needed money will be wasted for lack of scrutiny.

For starters, the World Bank has yet to clarify how it will use its market power to ensure that doses remain affordable. But as vaccine producers such as Johnson & Johnson back away from their pledges to make vaccines available on a not-for-profit basis, such intervention is becoming urgent. The three US pharmaceutical firms with approved vaccines — Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson — have already shared with investors plans to raise vaccine prices in the near future. In making \$12 billion available for vaccine procurement and deployment, it remains unclear what steps the World Bank is taking to make vaccine manufacturers share the technology and know-how to ramp up global production.

month of its launch because politicians were cutting in front of higher-priority individuals, such as health workers.

Transparency is vital to limit such behaviours, but the World Bank may be setting itself up for more of the same: it recently approved a project in Ethiopia, where similar queue-jumping is a known risk. It has also approved a project in Tunisia, where vaccine hesitancy and skepticism, and disinformation efforts, are substantial — factors that can further undermine a programme's efficiency, if not addressed effectively.

These projects are being designed at rapid speed. Too often, however, World Bank teams — whether at the Bank's headquarters in Washington, DC, or in the countries seeking funds — are developing these vaccine programmes without input from all essential stakeholders. If groups at risk of being excluded from the vaccine rollouts are not involved in project design and monitoring, it will become all the more likely that they will be left behind.

Such groups include refugees, prisoners, and people living in slums and other overcrowded

Containment strategy

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

Welcome step

Sir, The Orissa High Court's quashing of the state government's decision to merge nearly 4,500 primary schools with bigger nearby schools is a welcome step. The notification not only violated the Odisha Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010, but also was arbitrary as it would have put lakhs of children into a lot of hardship.
Sourav Ranjan Sahoo, BHUBANESWAR

Pandemic policing

Sir, The masses are living in an atmosphere of panic due to two reasons. One, because of the havoc created by the second spike of Covid-19 and the other, the coercive measures taken by the government to restrain mobility of people and prevent mass assembly. The health-care providers are working relentlessly to save lives and control the spread of the pandemic. The disciplining agencies like the police and the paramilitary forces are on their toes to check the unwanted movement and gathering of the public. But there have been some instances of police and government official being harsh on people. As in the case of Tripura District Magistrate Sailesh Kumar Yadav, who worked in a filmy style to disperse the crowd from a wedding ceremony. This act of the IAS officer has been criticised by many quarters. As a government official one cannot become too aggressive and resort to violence and abusive language on people. Police and government officials have to be careful in their behaviour while dealing with crowds or it may create unnecessary raucous. The disciplining agencies employed by the government should not always take extreme steps to tame the crowd rather they have to be tolerant.
Sanjib Kumar Sahu, BHAWANIPATNA

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

Sanjib Kumar Das, CUTTACK

More curbs in Delhi

MARRIAGE ONLY AT HOME OR COURT; NO METRO SERVICE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 9: Delhi, gasping for oxygen with overloaded health management of the state administration for the last few weeks, will witness more stringent restrictions after a fresh round of lockdown will come into effect from Monday morning.

The ongoing lockdown in Delhi was Sunday extended up to May 17 morning with suspension of Metro train services and prohibition of wedding ceremonies at public places.

Announcing the lockdown extension, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said although COVID-19 cases and positivity rate have come down in the last few days, any leniency would squander the gains achieved so far in the current wave of the pandemic.

Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in order to combat the spread of the second wave of Covid infections, has decided to put some more restrictions on movement of individuals and groups of people within the city.



Connaught Place wears a deserted look during COVID-induced lockdown, in New Delhi, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

Delhi's lifeline transport services - Delhi metro rail will remain shut till the DDMA assesses the outcome of the lockdown in the city and number of cases till next order. Marriage functions will not be permitted at gardens, halls, hotels or any other public places, except at homes with only 20 people. "There will be complete prohibition on organising any marriage ceremony at public places/ marriage

hall/banquet hall/hotels and similar places. Marriages may however be organised in court or at home, in which not more than 20 people will be allowed to participate," an order issued Sunday by Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev said.

Individuals moving in the city will have to produce a solid reason with production of soft copy of e-pass issued by the Delhi government. DJ sound, catering facilities will not be allowed at any marriage function across the city till May 17.

The DDMA has directed Delhi police to ensure effective checking of movement of persons and vehicles by putting adequate number of barricades. "Police authority shall ensure effective checking of movement of persons and vehicles by putting adequate number of checking points with objective to prevent unnecessary movement of people on roads during curfew," DDMA order stated.

273 DEATHS, LOWEST SINCE APRIL 21

New Delhi: Delhi recorded 273 more coronavirus deaths Sunday, the lowest since April 21, and 13,336 new infections with a positivity rate of 21.67 per cent, the Health Department said. The number of new cases, the lowest since April 12, can be attributed to a smaller number of tests - 61,552 -- conducted Saturday. Over 1.29 lakh beneficiaries were vaccinated Saturday, the highest since the inoculation drive began on January 16. Of these, 90,289 were those who got their first dose, according to a health bulletin. There are 86,232 active cases, including 52,263 in home isolation. More than 14,500 people recuperated, taking the number of recoveries to 12.17 lakh, the bulletin stated.

'Crime to export vax when people dying in country'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Sunday attacked the Centre over the export of coronavirus vaccines, saying a large number of lives could have been saved in India if the doses were given to people in the country first.

"It's a heinous crime committed by the Central government to sell vaccines to other countries only for its image management at a time when people were dying in our own country," he told an online briefing.

Citing a newspaper report, Sisodia said the Centre sold coronavirus vaccines to 93 countries of which 60 per cent had COVID-19 under control, and also where there was no threat of loss of life due to the virus.

A large number of youths in the country perished to the coronavirus

It's a heinous crime committed by the Central government to sell vaccines to other countries only for its image management at a time when people were dying in our own country

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

in the second wave of the pandemic, he said, adding their lives could have been saved if the vaccines were given to them instead of exporting the doses.

He said the Centre should now ensure that the vaccines manufactured in the country are provided to the states that are facing a shortage. He reiterated the Delhi government can vaccinate everyone in the city within three months if adequate doses are made available to it.

23 Covid patients go 'missing' from hospital



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has ordered an inquiry into the incident of 23 COVID-19 patients going 'missing' from the North Delhi Municipal Corporation-run Hindu Rao Hospital, official sources said Sunday.

Sisodia has asked the health department to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit a report by Monday evening, they said.

The corporation's mayor, Jai Prakash, had Saturday said that at least 23 COVID-19 patients left the hospital between April 19 and May 6 without informing the medical facility. Sisodia said it is very shocking that a large number of COVID-19 patients have gone 'missing' from the hospital, a source said.

The deputy chief minister also said that this is not only dangerous to the lives of these patients but is also a setback to the efforts of the government which has imposed a lockdown to check the spread of the disease, the source said.

Hindu Rao, run by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, is the largest civic hospital in the national capital.

The hospital has 250 beds reserved for coronavirus patients and according to the Delhi Corona app, all beds are currently occupied.

Himanta: From disgruntled Cong man to BJP's trouble-shooter in Assam

Himanta Biswa Sarma's eyes were always set on the top job in Assam. However, the leader who owed his early rise to two former CMs of Congress had to toil for many years with dogged determination to achieve his goal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, May 9: Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to take on the mantle of the chief minister of Assam, after being elected leader of both the BJP legislature party and the NDA in Assam Sunday.

Sarma's eyes, according to those close to him, were always set on the top job in Assam. However, the leader who owed his early rise to two former chief ministers from the Congress had to toil for many years with dogged determination to achieve his goal.

Considered by many to be the most powerful politician of the entire North Eastern region, 52-year-old Sarma is equally revered by supporters for his capabilities and reviled by critics for being over-ambitious. A four-time MLA and a minister in all cabinets since 2001, Sarma's political acumen and the ability to get work done against all odds was not only noticed but rewarded by his mentors - former Congress chief ministers Hiteswar Saikia and Tarun Gogoi - with both

giving him ample opportunities to rise.

After he fell out with Gogoi, who realising his protégé's spiralling ambitions attempted to rein him in, Sarma ultimately quit the Congress in 2015.

The BJP did not waste the chance and scooped him up as a 'big catch' to help the right-wing party make inroads into the North East. He returned their confidence in him as the Convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), bringing all eight North Eastern states within the fold of the NDA, and forming governments either of the BJP or its alliance partners in the region. Sarma took his first baby steps in politics way back in the early 1980s, during the height of the anti-foreigners' stir, as an 'errand boy' of the then AASU leaders Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhriugu Kumar Phukan from whom he later wrested the Jalukbari constituency in 2001 as a Congress candidate.

After grasping the fine art of politics in AASU, he was noticed by the then Congress Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia who took him under his wings while Sarma was still a law student at the Guwahati University. Bypassing party norms, newly elected Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, also impressed with Sarma's political skills, appointed the young debutante as minister of state for agriculture, planning and development and later during the same term, gave him additional responsibilities.

Sarma's upward trajectory had begun. He slowly emerged as Gogoi's blue-eyed boy and was elevated as



BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is set to be the next CM of Assam, is greeted by outgoing CM Sarbananda Sonowal, in Guwahati, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

a Cabinet Minister in his second term. The Congress, facing an anti-incumbency wave in 2011, depended heavily on Sarma's skills at strategising and managed to come to power for the third consecutive term with Gogoi rewarding him with the plum portfolios.

However, the success also saw the start of politicking to make him a possible chief minister after Gogoi. With rifts widening within the Assam Congress, Sarma camped in Delhi on several occasions to lobby. He met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as part of this attempt. A meeting about which he later famously said in an interview that Gandhi was more interested in feeding biscuits to his dogs than resolving the party crisis in Assam.

Side-lined within the Congress, he resigned from the ministry, the assembly and subsequently from the party in 2015. He was soon welcomed to the BJP at a meeting at Home Minister Amit Shah's residence in August 2015.

