



## CAUSE AMBASSADOR

Actor Aahana Kumra has backed a drive that helps victims locate beds at Covid centres

LEISURE P2



## EYE ON PRIVATE HOSPITALS

CM Naveen asked senior officers to keep tabs on private Covid hospitals to ensure Covid patients are not fleeced

DOWNTOWN P3



## AIRSTRIKES ON GAZA

Israel unleashed airstrikes on Gaza early Tuesday, hitting a pair of high-rise buildings believed to be housing ultras

INTERNATIONAL P10

# Boost to state's Covid infra

ODISHA TO SET UP RT-PCR TESTING LABS IN 16 DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS HOSPITALS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 11: A day after deciding to open a global tender to procure vaccines from open markets to ensure mass inoculations in the state, the state government Tuesday decided to set up RT-PCR testing laboratories in 16 district headquarters hospitals.

Health and family welfare department issued a notification to this effect. The testing labs will be set up at the district headquarters of Bhadrak, Boudh, Bargarh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Khurda, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Sonepur and Sundargarh. Another district is Rayagada for which a machine has been ordered by the Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd (OSMCL).

The approximate cost of the each laboratory will be around ₹1.20 crore. The government has approved recruitment of staff including one microbiologist and three lab technicians for each shift (eight hours) duty. The move will not only enhance the daily testing rate but also reduce the time period now required for testing, official sources said. Due to lack of sufficient number of RT-PCR testing labs, samples collected from various parts of the state are being transported to nearest lab each



day. And it is delaying the time for getting results, the source said.

At present, the state has 20 RT-PCR laboratories of which 13 are government-run and seven are run by private organizations. All seven state-run medical colleges at Cuttack, Berhampur, Burla, Koraput, Baripada, Balasore and Bolangir have the facility.

Similarly, RT-PCR labs are functioning at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Ispat General Hospital—Rourkela, Institute of Life Sciences—Bhubaneswar, International Centre for Foot and Mouth Disease—Khurda and Indian Institute of Science Education & Research (IISER)—Berhampur. Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC),

Bhubaneswar is having a high throughput laboratory.

Private-run labs are there in Apollo Hospitals, SUM Hospital, InDNA Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, GenX Diagnostics, AMRI Hospitals, Kalinga Institute of Medical Science (KIMS) and Kalinga Hospital Ltd.

TrueNAT testing facility is there in 32 healthcare facilities across the state while only KIMS has a CB NAAT testing lab. The state had tested 46,241 samples for Covid May 10, out of which RT-PCR tests accounted for 16,717. Though the government has aimed to increase the daily testing rate to 50,000, it is yet to achieve it. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has sanctioned ₹20 crore for the purpose, an official said.

## 7 O<sub>2</sub> plants by DRDO

Oxygen plants will come up in Boudh, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Gajapati, Jharsuguda, Nayagarh and Koraput districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 11: With an aim to enhance medical oxygen production to meet the rising demand, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will set up seven medical oxygen plants in Odisha.

The DRDO is setting up 500 oxygen plants in the country within three months with the help of its indigenous developed technology. Of which, seven will be established in Odisha, CGM of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Odisha, Ram Prasad Panda, said.

The plants will come up in Boudh, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Gajapati, Jharsuguda, Nayagarh and Koraput. The NHAI has been asked to carry out the civil and electrical work of the plants while DRDO will look after technical part, he said.

Panda said land has been acquired for the plants while the NHAI has already commenced the civil construction work at two places—Boudh and Cuttack. The oxygen plant is designed for a capacity of 1,000 litres per minute (LPM). The system can cater for 190 patients at a flow of 5 LPM and will charge 195 cylinders per day.



Once the plants become functional, hospitals can generate oxygen from the on-site plant instead of depending on other sources. It would also be cost-effective for the health centres. The plants would be useful for patients, especially those who are suffering from Covid-19.

# STATE FARES MISERABLY ON COVID-19

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 11: Amidst the rapid surge in COVID-19 cases in the state and the government's efforts to curb its footprints, the Covid positivity rate of Odisha stood at 24.4 per cent, more than the national positivity rate of 21 per cent.

At a presser on the status of the pandemic, joint secretary, Union health ministry, Lav Agarwal, said 26 states have a case positivity rate of more than 15 per cent. The health ministry also said that Odisha is among top five states that have been witnessing increasing trend of new cases with 5,908 cases reported April 27 to over 10,000 new cases May 10.

The Union health ministry also said that 533 districts across the country, including 27 from Odisha, have a case positivity rate of more than 10 per cent.