Sarma was made the Convenor of Assam BJP's Election Management Committee and he along with the then state unit president Sarbananda Sonowal, scripted the party's election success and the installation of the first BJP government in the state in 2016.

As a reward, he was made the NEDA Convenor and tasked to ensure similar wins in other North Eastern states which he successfully delivered over the next five years.

Assam tea estates witness steep spike in Covid cases

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, May 9: Amid the drought-like situation prevailing in Assam, the tea industry in the state is facing the Covid blues as over 500 workers in many tea gardens have been infected by the virus, health officials said.

Health officials in Guwahati said that after the detection of the virus in many workers, several measures have been taken to check the spread of the virus, including setting up of containment zones and ramping up testing facilities.

According to the officials, till Saturday, at least 503 tea garden workers in many estates under 14 districts have been infected by the virus. These districts are -- Dibrugarh, Biswanath, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Udalguri, Charaideo, Kamrup (Metro), Baksa, Darang, Dhemaji and Sivasagar.

The North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) has urged the state government to urgently organise vaccination camps in the tea estates.

In a letter to the Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, and in separate letters to all the 34 Deputy Commissioners, NETA has requested to protect the tea garden population from the second wave of the pandemic by organising vaccination



camp urgently in the tea gardens. NETA adviser Bidyandana Barkakoty said that two tea estates in Dibrugarh district have been declared containment zones, recently.

"Last year, the tea gardens did not face such problems like this time. Therefore, before things go beyond control, setting-up of vaccination camps in the tea gardens is of utmost importance. NETA has assured to fully cooperate with the government in organising the vaccination camps," Barkakoty said. The industry body has also undertaken a massive awareness campaign among the workers and their family members to check the spread of the disease.

Tea estates have a large concen-

tration of workers and were until recently largely unaffected by Covid-19. The industry body, Tea Association of India (TAI), had earlier said that the crop prospect in the current season in Assam and West Bengal looks bleak due to the drought-like situation prevailing in both the states.

TAI Secretary General P.K. Bhattacharya had said that due to the prolonged period of lockdown, the tea industry in Assam and Bengal lost around 140 million kg of made tea last year. Assam has over 10 lakh tea garden workers in the organised sector working in 850 tea estates. The state roughly accounts for 55 per cent of India's total tea production.

2nd World War era airport takes commercial wings

AGENCIES

Guwahati, May 9: Regular flight services began at Rupsi airport, built in 1939 for warplanes, from Saturday as part of the government's endeavour to link underserved and unserved airports through regional connectivity scheme routes.

Rupsi airport is in Dhubri district of lower Assam. Water cannon salute was accorded to the incoming flight by the Rupsi Airport officials as a gesture of welcome to the flight and the passengers were welcomed with the traditional Gamosa (scarf) before the flight departed for Kolkata at around 12.40 pm. COVID-19 guidelines were strictly followed.

AAI has re-developed this world war-II era air strip in Assam at an estimated cost of Rs 69 crore and the foundation stone for it was laid in February 2019.

Spread across 337 acres, the newly developed airport has a terminal building measuring 3,500 sq m and is equipped with 10 check-in counters, an AAI release said, adding, the terminal is designed to manage



AAI has re-developed this world war-II era air strip in Assam at an estimated cost of Rs 69 crore and the foundation stone for it was laid in February 2019.

about 200 passengers during peak hours. The newly built runway is suitable for landing ATR-72 type aircraft. A trial flight was tested and operational requirements were checked successfully May 5.

Under the RCS-UDAN scheme affordable flying will be ensured for all, specially the lower income group population over short distances, the airport in-charge Jyotirmoy Barua said.

The operationalisation of Rupsi Airport will help boost the local economy of the Bodoland area and provide better connectivity to air travellers of Dhubri and adjacent districts of Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Goalpara as well as districts in the neighbouring states of Meghalaya, West Bengal and parts of Bhutan, AAI said.

This is northeast's 15th airport. There are 14 airports already in the northeast region -- Guwahati, Silchar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tezpur and Lilalabari (Assam), Tezu and Pasighat (Arunachal Pradesh), Agartala (Tripura), Imphal (Manipur), Shillong (Meghalaya), Dimapur (Nagaland), Lengpui (Mizoram) and Pakyong (Sikkim).

Netizens laud Delhi govt for 'smooth execution' of vax drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Netizens flooded social media platforms with "Thank You" messages for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his government, praising them for "orderly arrangements" and "smooth execution" of the ongoing third phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive.

Many took to Twitter to share their experiences of getting vaccinated in the mega drive, which they said was done by "calm professionals" in a seamless manner while maintaining all coronavirus protocols. "@ArvindKejriwal Thank you Sir, you are really a unique CM I ever seen, I got vaccinated yesterday, the management was incredible there was proper social distancing and the doctor were very polite towards all vaccine takers. We are proud to hv CM like you... AK70," read the tweet of a Twitter handle @VInduriya.

"Got my first dose of Covishield today at Jhandelwala... Good and orderly arrangements at the vaccination centre... Helpful staff and officials... Thank you @ArvindKejriwal and @msisodia for the well managed vaccination... #vaccinated #Covishield #VaccineForAll," tweeted one Romil Kumar.

Neha Poonia wrote, "First shot White heavy check mark Hats off to the officials at the vaccination centre. They were pleasant, professional and calm even as they worked through this unbearable heat. They've done a tremendous job ensuring safe distancing + ventilation. Well done, @ArvindKejriwal & team."

Laxmi Kant Dubey, who heads the vaccination centre RSBV at West Vinod Nagar, said what has impressed most people is that they are not made to wait much and due process is followed in the vaccination drive and paying attention to minutest details. The centre, which has five sites and is vaccinating al-



most 750 people every day since May 3, is fully-ventilated and sanitised twice a day, he said.

"People are very happy. My visitors' register is filled with good remarks. We have a medical room and wheel-chairs are available on gates for the disabled, and follow all guidelines to a tee. For each site, we have allotted three rooms. While the first room is waiting area, the

second and third are for vaccination and observation," Dubey told PTI.

The sentiments are echoed by other heads of vaccination centres as well, like Renu and Jayanti Gupta from Government Girls Senior Secondary School (Chhattarpur) and Shaheed Captain Sanjeev Dahiya Sarvodaya Vidyalaya Sector 9 Rohini, respectively. "My teachers tell me that many

people come to them and give a thumbs-up for the facilities provided in the vaccination centre. I guess much of its credit goes to the administration. We, on our part, are following all the guidelines and make the process as smooth as possible," said Jayanti Gupta.

Kejriwal Saturday said the number of COVID-19 vaccination centres will be increased three times in Delhi and demanded that the Centre supply around 2.6 crore vaccine doses for inoculation of all people in the national capital in the next three months. Currently, vaccination is going on at 100 centres in Delhi. The number of centres will be increased to 250-300 by the Delhi government, he said in an online briefing.

Delhi has been vaccinating more than one lakh people everyday. This includes around 50,000 people in the age group of 18-44 years and 50,000 aged 45 years and above, he added.

national

of the day quote

It's a heinous crime committed by the Central government to sell vaccines to other countries only for its image management at a time when people were dying in our own country

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DY CM

Nothing equals a mother's love. The encouragement, courage, and inspiration a mother gives, is invaluable. Salutations to the mothers who symbolise love and sacrifice

YS JAGANMOHAN REDDY | ANDHRA PRADESH CM

The government should ensure testing, tracing, medical camps as well as provision of temporary hospitals in the villages. There is need to formulate a comprehensive policy so that the villagers can get the medical advice and treatment on time

BHUPINDER HOODA | FORMER HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

19 grenades seized at terrorist hideout

Jammu: Security forces Sunday unearthed a terrorist hideout in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, leading to the recovery of 19 hand grenades and scuttling of a terrorist plan to disturb peace in the border district by carrying out grenade attacks, a defence spokesman said. No one was arrested during the operation which was jointly carried out by the Army and police in Phagla area of Surankote, the spokesman said.

Tiger found dead in Kanha reserve

Bhopal: A tiger was found dead at a forest in the Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, an official said Sunday. The carcass of the feline, aged around 12 to 13 years, was spotted Saturday by a patrolling team in the Bhaishanghat range, located over 400 km from the state capital Bhopal, KTR field director S K Singh said. The tiger apparently died 10 to 15 days back, he said. An autopsy was conducted and the carcass was disposed of as per guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), he said. This is the second tiger death reported in Madhya Pradesh in the last two days.

13 prisoners escape from COVID facility

Chandigarh: Thirteen prisoners escaped from a jail in Haryana's Rewari, a dedicated facility for COVID-19 positive inmates in the state, officials said Sunday. Four police teams have been formed to trace the prisoners while Rewari Police is also coordinating with police departments of neighbouring districts including Narnaul, a senior officer said. The incident took place on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday and some of the escaped prisoners are convicted in cases of murder, rape, and dacoity, they said.

Leopard beaten to death, 5 booked

Balrampur (UP): A case was registered against five people for beating a leopard to death in Sohelwa wildlife sanctuary here, officials said Sunday. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Prakar Gupta said a leopard was found dead with injury marks on the body at the Bankatwa range of the forest. In the post-mortem examination, it was revealed that the animal was beaten to death with sticks, he said. A case was registered against the five at Lalia Police Station, he added.



There is a need to have a strong alliance of opposition parties in the country. But there can't be an alliance without the Congress party. It will be the soul. Leadership can be decided through consultations

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA LEADER

103-YEAR-OLD BEATS COVID

A 103-year-old man from Palghar in Maharashtra has recovered from COVID-19 despite being in the vulnerable age group. Shamrao Ingle, a native of Virendra Nagar area here, was admitted to a rural COVID-19 hospital in Palghar after he contracted the infection. He was discharged Saturday after recovering from the disease



Defence Min directs AFMS to recruit 400 retd medical officers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The Defence Ministry said Sunday it has issued an order to the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) to recruit 400 retired medical officers of the Army Medical Corps (AMC) and the Short Service Commission (SSC) on a contract basis for maximum 11 months.

India has been badly hit by the second wave of coronavirus infections and hospitals in several states are reeling under shortage of health workers, vaccines, oxygen, drugs and beds.

The Defence Ministry's statement noted "Under the 'Tour of Duty' scheme, 400 ex-AMCSC medical officers, released between

2017 and 2021, are expected to be recruited on contract basis for a maximum period of 11 months."

These medical officers will be paid a fixed monthly lump sum amount, which will be calculated by deducting the basic pension from the salary drawn at the time of retirement, it said.

If there is any additional pay for specialists, it will be given on top of this lump sum amount, it added.

The amount would remain unchanged for the term of the contract and no other allowances would be paid. The medical officers to be recruited are required to be medically fit as per civilian standards, it mentioned.

The AFMS has already deployed additional doctors, including specialists, super specialists and paramedics, at various hospitals, to deal with the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SSC doctors of the AFMS have also been granted extension till December 31, which has augmented the strength by 238 more doctors.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

FUNGAL FEAR

Centre issues advisory on Mucormycosis infection

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Mucormycosis, a fungal infection being found in COVID-19 patients with uncontrolled diabetes and prolonged intensive care unit (ICU) stay, may turn fatal if uncared for, the Centre said Sunday.

In an advisory, it also said the fungal infection mainly affects people who are on medication that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens.

The evidence-based advisory for screening, diagnosis and management of the disease was released by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Union health ministry. "Mucormycosis, if uncared for, may turn fatal. Sinuses or lungs of such individuals get affected after fungal spores are inhaled from the air," it said.



Warning symptoms include pain and redness around eyes and nose, fever, headache, coughing, shortness of breath, bloody vomits and altered mental status, the advisory stated.

In COVID-19 patients with diabetes and immuno-suppressed individuals, one must suspect of mucormycosis if there is sinusitis, one-side facial pain or numbness, blackish discoloration over the bridge of the nose or palate, toothache, blurred or double vision with pain, skin lesion, throm-

VACANT TRACKS



Deserted view of Shimla Railway Station during COVID-induced curfew in Shimla, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

SAUDI CALLS FOR TALKS BETWEEN INDIA, PAKISTAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Islamabad, May 9: Saudi Arabia has emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve their outstanding matters, including the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan Foreign Office Saturday night released a joint statement agreed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia after Prime Minister Imran Khan held high-level talks with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

Khan is on an official visit to Saudi Arabia from May 7-May 9.

"The two sides emphasised the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially Jammu



and Kashmir issue, to ensure peace and stability in the region," according to the joint statement.

The Crown Prince welcomed the recent understanding reached between the military authorities of Pakistan and India regarding ceasefire at the Line of Control (LoC), which is based on a 2003 understanding between Pakistan and India. The militaries of India and Pakistan, in a surprise announcement February 25, said that they have agreed to strictly observe

all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors.

India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with it in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence.

During Khan's Saudi visit, the two sides also reviewed all facets of bilateral cooperation and discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest and agreed to further strengthen the relationship in diverse fields.

They signed an agreement on the establishment of the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council (SPSCC). An MoU on combating illicit traffic in narcotics, drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals was also signed.

Kerala poet's FB suspended for satire on BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, May 9: Noted poet K Satchidanandan has alleged that he was restrained by Facebook from liking, commenting and sharing posts for 24-hours after he tried to upload online a satire video on the BJP's defeat in the recently concluded Kerala assembly polls.

The poet told media that he has also been barred from live appearance on the social media platform for 30 days.

Satchidanandan, former secretary of Kendra Sahitya Akademi, said when he attempted to post the video mocking the BJP's electoral defeat, he had received a message from Facebook alleging violation of its community standard.

He claimed that the video, widely shared on various other social media platforms, was not an abusive one.

Citing his experience, the poet alleged that the critics of the rightwing are under their watch.

Military Police inducts first batch of women

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bengaluru, May 9: The Indian Army on Saturday inducted the first batch of 83 women soldiers into the Military Police after their attestation parade held here Saturday.

The attestation parade was held at the Dronacharya Parade Ground of the Corps of Military Police Centre & School (CMPCC&S) here. The low-key event was held following all the Covid-19 protocols, the Army said.

The Indian Army was originally preparing to induct 100 young women soldiers. However, 17 recruits were relegated on medical grounds or had failed in the tests, which rendered them unable to pass out in this first batch, the Army said in a statement.

They will continue with the next batch, the statement added.

The Commandant of the CMP Centre & School, Brigadier C Dayalan, congratulated the soldiers on their successful completion of the intense 61-week training schedule on aspects related to



basic military training. Provost training to include all forms of policing duties, management of prisoners of war, ceremonial duties and skill development to include driving and maintenance of all vehicles and signal communications. He also expressed confidence that the training imparted to them and the standards achieved would hold them at par with their male counterparts and help them prove to be a force multiplier at their new units located across varied terrains and operational conditions in the country.

'COVID-apt behaviour, vax shields against mutants, future waves'

SEVERAL EXPERTS BELIEVE THAT A CASUAL APPROACH THAT FOLLOWED THE TROUGH OF THE FIRST WAVE COULD BE A POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE PANDEMIC RAISING ITS HEAD AGAIN, THOUGH OTHERS ARE ALSO PUTTING THE BLAME ON THE NEW MUTANTS OF THE VIRUS BEING MORE VIRULENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: With the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the country and concerns being raised about a possible third wave, experts caution that the next wave could be less severe if people keep following COVID-appropriate behaviour and a large portion of the population is vaccinated.

According to the Union Health Ministry data released Sunday morning, India recorded 4,03,738 fresh COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the country's cumulative tally to 2,22,96,414, while the death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths.

There has been a sharp surge in infections over the past couple of

months, making the second wave much worse than the first one that began in early 2020 and peaked in the last quarter of that year before the tally hit a trough in the first quarter of 2021.

Several experts believe that a casual approach that followed the trough of the first wave could be a possible reason for the pandemic raising its head again, though others are also putting the blame on the new mutants and variants of the virus being more virulent.

K Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser, had said Wednesday last week that the third wave was inevitable and it was necessary to be prepared for new waves, but clarified two days later that the insidious asymptomatic transmission can be stopped if pre-



scribed guidelines about precautions, surveillance, containment, treatment and testing are followed.

If we take strong measures, the third wave may not happen in all places or indeed anywhere at all.

It depends on much how effectively guidance is implemented at the local level in the states, districts and cities everywhere, he said.

According to experts, in a few months when the immunity people have developed naturally or with the help of vaccination fades, the virus strikes again and the only thing that can stop the virus from bouncing back is how people are guarding themselves.

Early this year, as the new cases receded, people started interacting as if there was no virus. The immunity had already started declining. They organised mass gatherings, they stopped wearing masks, giving the opportunity to the virus to strike again, said Dr Anurag Agarwal, director, Institute of Genomics and Integral Biology,

New Delhi.

While we anticipate a third wave, we cannot say when exactly it will come or how severe it will be. But if people keep following COVID-appropriate behaviour in coming months and we are able to vaccinate a large number of people, the third wave could be less severe, Dr Agarwal added.

While the sudden surge in the number of cases during the second wave has led to panic among people, what is adding to their fear is the constant threat of new mutants of the virus and how these mutants could potentially harm them.

Some experts, however, believe that mutations are a common phenomenon, and the mutations do not generally affect the prevention, treatment, or vaccination.

national

of the day quote

Family doctors play an important role. If they guide the patients at the initial stage of the infection, it will be helpful to curb the virus spread. They can identify symptoms and check whether a patient is asymptomatic or needs hospitalization

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

On #MothersDay, I remember my late mother Rajmata Mohinder Kaur Ji as the most caring, affectionate and loving human being. I know you are with us always

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

Several patients get admitted to the hospital at the last minute. Doctors are not magicians to turn around the health after lungs are damaged completely

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER



The country needs breath, not the Prime Minister's residence
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

MARRIAGE EVENTS BANNED IN BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government has imposed a complete ban on holding marriage functions in Bhopal till May 17. This is one of the several measures taken by the state government to control the spread of coronavirus infections in the state. The district administration has urged the general public not to hold such events in May this year

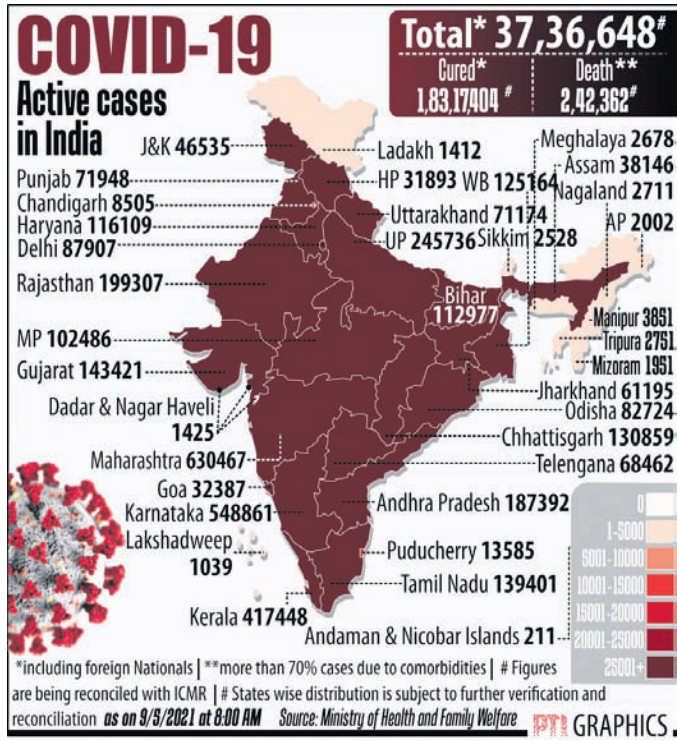


10 states account for over 71% of new Covid cases

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 71.75 per cent of the 4,03,738 new COVID-19 cases registered in a day, the Union Health Ministry said Sunday. The other states in the list of 10 are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Haryana. Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 56,578. It is followed by Karnataka with 47,563 while Kerala reported 41,971 new cases

A total of more than 30.22 crore tests have been conducted so far across the country while the daily COVID-19 positivity rate stands at 21.64 per cent, the ministry said. India's total active caseload has reached 37,36,648 and now comprises 16.76 per cent of the country's total infections. A net increase of 13,202 cases has been recorded in the total active caseload in a span of 24 hours. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu,



Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh cumulatively account for 82.94 per cent of India's total active

PM speaks to CMs of four states

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday spoke to the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Karnataka, Bihar and Uttarakhand on the COVID-19 situation in their states, official sources said. Modi has been speaking to state chief ministers and lieutenant governors of union territories for the last few days to assess the pandemic situation there and offer suggestions. Chief ministers have also briefed him on the measures being taken by them to deal with the raging second wave of the pandemic.

of the cumulative doses given so far in the country, the ministry said. Cumulatively 17,84,869 beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years have received their first dose of COVID vaccine. More than 20 lakh vaccination doses were administered in the last 24 hours. As on Day-113 of the vaccination drive (May 8), 20,23,532 vaccine doses were given.