Two Odisha districts—Kalahandi and Sambalpur have the highest positivity rate of 46.7 and 46.6 per cent respectively. Similarly, four districts in the state have a positivity rate between 30 and 40 per cent—Sundargarh 34.2 pc, Angul 34 per cent, Khurda 33.3 pc and Bargarh 32.6 per cent.

As many as 11 districts, including Cuttack and Puri, have a positivity rate between 20 and 30 per cent and 10 districts including Dhenkanal, Kendrapara and Kandhamal have positivity rate between 10 and 20 per cent.

## Odisha Covid toll up by 18

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha's COVID-19 caseload Tuesday rose to 5,54,666 after 9,793 more people tested positive for the disease, while 18 fresh fatalities pushed the state's death toll to 2,215, a health department official said. Accordingly, the number of active cases climbed to 94,829, he said. Of the 9,793 new cases, 5,534 were reported from various quarantine centres while the rest detected during contact tracing. Khurda district reported the maximum number of new cases at 1511, followed by Sundargarh at 1,018 and Cuttack at 641. The health department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of 18 Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

While Goa tops the chart with 49.6 per cent of positivity followed by Pondicherry, West Bengal, Haryana and Karnataka, Odisha stood at the 11th position with 24.4 per cent positivity rate.

The state has been witnessing a surge in new cases with 5,908 cases reported April 27 that went up to 9,793 cases May 11. It said Bangalore urban, Chennai, Ernakulam, Malappuram and Khurda among others are showing a rise in the number of cases. Khurda district has been showing an upward trend in Covid infections for three weeks.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



It's better than winning a lottery. He has successfully booked a slot for vaccination!

# O<sub>2</sub> crunch kills 26 at Goa hosp

CM BLAMES DEARTH OF OXYGEN TRUCK DRIVERS

AGENCIES

Panaji, May 11: Lack of expert drivers manning trucks ferrying oxygen has led to the oxygen shortage crisis in Goa's top hospital, Goa Medical College, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said Tuesday, even as Health Minister Vishwaji Rane claimed that 26 persons died within four hours due to shortage of oxygen at the apex health facility.

Rane, who has been at loggerheads with Sawant over control of the state's Covid management apparatus, has now urged the Bombay High Court to probe the oxygen shortage issue at the Goa Medical College and take over the Covid management system at the health facility. Rane Tuesday said that 26 patients admitted to a Covid ward at the hospital, had died between 2 am and 6 am Tuesday morning.

"I request the High Court to check if there is mismanagement or shortage and bring out a white paper using experts... High Court should take over Covid management of GMC," Rane said, adding that the key issue was not mismanagement, but shortage of oxygen which led to the deaths. "We need 1,200 (jumbo) cylinders, but



- Rane has urged Bombay HC to probe the oxygen shortage issue at Goa Medical College
- The cause of deaths was because oxygen tanks could not reach the patients in time
- The patients admitted to the Covid ward died between 2 am and 6 am Tuesday morning

yesterday we got only 400," Rane also said. Sawant Tuesday morning visited the Covid ward, which witnessed over two dozen fatalities, insisted that it was not oxygen shortage which led to the deaths. The cause of deaths was because oxygen tanks could not reach the patients in time, he said. Sawant also met patients and kin of patients at the Covid ward, who complained about regular drop in oxygen supply.

# FUEL RATES UP AGAIN

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 11: Petrol and diesel prices Tuesday were hiked for the sixth time this month, propelling prices to cross the ₹100-a-litre-mark in places from Nanded in Maharashtra to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.

Petrol price was hiked by 27 paise a litre and diesel by 30 paise per litre, according to a price notification by state-owned fuel retailers. The rise took petrol and diesel prices to their highest-ever level across the country. In Delhi, petrol now comes for ₹91.80 per litre and diesel is priced at ₹82.36. This was the sixth increase in prices since May 4, when the state-owned oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal. The price increase led to petrol rates crossing the ₹100-mark in more places of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

## CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹92.81 (+0.59)
DIESEL	₹90.03 (+0.64)

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh. Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at ₹102.70 per litre and ₹95.06 a litre respectively. Also in Rajasthan, petrol crossed the ₹100-mark in Jaisalmer (₹100.71) and Bikaner (₹100.70) while it neared that mark in Barmer (₹99.82).

Petrol in several districts of Madhya Pradesh, including Shahdol (₹102.06), Rewa (₹102.04), Chhindwara (₹101.67) and Balaghat (₹101.98) crossed the physiological mark. It neared that mark in Indore (₹99.90 a litre) and Bhopal (₹99.83). If rates continue to rise, Bhopal will be the first state capital to see petrol at ₹100.