Stalin bats for strict lockdown in TN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 9: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, in his first cabinet meeting Sunday, called upon ministers and officials to implement a strict lockdown in the state to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Stalin advised his cabinet colleagues to camp in the districts allotted to them and to ensure execution of strict lockdown. The cabinet resolved that unless strict lockdown is not implemented in the state from May 10 to May 24, the spread of the virus cannot be contained. The Chief Minister also called upon the ministers to ensure that all patients arriving at district hospitals are treated without any delay. It was also decided to provide adequate food to health-care workers and patients.

The cabinet also resolved to settle the shortage of oxygen which was plaguing the state government, ensure proper supply and to strictly monitor distribution so that there is no wastage of the gas.

PROTEST AMID PANDEMIC

Steadfast farmers seek vaccination



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Desi kaadha and lemonade have become the most consumed beverages among farmers protesting against the new Central agricultural laws at three Delhi borders for nearly six months now, even as the raging coronavirus pandemic claims hundreds of lives daily and leaves thousands sick.

They have also added multi-vitamin and zinc tablets as supplements hoping to improve their immunity against the virus, but are resolved not to yield ground until their demands - a repeal of the three contentious farm laws and a new one guaranteeing MSP on crops - are met. But, they say, they are open to COVID-19 vaccine jabs.

Farmer leader Kulwant Singh, who hails from Punjab, said a vaccination centre is being operated at a hospital at the Singhu border.

"One of our leaders tested positive for the Covid-19. He has recovered and is now doing well. Those who are showing symptoms are getting tested for the virus. The farmers at the border are taking a healthy diet. The vaccination process is underway at a hospital near the border. I got my first jab in Punjab. To get the next dose, I will go back to the state," Kulwant said.

At Tikri and Ghazipur, the protesters said they have demanded for a vaccination facility but the government has not responded to their appeal yet. They added they are firmly resolved to stay put at Delhi's borders, and are making arrange-

ments to ensure COVID-appropriate behaviour among crowds. At Ghazipur on Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, not more than three farmers stay in bigger camps now which used to house many more before the second wave of coronavirus began.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), which is leading the charge there, recently arranged around 500 cots to ensure social distancing among the farmers when they sleep.

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, who has got the first dose of vaccine, is also on the ground at Ghazipur leading his supporters, with all of them consuming 'kaadha' three to four times a day and lemonade too, BKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik said. Malik said the BKU is also helping the oxygen langars, which provide oxygen cylinders to needy COVID patients, with whatever support the farmers union can extend.

"We are dealing with the situation and hoping the government would soon make some arrangement to get all farmers vaccinated," he said. Hundreds of farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November 2020 with their demands that the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 be rolled back and a new law made to guarantee minimum support price for crops.

'ALLOW VIRTUAL MEETS OF PARLIAMENTARY PANELS'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The opposition Congress and TMC have written to presiding officers of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha to allow virtual meetings of parliamentary standing committees, saying Parliament cannot be a mute spectator to the COVID crisis and must give a message of solidarity with people.

In a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge said parliamentary panels can contribute to the ongoing endeavours in containing the pandemic and providing relief to people.

"At this hour of collective crisis, the Parliament of India cannot be and must not be a mute spectator. It must give a message of solidarity with the people, of serious business to alleviate their agony and of unity of purpose," he said.



The senior Congress leader said the Department Related Standing Committees are an effective, non-partisan mechanism of Parliament and the tradition of collective brainstorming in the committees is a cherished achievement of the parliamentary system.

"The meetings of the Standing Committees at this juncture will provide the nation much required collective initiative across the party lines. They are an effective instrument to ensure accountability, to provide an institutional plat-

form to all stakeholders and to collectively explore solutions."

"It is in this spirit that I urge you to allow the virtual meetings of the Standing Committees," he said in his letter.

Trinamool Congress' national spokesperson Derek O'Brien wrote to Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on the same issue.

This is the TMC's third letter on the issue, the party said, adding that the first was sent in July 2020 and the next in August 2020.

The opposition parties had raised a similar demand in July last year after the COVID pandemic outbreak. Both Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman had then communicated that virtual meetings of parliamentary committees could not be allowed because of the confidentiality clause and it could only be altered by Parliament.

Dying declaration can be basis for conviction if court is satisfied: SC



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: The Supreme Court reiterated that a court must be satisfied that the dying declaration is true and voluntary, and only then it could be the sole basis for conviction without corroboration.

In a case, the Karnataka High Court reversed the acquittal recorded by the trial court and convicted the accused in a murder case. To convict them, the high court relied on the dying declaration made by the deceased.

In an appeal, the court noted the following factors (i) interpolation in the dying declaration (ii) contradiction in the statements of prosecution witnesses regarding injuries on the palm, (iii) the victim with 80% injuries was apparently not in a situation to talk or give statement, (iv) PW-2, son of the deceased himself has stated that his mother committed suicide as she could not bear that her another son had been sent to jail, (v) there being no corroborative evidence to the statement, and (vi) there is no other evidence led by the prosecution to connect the appellants with the crime except the statement.

In the Sampat Babso Kale and Another vs State of Maharashtra 2019 (4) SCC 739 case, the bench said, it was noted that "the endorsement made by the doctor that the victim was in a fit state of mind to make the statement has been made not before the statement but after the statement was recorded. Normally it should be the other way around." The court also noted that, in this case, the prosecution had sufficient time to call a judicial/executive magistrate to record the dying declaration.

SHORT TAKES

Lockdown extended in Uttar Pradesh

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to extend the lockdown till May 17 in the state to break the chain of coronavirus infections, the government said here Sunday. State Additional Chief Secretary, Information, Navneet Sehgal said it would be like a partial corona curfew. During this time all necessary services will continue as before.

Covid patient kills self in hospital

Pune: A 44-year-old COVID-19 patient was Sunday morning found hanging in a hospital in Talegaon Dabhade in Pune, police said. The man was admitted in the ICU section of the hospital May 1 and was found dead in a storeroom attached to it, an official said. "The staff at the hospital had handed him a toilet pan, pulled curtains around his bed and waited outside. He got up, went to the storeroom and locked it from inside. He was found hanging from a pipe with a telephone wire in the storeroom after the staff mounted a search for him when he was not seen for a while," Senior Inspector Bhaskar Jadhav of Talegaon Dabhade police station said.

Four children charred to death

Jaipur: Four children died after a cabin of a truck, in which they were playing, caught fire in Rajasthan's Alwar district, police said Sunday. The incident happened in Chauma village Saturday and it seems that a short circuit caused the fire, Ramgarh Station House Officer (SHO) Ramniwas Meena said. Three of the children died during treatment Saturday night, while one passed away Sunday, he said in a statement.

Minor raped

Nagpur: A 12-year-old girl was allegedly blindfolded and raped by her 55-year-old neighbour in Kalamna area here in Maharashtra, police said Sunday. Angry residents thrashed the accused following the incident and handed him over to the police Saturday afternoon, an official said. As per the FIR, the accused Dolchand Chavan, a resident of the Kalamna slum, lured the girl and her friend to his house under the pretext of playing a blindfold game with them, the official said. He allegedly blindfolded both the girls and raped the 12-year-old, the official said quoting the FIR.



Reward awaits Sunil Arora now

The Capital is agog with reports that former Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora be rewarded for doing a commendable job by conducting polls in five states during the worst Covid second wave. The grapevine has it that Arora may be sent to Goa as Governor whenever a

shake-up of Governors takes place now that the task assigned has been accomplished. Even the Supreme Court did not give EC instant reprieve after it was scolded by the Madras High Court. Sunil Arora will be the second such person after former CJI Ranjan Gogoi to get a lucrative post if he eventually gets it. Gogoi was given a Rajya Sabha nomination by the Modi government last year in his second term. Even in his first stint, PM Modi had rewarded former CJI P Sadasivam with a gubernatorial post in Kerala.

Mystery behind falling cases

It is now clearly emerging that the moment more testing is done, India witnesses higher number of cases. India conducted 19.2 lakh

tests and the Covid cases touched a record high of 4,12,624 May 5. The same thing had happened April 30 when 19.5 lakh tests were conducted across the states. The Covid cases touched a record high ever in the history of the past 14 months as they touched 4,020,14. But May 2 when cases fell to 3,70,082, the government experts started beating the drum saying that cases have started falling and the second wave will subside by May 15. But no one was there to point out the fall was because India conducted lowest ever tests in recent week to 15 lakhs. A fall of 4.5 lakhs led to the fall in 32000 cases within two days. But everybody was having a sigh of relief as if the Corona wave was going. Next day, 16.6 lakh tests were conducted and cases fell down by another 15,000 to 3.55

lakhs. But the shocker came Thursday morning when cases touched a record high of 4.12 lakhs. For the past few days, many states have been testing less and that's why cases were falling. Even the Modi government is delaying a decision on national lockdown due to the declining curve. Be it Maharashtra, UP, Delhi or in India, it's the same story. In some states like UP, the patients are handed over false negative reports and orally told that they are Covid positive.

Where are 162 old O2 plants?

The Prime Minister may have sanctioned the setting up of additional 551 dedicated Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Medical Oxygen Generation Plants in

districts under the PM CARES fund. But the moot question is what happened to the earlier 162 such plants sanctioned last year at a cost of ₹201.58 crores only. It now transpires that of the 162 PSA plants sanctioned last year, only 33 could be set up. These fully-funded plants were to be set up by March 2020 itself by the Central Medical Services Society (CMSS) under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This was long before the Covid-19 broke out. The tenders were also floated in October and orders were placed in December, 2020. It takes one month to install the plant as the CMSS gave the contract to four companies to undertake the task in record time of three months. These plants would have helped the states to meet their day to day needs in addition to the liquid medical oxygen (LMO) by the

private suppliers. But neither states nor the CMSS showed any urgency to make them operational by March 2020. Why this could not happen despite the Centre providing the funds? The CMSS Director General Suresh Puri and Nipun Vinayak, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health, did not respond to media queries in this regard. Strangely, the CMSS website has many links not working. An email to the health ministry also went unanswered except saying that two contractors were black-listed. But this black-listing did not solve the problem as plants could not be set up in time. It is said that these contractors, civil hospital administrators and vested interests in states developed a cozy nexus. They wanted to keep buying oxygen from private players rather than becoming "Atmanirbhar."

international



As we try to revive JCPOA in Vienna, it's necessary to remember how it all started. Three years ago today, a disgraced buffoon violated US obligations. Onus is on the US, not Iran
MOHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF | FOREIGN MINISTER, IRAN

CHINESE ROCKET DEBRIS LANDS IN INDIAN OCEAN

Remnants of China's biggest rocket landed in the Indian Ocean Sunday, with most of its components destroyed upon re-entry into the atmosphere but drawing US criticism over lack of transparency



of the day quote

I know that some of our actions in recent years have undermined the rules-based order and led others to question whether we are still committed to Multilateralism
ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US



I say this to the best of our friends: Jerusalem is Israel's capital and just as every nation builds in its capital and builds up its capital, we also have the right to build in Jerusalem and to build up Jerusalem
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PRIME MINISTER, ISRAEL



I am deeply humbled by the trust Londoners have placed in me to continue leading the greatest city on earth. I promise to strain every sinew, help build a better and brighter future for London, after the dark days of the pandemic
SADIQ KHAN | MAYOR, LONDON



SHORT TAKES

Musk reveals he has Asperger's

New York: Elon Musk kicked off his "Saturday Night Live" debut by declaring himself to be the first person with Asperger's syndrome to host the US comedy sketch show. In his opening monologue, the eccentric tech entrepreneur behind Tesla and SpaceX explained some of his past eyebrow-raising behavior. "Look, I know I say or post strange things but that's just how my brain works. To anyone I've offended I just want to say, I reinvented electric cars and I'm sending people to Mars in a rocket ship. Did you think I was also going to be a chill, normal dude?" he said.

Australia's borders closed indefinitely

Canberra: PM Scott Morrison Sunday said that the country's borders will remain closed indefinitely amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Morrison said in a media interview that there is no "appetite" among Australians to re-open the country's borders to international travelers. "I think what we're seeing at the moment is the appreciation of the people that the pandemic isn't going anywhere. "All I know is once you let it back in again, you cannot get it out. You've crossed that threshold," the Prime Minister added.

Conflict continues

Jerusalem: Some 90 Palestinians were injured in the second night of the ongoing violent clashes with Israeli security forces in East Jerusalem, it was reported Sunday. Sixteen of them were taken to hospital, Israeli radio reported, citing Palestinian medics. An Israeli police spokesman said Sunday morning that confrontations took place Saturday night at the Damascus Gate, one of the entrances to the Old City.

Fire erupts in refinery facility

Damascus: A fire erupted in a major oil refinery in war-torn Syria due to a leak, the country's state news agency SANA reported Sunday. The blaze took place at a distillation unit because of a pump leak in the Homs oil refinery in central Syria. SANA, citing a local firefighting official, reported that the blaze was later brought under control without causing casualties. "The cooling process is now under way. There are no casualties," chief of the Homs firefighting brigade, Hassan Amar, said.

BRITISH ROYAL OFFERS TO SELL ACCESS TO KREMLIN

PRINCE MICHAEL TOLD UNDERCOVER REPORTERS POSING AS INVESTORS FROM SOUTH KOREA IN A VIRTUAL MEETING THAT FOR 10,000 POUNDS A DAY HE COULD MAKE 'CONFIDENTIAL' REPRESENTATIONS TO PUTIN'S ENTOURAGE

AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

London, May 9: Queen Elizabeth's cousin, Prince Michael of Kent, has been caught offering investors access to the Kremlin in exchange for personal gain, according to Sunday Times and Channel 4 investigation.

The embarrassing claims come at a time of disastrous relations between London and Moscow, notably after the 2018 poisoning of a former Russian spy in England.

Prince Michael told undercover reporters posing as investors from South Korea in a virtual meeting that for 10,000 pounds (11,500 euros) a day he could make "confidential" representations to Russian President Vladimir Putin's entourage.

Channel 4's Dispatches programme and the weekly newspaper set up a fake South Korean gold company - House of Haedong.

The prince said he could also give the company a royal endorsement in a recorded speech for \$200,000 dollars (164,000 euros),



with his Kensington Palace home as a backdrop. In a recorded meet-



ing with the undercover reporters, his business partner Lord Reading called the prince "Her Majesty's unofficial ambassador to Russia."

"I think ... this is kind of slightly discreet, we're talking relatively discreetly here," he reportedly said. "Because we wouldn't want the world to know that he is seeing Putin purely for business reasons, if you follow me."

Prince Michael's office told the British Press Association he had no special relations with Putin and

receives no public funding and earns his own living through a consultancy company that he has run for over 40 years.

"Lord Reading is a good friend, who in trying to help, made suggestions which Prince Michael would not have wanted, or been able, to fulfil," said Prince Michael's office.

The 78-year-old prince was decorated with Russia's Order of Friendship in 2009 when Putin was Prime Minister.

Covid-19 virus airborne: US CDC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, May 9: Exposure to respiratory fluids - very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles - present in air and which carry viruses are the main reason for contracting Covid-19 infection, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

People release respiratory fluids during exhalation - quiet breathing, speaking, singing, exercise, coughing, sneezing in the form of droplets. While large droplets settle out of the air within seconds to minutes, very fine droplets can remain suspended in the air for minutes to hours. These droplets carry viruses and transmit infection, said the agency's latest science brief as part of its public guidelines on Covid-19.

Exposure to these droplets occurs in three principal ways: inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles, deposition of respiratory droplets on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by direct splashes and sprays, and touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled either directly by virus-containing respiratory fluids or indi-



rectly by touching surfaces with virus on them.

Further, "the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection varies according to the amount of virus to which a person is exposed," the CDC said.

Infections through inhalation at distances greater than six feet from an infectious source are less likely than at closer distances. But, when an infectious person exhales virus indoors for an extended time (more than 15 minutes and in some cases hours), it can lead to virus concentrations in the air space.

It can be sufficient to transmit infections to people more than 6 feet away, and in some cases to people who have passed through that space soon after the infectious person left. The risk in this case is more in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation, the agency said.

While there remain many knowl-

Air transmission occurs in 3 ways

Inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles

Deposition of droplets on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose or eye

Touching mucous membranes that have been soiled directly or indirectly by virus-containing fluids

edge gaps about Covid, the available evidence continues to demonstrate that existing recommendations to prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission remain effective. This includes physical distancing, community use of well-fitting masks, adequate ventilation and avoidance of crowded indoor spaces.

The World Health Organisation, in a recent brief, said, "Current evidence suggests that the virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with each other, typically within 1 metre (short-range). A person can be infected when aerosols or droplets containing the virus are inhaled or come directly into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth."

EU leaders postpone nod on patent waiver

Europe should not lose sight of the main urgencies; production of vaccines as soon as possible and how they will be distributed in a fair and equitable way, said Ursula von der Leyen

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lisbon, May 9: President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said Saturday at the end of the social summit of the European Union (EU) held in the Portuguese city of Porto that leaders of the EU countries understand that there are "more pressing issues" than patent waiver on vaccines against Covid-19.

Speaking to journalists, von der Leyen said this topic "is important," but will be discussed "in the long term, not in the short or medium term," Xinhua reported.

According to her, Europe should not "lose sight of the main urgencies," which are "production of



vaccines as soon as possible and how they will be distributed in a fair and equitable way."

The EU executive stressed that "the European Union is the pharmacy of the world."

"Up to today, 400 million doses of vaccines have been produced in the European Union. And 50 per cent of them - 200 million doses - have been exported to 90 different countries in the world. So we invite others to do the same," she said, adding, "this is the best way, in the short term, to address bottlenecks and lack of vaccines worldwide."

She also announced that the EU has concluded the negotiations with BioNTech-Pfizer for a new contract, which secures 1.8 billion doses of vaccines through 2023.

Scottish govt wins; vows for independence

THOUGH THE SNP WON THE VAST MAJORITY OF CONSTITUENCIES, IT FAILED TO GET THE 65 SEATS IT WOULD NEED TO HAVE A MAJORITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 9: The Scottish National Party won its fourth straight parliamentary election Saturday and insisted it will push on with another referendum on Scotland's independence from the UK even though it failed by one seat to secure a majority.

Final results of Thursday's election showed the SNP winning 64 of the 129 seats in the Edinburgh-based Scottish Parliament. The result extends the party's dominance of Scottish politics since it first won power in 2007.

Other results from Super Thursday's array of elections across Britain emerged Saturday, including the Labour Party's victory in the Welsh parliamentary election. Labour's Sadiq Khan was also widely expected to be re-elected mayor of London.