# Covid hits Naxals, many ailing

AGENCIES

Dantewada, May 11: Police Tuesday said that at least ten naxals have reportedly died of COVID-19 or food poisoning in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh and even some senior rebel leaders are suffering from the viral infection.

"According to local villagers, naxals burnt the bodies of at least ten colleagues in the forest along



the border of Bijapur and Sukma districts Monday night," said Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava.

"The deaths were caused by COVID-19 or food poisoning. But we are trying to get more details," he said. Police had confirmed information that around 500 naxals had gathered near Pidia village two weeks ago and some of them consumed medicines and packaged foods whose expiry date had expired, the SP said. Following the meeting, several cadres complained of food poisoning or developed cough, cold and fever, Pallava said.

# Russian school shooting kills 7 pupils, 2 others

AGENCIES

Moscow, May 11: A gunman attacked a school Tuesday morning in the Russian city of Kazan, killing nine people—seven eighth-grade students, a teacher and a staffer—and leaving 21 others hospitalised with wounds, Russian officials said.

Russian media said some students were able to escape the building during the attack, while others were trapped inside. Dozens of ambulances lined up at the entrance to the school after the attack, with access to the building fenced off by police. Rustam Minnikhanov, governor of the Tatarstan republic where Kazan is the capital, said four boys and three girls, all eighth-grade students, died in the shooting. Minnikhanov's press service later said a teacher was also killed.

"The terrorist has been arrested, (he is) 19 years old. A firearm is registered in his name. Other accomplices haven't been established, an investigation is underway," Minnikhanov said after visiting the school, adding that security had been restored. Authorities said additional security measures were immediately put into place in all schools in Kazan.

# New vax blocks Covid-19 and all its variants

CALLED PAN-CORONAVIRUS VACCINE, IT WAS FOUND EFFECTIVE IN PROTECTING MONKEYS AND MICE

AGENCIES

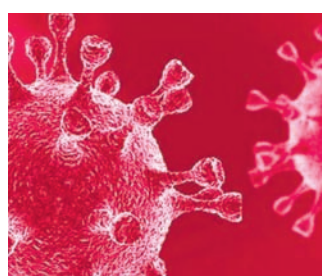
New York, May 11: US researchers have developed a potential new vaccine, which has proven effective against the original SARS-CoV-1, SARS-CoV-2 as well as its UK, South Africa and Brazil variants and related bat coronaviruses that could potentially cause the next pandemic.

The new vaccine, called pan-coronavirus vaccine, was found effective in protecting monkeys and mice. Pan-coronavirus vaccine triggers neutralising antibodies via a nanoparticle. The nanoparticle is composed of the Coronavirus part

that allows it to bind to the body's cell receptors and is formulated with a chemical booster called an adjuvant. Success in primates is highly relevant to humans, said researchers from the Duke University in North Carolina, US.

The findings, published in the journal Nature, showed that the nanoparticle vaccine, in monkeys, blocked Covid-19 infection by 100 per cent. The new vaccine also elicited significantly higher neutralising levels in the animals than current vaccine platforms or natural infection in humans.

"We began this work last spring



with the understanding that, like all viruses, mutations would occur in the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19," said senior author Barton F Haynes, director of the Duke Human Vaccine Institute.

"The mRNA vaccines were already under development, so we were looking for ways to sustain their efficacy once those variants appeared.

"This approach not only provided protection against SARS-CoV-2, but the antibodies induced by the vaccine also neutralised variants of concern that originated in the UK, South Africa and Brazil. And the induced antibodies reacted with quite a large panel of coronaviruses," Haynes said.

The team built on earlier studies involving SARS, the respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-1. They

found a person who had been infected with SARS developed antibodies capable of neutralising multiple coronaviruses, suggesting that a pan-coronavirus might be possible. They identified one particular receptor-binding domain site that is present on SARS-CoV-2, its circulating variants and SARS-related bat viruses that makes them highly vulnerable to cross-neutralising antibodies. The team then designed a nanoparticle displaying this vulnerable spot. The nanoparticle is combined with a small molecule adjuvant, which boosts the body's immune response.