The election with the biggest implications was the Scottish elec-



This is now a matter of fundamental democratic principle. It is the will of the country
NICOLA STURGEON | FIRST MINISTER, SCOTLAND

tion, as it could pave the way to the break-up of the United Kingdom. The devolved government has an array of powers but many economic and security matters remain within the orbit of the British government in London.

Though the SNP won the vast majority of constituencies, it failed to get the 65 seats it would need to have a majority as Scotland allocates some by a

form of proportional representation. Though falling short, the SNP will be easily able to govern for the five-year parliamentary term with the eight members of the Scottish Greens, who also back Scottish independence.

SNP leader and Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said her immediate priority would be steering Scotland through the coronavirus pandemic and that the legitimacy of an independence referendum remains, SNP majority

Boris calls for UK talks

British PM Boris Johnson Sunday invited the leaders of the UK's devolved nations for crisis talks on the union after Scotland's pro-independence party won its fourth straight parliamentary election. Johnson has consistently dismissed the notion of another referendum and is instead attempting to drive focus towards his "build back better" agenda for the entire UK in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. "I believe passionately that the interests of people across the UK and in particular the people of Scotland are best served when we work together. We have shown that through the vaccine roll-out," Johnson wrote in a letter addressed to Sturgeon Saturday, in a pre-emptive move as the results were becoming clear. "I recommit the UK government to working with the Scottish government in this cooperative spirit," he said, inviting the leader to a summit in the coming weeks to discuss "shared challenges".

or not. "This is now a matter of fundamental democratic principle," Sturgeon said. "It is the will of the country."

German churches to bless same-sex couples

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Berlin, May 9: Churches across Germany are planning services to bless same-sex couples this week, in defiance of a Vatican decree clarifying that such blessings are banned in the Catholic Church.

The Church of St Benedict in Munich is holding one of just four planned blessing Masses in the majority-Catholic state of Bavaria Sunday, reports dpa news agency. "It was not so easy to find a church," said Renate Spannig, spokesperson for the reform initiative Maria 2.0, which is co-organising the service.

Maria 2.0 is a grass-roots reform initiative, which among other things campaigns for greater roles for women in the Catholic Church.



The other three are set to take place in Wuerzburg.

Burkhard Hose, chaplain for the Catholic community of Wuerzburg Universities, began collecting signatures from people in the church shortly after the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the

Faith issued a declaration in March that the Catholic Church does not have the authority to bless homosexual couples.

By signing, the roughly 2,600 signatories declared their willingness to continue blessing same-sex couples.

Under the motto 'liebege winnt' (love wins), a number of events are now planned around the main day of action Monday, one week before the International Day against Homophobia

Under the motto 'liebege winnt' (love wins), a number of events are now planned around the main day of action Monday, one week before the International Day against Homophobia.

Blessings are expected to take place in many cities and towns, including Munich, Wuerzburg,

Frankfurt, Cologne, Aachen and Berlin.

There is a clear focus on the north and west of the country.

Catholic priests in Germany have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Vatican ban and have said they want to bless all loving couples, whether gay or straight.

Lay members of the church have also expressed their opposition to the Vatican's stance.

President of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, Georg Baetzing, criticized the action, saying it was not "a way forward".

"Blessing services have their own theological dignity and pastoral significance. They are not suitable as instruments for ecclesiastical political manifestations or protest actions," he said.

AU presents new initiative on Nile dam controversy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Khartoum, May 9: President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Felix Tshisekedi shisekedi announced the new initiative Saturday during his talks with Chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan in Khartoum, reports Xinhua news agency.

"The initiative is under study by the authorities concerned," Sudanese Foreign Minister Mariam Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi said after the talks.

"Sudan stands with Ethiopia's rights to develop its capabilities, benefit from the waters of the Blue Nile and develop its resources, without prejudice to the rights of others, especially the rights of Sudan and Egypt," Al-Mahdi noted.

business



As an ongoing process, we always try to mitigate commodity price increases through internal cost measures, be it on material cost through value engineering or by managing our fixed cost
VEEJAY NAKRA | CEO (AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION), M&M

NO CHANGE IN FUEL PRICES

Petrol and diesel prices in the country remained unchanged Sunday as OMCS decided to pause the daily revision process and closely study global oil price movement before effecting any change in the domestic market



of the day quote

Many kiranas have gone digital in recent months and have been accepting online payments, ordering supplies online, managing inventory, etc. However, there are still millions of kiranas that continue to work without any digitisation which puts them at huge disadvantage, hindering their growth tremendously

PIROJSHA GODREJ | FOUNDER & CEO, SNAPBIZZ

Our best estimate currently would be that we will see muted first quarter given what is happening. However, the muted sales in the first quarter could be compensated in the remaining nine months of this fiscal as it happened during 2020-21

PIROJSHA GODREJ | MD & CEO, GODREJ PROPERTIES

We thank the Indian Air Force for joining us with their expertise and necessary support for this initiative, and I am grateful to Artemis hospital, Paras hospital and W-Pratiksha hospitals for the required support

PAYAL KANODIA | PRESIDENT, M3M FOUNDATION

GST exemption may lead to price hike of vaccines: FM

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Sunday said GST exemption to domestic supplies and commercial import of Covid drugs, vaccines and oxygen concentrators would make these items costlier for consumers as manufacturers would not be able to offset the taxes paid on inputs.

If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer by increasing the price. A 5% GST rate ensures that the manufacturer is able to utilise ITC and in case of overflow of ITC, claim refund

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5% Goods and Services Tax (GST), while it is 12% in case of Covid drugs and oxygen concentrators.

"If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer/citizen by increasing the price. A 5% GST rate ensures that the manufacturer is able to utilise ITC and in case of overflow of ITC, claim refund. Hence exemption to vaccine from GST would



be counterproductive without benefiting the consumer," Sitharaman tweeted. She further said that if Integrated GST (IGST) ₹100 is collected on an item, ₹50 accrues to the Centre and the States each as Central GST and State GST respectively. Further 41% of the CGST revenue is devolved to States. So, out of a collection of ₹100, as much as ₹70.50 is the share of the states.

From the GST collected on vaccine, half is earned by the Centre and the other half by the States. Further, 41% of Centre's collections also get devolved to the States. So states end up receiving almost 70% of the total revenue collected from vaccines.

"In fact, a nominal 5% GST is in the interest of the domestic manufacturer of vaccine and in the interest of the citizens," Sitharaman said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier in the day wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking exemp-

tion from GST and customs duty on any donations of oxygen concentrators, cylinders, cryogenic storage tanks and Covid related drugs from organisations or agencies.

The Finance Minister tweeted her response to the CM's letter, saying these items are already exempted from customs duty and health cess. Besides, Integrated GST (IGST) is also exempted on all Covid relief material imported by the Indian Red Cross for free distribution in the country.

Also IGST exemption has been given in case of goods when imported free of cost for free distribution in the country by any entity, state government, relief agency or autonomous body on the basis of a certificate issued by a state government.

"In order to augment the availability of these items, government has also provided full exemption from basic customs duty and health cess to their commercial imports," Sitharaman said.

GigIndia to provide ₹3L insurance cover to its active workers

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: GigIndia, a B2B gig marketplace for on-demand work completion, will provide free Covid health insurance to its active gig workers covering up to ₹3 lakh of medical expenses.

Considering the adverse financial impact of Covid-19 on its gigger families, the Pune-headquartered firm in a release said that it is offering this insurance to active gig workers to make them feel relatively secure during these challenging times.



Moreover, the company is initiating efforts to ensure certified giggers on its platform continue receiving gigs (projects), thereby enabling a steady monthly income, it added.

"The Covid Health Insurance will ensure that medical costs are covered if any gig worker tests positive for Covid-19. We are also providing financial assistance to gig workers, which will help them with essential expenditure such as hospital charges, oxygen cylinders and ventilators, among others," said Sahil Sharma, Co-founder & CEO, GigIndia.

OPEN BANKING

'Robust regulatory framework needed to deal with challenges'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: India needs a robust regulatory framework to deal with multiple challenges emanating from increasing number of players sitting in different geographical locations getting involved in open banking operations, feel experts.

Open banking refers to sharing and leveraging of customer-permitted data by banks with third-party developers and firms to build applications and services, including those that provide real-time payments, greater financial transparency options for account holders, marketing and cross-selling opportunities.

Sivarama Krishnan, Partner & Leader, Cybersecurity, PwC India, pitched for a three-level governance model to deal with the security issues concerning open banking, stressing that with open API and disruptive innovations regulated entities will integrate even deeper with the external world.

"We need governance at three levels - broad country level privacy framework, individual regulatory framework for specific industry-related use cases around privacy requirements and organisational to evolve data protection techniques which help protect the data which can be shared for processing purposes with third parties," he said.

Regulated entities then can man-



date the data protection techniques to be followed by critical ecosystem partners who process sensitive data security for them, he added.

At a webinar on 'open banking' organised by Tata Consultancy Services in association with the Embassy of India in Brazil recently, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao had said that technological innovation in banking is of paramount importance but cannot be pursued at the cost of customer privacy and data protection which are non-negotiable.

Prakash Shetty, Head of Operations, Compliance and CS, Clix Capital, said open banking is still in its nascent stage of development at least in India and in some other similar developing jurisdictions.

"A comprehensive regulatory framework, covering eligibility criteria for participants, SOPs to maintain basic operational ethics can solve a big range of issues, which RBI deputy governor has raised," Shetty said.

SHORT TAKES

Anti-dumping duty extended

New Delhi: The government has extended anti-dumping duty on certain types of seamless tubes, and pipes till October 31 this year with a view to guarding domestic manufacturers from cheap Chinese imports. The duty on 'seamless tubes, pipes and hollow profiles of iron, alloy or non-alloy steel, whether hot finished or cold drawn or cold rolled of an external diameter not exceeding 355.6 mm' was first imposed in May 2016 for five years.

Maruti to boost O₂ production

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Sunday said it has joined hands with two NCR-based companies to boost their production of PSA oxygen generator plants. The auto major said it realised the critical importance of rapidly installing PSA oxygen plants, both to produce life-saving oxygen as well as reduce the immense logistical problems.

Myanmar junta nods 15 projects

Kolkata: China has started reaping rewards for backing the February 1 military takeover in Myanmar. The military regime-controlled Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) this week approved 15 projects, including a Chinese \$2.5-billion LNG power project, easily the biggest single investment since the new military takeover. The MIC did not specify details of the mega project but sources claim that the LNG project is likely to be the Chinese-backed power project in the Irrawaddy Delta.

'O₂ concentrators get airlifted'

Mumbai: Ajay Singh-owned airline SpiceJet's freighter arm SpiceXpress Sunday airlifted 9,600 oxygen concentrators to Kolkata and Delhi from Beijing, Wuhan, Nanjing and Hong Kong. The airline deployed both its wide-body and narrow-body cargo aircraft to transport these concentrators to India, SpiceJet said in a statement. SpiceJet has airlifted over 27,000 oxygen concentrators from the US, Hong Kong so far.

M&As rise 8% to \$32.3bn despite Covid wave: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 9: A massive 133% jump in the proceeds from initial public offerings (IPOs) has seen the deal street on a near roll in spite of the raging second wave of the pandemic, with the value of mergers and acquisitions increasing by 8% to \$32.3 billion across 437 deals till end-April this year, says a report.

As many as 28 initial public offerings (IPOs) raised \$2.7 billion in proceeds till end April, which is a massive 133% more than the same time last year, according to the latest data collated by Refinitiv, which is a global leader in financial markets data, and is an arm of the London Stock Exchange.

The deal street got the second

boost from the private equity-backed deals which soared 110% y-o-y with as many as 93 deals worth \$5.9 billion, shows the Refinitiv data.

Cross-border deals saw a marginal 4% growth, accounting to \$14.3 billion across 124 transactions, while strategic deals declined a marginal 3% to \$26.4 billion across 338 deals.

On the other hand, equity capital markets jumped 23% with as many as 62 issues and worth \$8 billion in proceeds, but debt capital market saw a 27% decline, according to the Refinitiv data.

The numbers show that the deal activity has not been impacted much by the second wave of the pandemic as the deals rose 17.4% between January 1 and March 31 to \$25.3 billion across 97 deals.

ArcelorMittal starts feasibility study of steel project in Odisha

PNN/PTI

Bhubaneswar, May 9: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India along with the Odisha government has initiated a feasibility study for its proposed 12 million tonne per annum (MTPA) integrated steel plant in Kendrapara district.

The Gujarat-based ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) had signed a MoU with the Odisha government for setting the Greenfield project in Kendrapara in March this year. The total estimated investment for the project is ₹ 50,000 crore.

Arcelor Mittal said, "AMNS India is developing its longer term opportunities for growth and has signed a MoU with the government of Odisha to explore options for a



greenfield integrated steel plant in the Kendrapara district."

"The company has initiated, in coordination with the Government of Odisha: a feasibility study, securing relevant permissions, land acquisition, developing logistics infrastructure and other enabling conditions to plan for the project construction."

It further said the AMNS India

the company continues to develop its plans for future growth in both steel production as well as iron ore mining.

The Thakurani iron ore mines, is now operating at full 5.5 MTPA capacity.

Its second pellet plant in Odisha is also expected to be completed in April-June period of 2021, the presentation said.

Hero MotoCorp extends shutdown of plants till May 16

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: Two-wheeler market leader Hero MotoCorp Sunday said it is extending the shutdown of its plants across India by another week till May 16 in view of the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the country.

The shutdown also includes the Global Parts Center in Neemrana and R&D facility, the Centre of

Innovation and Technology in Jaipur, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement.

Last month, the company had announced temporary stopping of operations at all its six manufacturing units located at Dharuhera and Gurugram, Haryana; Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh; Haridwar in Uttarakhand; Neemrana in Rajasthan, and Halol in Gujarat with a total yearly production ca-

capacity of 90 lakh units.

"The company is continuously monitoring the situation and is ready with its business continuity plans to be able to quickly resume and scale up operations as and when the situation improves," the statement added.

The extension of suspension of operations at the plants is also in line with its commitment to the safety and welfare of its people.

Global & domestic corporate giants step up to combat nCoV

TECH MAHINDRA SUPPLIED MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING VENTILATORS, TO OVER 20 HOSPITALS AND L&T GROUP COMMITTED TO SUPPLYING 22 OXYGEN GENERATORS TO NEEDY HOSPITALS ACROSS INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: As India suffers the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 cases, global and domestic corporate giants are pitching in resources from airlifting of medical equipment, making medical oxygen and setting up hospitals to supplement a public health system buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths.

Amazon and Google as well as Indian firms Tata Sons, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and Adani Group have set up Covid hospitals, airlifted cryogenic tankers from abroad for transporting medical oxygen and contributed funds to aid the Covid battle, according

to company announcements and industry sources.

India has reported more than 3,00,000 new daily Covid-19 cases for two weeks, and reached more than 4 lakh new daily cases over the weekend. More than 2.42 lakh people in India have died from the virus infection.

While Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month announced \$18 million donation, Amazon said 1,000 Medtronic ventilators will be delivered to India. Microsoft said it would work to provide India with 1,000 ventilators and 25,000 oxygen concentration devices.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries tweaked manufacturing at its oil refineries to pro-



duce over 1,000 tonnes of medical grade liquid oxygen per day - or over 11 per cent of India's total production - meeting the needs of nearly every one in 10 patients. It

has also set up 1,875 hospital beds for free treatment of Covid patients in Jamnagar in Gujarat and Mumbai.

India's largest steel maker JSW

has stopped making some steel products to produce hundreds of tonnes of oxygen for hard-hit areas. It said it was building large COVID care centres around its plants, so that they can be serviced via a pipeline.

While Wipro and Azim Premji Foundation converted one IT facility in Pune into a 430-bed intermediary care Covid hospital, Infosys has set up a 100 room Covid hospital in Bangalore in association with Narayana Health, providing free care to the poor.

Cipla supported Maharashtra government in setting up Covid isolation ward, Vedanta is setting up a field hospital in Delhi NCR and Adani Foundation set up hospi-

tals in Gujarat and even converted the Adani Vidya Mandir school in Ahmedabad into an emergency COVID Care Centre with oxygen support and catered food.

Tata Group made about 5,000 beds available to Covid patients through its group companies and ITC set up a 200-bed makeshift hospital in Kishore Bharati Stadium, given by West Bengal government, for Covid patients in a record 72 hours.

State-owned SBI set up 1,000-bed makeshift hospitals, 250-bed ICU facilities and 1,000-bed isolation facilities across India, while Coal India set up the largest number of Covid beds totalling 2,000, including 750 oxygen and 70 ICU beds.

FOREIGN PLAYERS OF INDIAN CLUB GUILTY OF VIOLATING COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AHEAD OF AFC GAME

RED DEVILS CONTINUE WINNING RUN

BFC asked to leave Male

Man U prolong City's title wait

AGENCIES

Male/New Delhi, May 9: It was a chaotic Sunday for Indian football as Bengaluru FC (BFC) were asked to leave Male for violating Covid-19 safety protocols ahead of their AFC Cup play-off against Eagles FC. At the same time, all Group D fixtures in the same event stood postponed hours after ATK Mohun Bagan reported two positive cases (see box). The two other teams in the group are Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh and Maziya Sports & Recreation of Maldives.

It all started with BFC's play-off match against Eagles FC, scheduled to be played here May 11. However, the match became a non-starter after the host country's Sports Minister Ahmed Mahloof asked the ISL side to leave citing breach of COVID-19 protocols.

The exact nature of violation by BFC was not specified but Mahloof termed it 'as unacceptable'.

"Unacceptable behaviour from @bengalurufc breaching the strict guidelines from HPA (Health Protection Agency) & @theafc.com. The club should leave Maldives immediately as we can't entertain this act," Mahloof tweeted from his official handle. "We have informed FAM that we cannot hold the match, and asked them to make



Bengaluru FC players during a training session at a ground in Male

PHOTO COURTESY: BFC TWITTER

arrangements for @bengalurufc's departure," he added.

The minister's tweets came after reports emerged that some players of the side were seen roaming Male's streets in violation of the quarantine protocol.

"Participating clubs who have travelled to Maldives will be re-

quired to arrange for their return home while adhering to the Covid-19 health and travel protocols put in place by the country," the AFC said in a statement. "At the same time, the AFC is in contact with all other participating clubs and officials who have not entered the Maldives to cancel their travel arrangements.

The AFC Cup (South) group stage matches are now postponed until further notice with more information to be announced in due course," it added.

Maldives' sports minister asked BFC to leave after along with other reports, 'Channel Nine Maldives' posted a photo of Australian import

2 test positive from ATKMB

New Delhi: Two ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) players - Prabir Das and SK Sahil - tested positive for COVID-19, hours before their AFC Cup Group D matches in Maldives were postponed. The duo returned positive after all the team members underwent Covid-19 tests May 7 at a private hospital in Kolkata before their travel to Male. "Yes, Prabir and Sahil have tested positive and so they will be left out. All others have negative results," a source in ATKMB said Sunday. The Kolkata-based club were scheduled to leave Monday for Maldives. However, it now stands cancelled as the event has been postponed.

Erik Paartalu walking on a street in Male.

BFC director, Parth Jindal apologised for the 'inexcusable behaviour of three foreign players/staff' and promised strictest action against them. "On behalf of @bengalurufc I am extremely sorry for the inexcusable behaviour of three of our foreign players/staff while in Male - the strictest action will be taken against these players/staff," he tweeted.



Marcos Alonso of Chelsea celebrates after getting the winner against Man City

AGENCIES

London, May 9: Manchester United delayed fierce rival Manchester City's coronation as Premier League champions by rallying to beat Aston Villa 3-1 here Sunday. Man City would have clinched the title if United lost, and that scenario was on when Bertrand Traore put Villa into the lead in the 24th minute.

United were more emergent in the second half and a 52nd-minute penalty by Bruno Fernandes - his 17th goal of the campaign - was followed four minutes later by a strike by Mason Greenwood.

Substitute Edinson Cavani headed in a third goal in the 87th, and Villa had striker Ollie Watkins sent off in the 89th for picking up a second yellow card after he was adjudged to have dived.

City still need three points from their final three games to seal a third league championship in four years under Pep Guardiola, and a fifth in 10 seasons in total.

Man U could however, hand the title to City by losing either of their games to be played Tuesday and Thursday - against Leicester and Liverpool, respectively.

Earlier Saturday, Chelsea forced Manchester City to postpone their Premier League title party winning 2-1 to boost their own chances of

a top-four finish in a dress rehearsal for the Champions League final. Raheem Sterling gave Manchester City the lead just before half time at an empty Etihad Stadium, but Hakim Ziyech levelled and Marcos Alonso bundled in the winner in the dying seconds.

Elsewhere at the Anfield, Liverpool also kept themselves in contention for the Champions League berth with a 2-0 win over Southampton.

City took the lead when Gabriel Jesus shrugged off Andreas Christensen to break into the area. He squared, looking for Sergio Aguero. The Argentine's touch was poor but Sterling was on hand to tuck home. City should have been 2-0 up in first half added on time but Aguero paid the price for attempting a 'Panenka' penalty that was easily saved by Edouard Mendy in Chelsea goal, drawing the ire of Pep Guardiola.

As the second half wore on, the visitors started to establish a foothold and they equalised just after the hour. Chelsea broke down the right and Cesar Azpilicueta picked out Ziyech just outside the area. The Moroccan drilled a low shot into the bottom corner.

In the Liverpool-Southampton game, Sadio Mane and Thiago Alcantara got the goals for the winners.

SHORT TAKES

Chetan bereaved

Rajkot: Young Saurashtra and Rajasthan Royals pacer Chetan Sakariya's father Kanjibhai died Sunday due to Covid-19 at a hospital in Bhavnagar. He was 42 and was battling the infection for the past few days. Saurashtra Cricket Association consoled the demise. It said "Everyone at the Saurashtra Cricket Association is deeply saddened on the sad demise of cricketer Chetan Sakariya's father. Our heartfelt condolences to Chetan and prayers to the Almighty to give enough strength to everyone in his family to bear the loss."

Maiden pro win

New Delhi: Commonwealth Games silver medal-winning boxer in 2013, Mandeep Jangra has made a positive start in the professional circuit. He beat Argentina's Luciano Ramos in his debut bout Saturday in Florida, USA. Jangra had travelled to USA two months back for training. The boxer won his bout against Ramos in a four-round unanimous decision in the super welterweight category. Jangra has signed up with the Florida-based Pro Box Promotions.

Bayern's 9th title

Dortmund: Borussia Dortmund ensured Bayern Munich clinched their record-extending ninth consecutive Bundesliga title early without even kicking a ball, defeating second placed Leipzig 2-3 at the Signal Iduna Park here Saturday. Leipzig's defeat means they can no longer overhaul Bayern Munich who hold a seven-point lead against their nearest rivals as only two games are left to be played. Jadon Sancho scored twice for Dortmund after captain Marco Reus fired his team into a seventh-minute lead. The goals for Leipzig were scored by Lukas Klostermann and Dani Olmo. It was Bayern's 30th Bundesliga triumph.

Lewis triumphs

Montmelo (Spain): Lewis Hamilton beat Max Verstappen in a thrilling duel to win the Spanish Grand Prix and increase his Formula 1 (F1) championship lead over his rival Sunday. Verstappen's Red Bull edged the pole-sitting Hamilton to the first curve to snatch the early lead. But Mercedes' use of two pit stops to give Hamilton fresher tires down the final stretch paid off and allowed him to overtake the Dutchman with six laps remaining. Hamilton followed his 100th career pole Saturday by taking his 98th career win. Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas finished third. AGENCIES

Advantage Real as Barca, Atletico draw

AGENCIES

Barcelona, May 9: Barcelona and Atletico Madrid played out a goalless draw to hand over the advantage to Real Madrid to go on top of the La Liga points table. Now four wins from the last four games will be enough for Real Madrid to win the La Liga crown.

The first part of a blockbuster weekend in the Spanish title race pitched first against third. However, neither could take a decisive step forward, despite the best attempts of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, who faced each other for the first time since the latter's departure last summer.

A point each leaves Atletico three



CATCHING UP: Lionel Messi (R) and Luis Suarez have a lot to talk about ahead of the Atletico Madrid-Barcelona game, Saturday

points clear of Real Madrid, who have a game in hand and also the superior head-to-head records over both Atletico and Barcelona.

"Anything can still happen be-

cause of what we've seen so far," said Barcelona's Gerard Pique. "If (Real) Madrid win their four games they will be champions, but it is difficult for big teams to be consistent. If

AHEAD OF OLYMPICS, MEN IN BLUE REMAIN UPBEAT

Best chance to win a medal: Manpreet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 9: The Indian men's hockey team are clocking long hours in the sun to be ready for the heat and humidity that awaits them in Tokyo during this year's Olympics. Skipper Manpreet Singh said that he is confident that his team will peak at just the right time. India have won eight Olympic gold medals in the past, but their last top finish came way back in 1980 Moscow Games.

"We strongly believe we have the best chance to win a medal at the Olympics. This belief is keeping everyone motivated and optimistic," Manpreet said on the occasion of the 75-day countdown for the Tokyo Olympics which opens July 23.

"Our training has been planned in such a manner that we peak at the right time and also we are clock-



MANPREET SINGH

ing long hours in the sun to get our bodies acclimatised to the hot conditions in Tokyo," Manpreet added.

The skipper, however, said that the postponement of FIH Pro League matches against Germany and Spain due to coronavirus has been a big setback for the team.

Kiwi cricketers back home safely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Auckland May 9: All New Zealand cricketers and coaches, who were involved in IPL 2021, have arrived home safely. They arrived back by private jets in two groups after the indefinite suspension of the T20 league midway.

Cricketers Trent Boult, Finn Allen, Jimmy Neesham, Adam Milne and Scott Kuggeleijn, coaches and former players James Pamment and Shane Bond, and Royal Challengers Bangalore's director of cricketing operations Mike Hesson were the first to land here late Saturday night. They arrived on board a Bombardier Global Express private jet via Tokyo. It was the first of the two chartered flights repatriating the Kiwis after

the league was suspended.

Former New Zealand captains Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming were among the second group of cricketers to touch down here Sunday. A second private flight of Vistajet carrying McCullum, Fleming, fellow IPL coach Kyle Mills, fast bowler Lockie Ferguson and commentators Simon Doull and Scott Styris, and umpire Chris Gaffaney also safely landed at the Auckland Airport here.

New Zealand's UK-bound Test contingent, including skipper Kane Williamson, Mitchell Santner, Kyle Jamieson, and physio Tommy Simsek, have been transferred to Maldives. All the players and coaches went into managed isolation upon arrival, according to a report in 'stuff.Co.Nz'.

SHUNNING GUNS TO PROVIDE PATIENTS WITH LIFE-SAVING OXYGEN

National shooters join fight against Covid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Seeking to help those battling the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 100 national-level shooters have initiated a campaign in Uttar Pradesh to ensure timely supply of oxygen to health centres. Among the shooters involved in the campaign are Asutosh Dwiwedi, Pardeep Kumar Singh, Tabish Ahmed, Rahul Soni, Monu Kumar, Harpreet Singh, and Shalender. All of them are from UP, Delhi and Haryana.

"Such initiatives will go a long way in alleviating the miseries of coronavirus patients. I urge more people to come forward to join the cause and take all necessary precautions against Covid-19," said Deepak Dubey, coach of Olympics-bound rifle shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar, in a press release.

The initiative comes after Raj Kumar, CMD, Rodic Consultants and a national-level shooter urged



the shooting community to support the fight against Covid-19.

Rodic has developed a first-of-its-kind digital portal for oxygen monitoring in Uttar Pradesh, to ensure a timely supply of the gas in the state. "These are unprecedented times as we are witnessing a sharp surge in coronavirus cases across India. Collaboration will be the key to winning the battle against Covid-19," Kumar said.

"In this endeavour we required volunteers to support us for efficient management of this entire process.

I had appealed to all my fellow shooters across India to come forward and support us as volunteers," Kumar added.

The platform will regularly monitor and track the real-time location of vehicles so that oxygen reaches hospitals without any delay, especially during emergencies.

The company is leveraging a 'hub and spoke' model to streamline the oxygen supply. The model requires intensive manpower to ensure a hassle-free supply across Uttar Pradesh.

Such initiatives will go a long way in alleviating the miseries of coronavirus patients. I urge more people to come forward to join the cause

DEEPAK DUBEY | COACH

Sabalenka overcomes Barty threat in Madrid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, May 9: Aryna Sabalenka is glad she changed her mind about playing at the Madrid Open tennis tournament. Two weeks after nearly withdrawing from the event because of a muscle injury, Sabalenka was standing on centre court with the winner's trophy in her hands Saturday. She defeated top-ranked Ash Barty 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 for her 10th WTA title - and first on clay.

Sabalenka's victory, came two weeks after she was hurt in a loss to Barty in the Stuttgart final. It will move the Belarus player to No. 4 in the world rankings.

"To be honest, after the final in Stuttgart I was injured, I couldn't even move, I really wanted to withdraw from here," Sabalenka said. "And I don't know how, but my team did it. The recovery was really good. In four days they made me feel much better. Somehow I'm here standing as the champion of



PROUD MOMENT: Aryna Sabalenka holds aloft the trophy after winning the title at Madrid

this tournament," she added.

Sabalenka completely dominated Barty in the first set. She did not face a single breakpoint on her serve and broke her opponent thrice to close out the set in a jiffy. In the second however, Barty started to find range with her shots. Even though she lost her serve early on, she broke Sabalenka twice to come back on level terms in the match.