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	49161.81	↓ 340.60
NIFTY	14850.80	↓ 91.60
DOLLAR	73.91	↑ ₹0.01
EURO	89.51	↑ ₹0.02
GOLD	₹47,560	↓ ₹391
SILVER	₹71,568	↑ ₹24

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	36.1°C	34.2°C
MAX	27.4°C	24.8°C
MIN	93%	88%
Humidity	16.9mm	24mm
Rainfall		Light rain
		very likely

# leisure



## DREW BARRYMORE SUPPORTS PRIYANKA'S COVID RELIEF FUND

Hollywood star Drew Barrymore has urged everyone to contribute towards Priyanka Chopra and her husband Nick Jonas' Covid-19 relief fund for India. The actress, on her programme *The Drew Barrymore Show*, said she is with India, which has been hit by the devastating second wave of pandemic.

## CRUISE RETURNS GOLDEN GLOBES TO JOIN PROTEST AGAINST HFPA

Superstar Tom Cruise returned his three Golden Globes to join the protest against the Hollywood Free Press Association (HFPA), the organisers behind the awards. Cruise's action comes at a time when HFPA has continued facing allegations of corruption and lack of diversity, reports *nme.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Ganesh is very impressed with you today for the way you handle your relationships. You will indulge in some furtive activity today. Ganesh warns you to be cautious about getting caught up in a fix where you have to shell out money.

**TAURUS**  
Today you are likely to reach out for things that are beyond your reach and capabilities. Ganesh, nevertheless, assures that you will succeed in attaining your objectives through sheer force of your self confidence and self conviction.

**GEMINI**  
You need to be cautious and yet at the same time committed in any work that you do today. You believe in doing everything at a steady pace. Hence, make sure that every work that you take up is performed in a scheduled manner. You need to pay special attention to your health today, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You have two options to over-come the unwanted sad events. One is to run away and the other is to face boldly. Ganesh suggests you choose the second option. The evening promises a joyful mood. You will entertain guests at home.

**LEO**  
You will take some important decisions regarding personal or professional matters today, says Ganesh. The later half of the day will be spent enjoying with your family and friends. An extremely progressive day awaits.

**VIRGO**  
You are a master craftsman when it boils down to interpersonal relationships. In the afternoon, you may feel very secretive about some things. An insipid evening may make you miss the enjoyment you might otherwise have had. Nevertheless, Ganesh says it will be a happy and bright day.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says today your children will make you happy by imparting good news to you and you will be able to spend a nice and happy time with them. This is a good day for you in money matters as you may get a salary rise or even gain an inheritance from relatives. Your interests in the finer arts will be appreciated.

**SCORPIO**  
You are as inquisitive as a child today. There are a lot of queries in your mind that need to be solved. At work, you have umpteen challenges. But, this does not stop you from fulfilling your responsibilities towards your family. Love and affection rule in the family, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Stars are aligned in a way that they shower both, luck & money on you today. Profits and achievements galore at business front, says Ganesh. You may go on a shopping spree with your partner and splurge on the exclusive jewellery. Tighten your purse strings.

**CAPRICORN**  
You follow your gut feeling when it comes to making decisions. But, today is a different day. You examine nuts and bolts of every situation and make judgements accordingly. You will pay attention to your love life during the second half of the day.

**AQUARIUS**  
Do you feel slightly awkward in social gatherings? Do you wonder how to break the ice and strike a conversation? Don't be conscious, in fact, be yourself to feel comfortable, feels Ganesh. You may find it difficult to get rid of some petty issues today. Listen to music, sing or play an instrument; it will relax your mind.

**PISCES**  
With the blessings of Ganesh you will face fewer obstacles than you normally do. You will enjoy your favourite foods today. You will experience less mental stress today and you will be full of hopes and dreams. It will appear as though life is moving in the right direction. You will feel happy and satisfied today.

# Aahana Kumra backs 'Find A Bed' drive for Covid-hit

**Mumbai:** Actress Aahana Kumra has extended support for an initiative that aims at providing a one-stop solution to locate a bed at a Covid centre. The movement, named 'Find A Bed', has been initiated by over 20,000 students across 160 cities and Aahana is its cause ambassador.

"As India grapples with the toughest times, Find A Bed is an initiative for anyone who has mild symptoms of Covid-19 but cannot quarantine at home, may not need to be hospitalised but have to find a bed at a Covid centre," said Aahana.

Aahana hoped that the "initiative by the young students of IIMUN (India's International Movement to Unite Nations) is not only going to save lives but will also help thousands of people in distress."

On the work front, Aahana will be seen in Madhur Bhandarkar's film *India Lockdown* and in the remake of the French television drama *Call My Agent!*.

IAN S

## I AM FLOWING WITH TIDE: JACKIE SHROFF

**Mumbai:** Actor Jackie Shroff has been working in Hindi film industry for around four decades. The actor, who will soon be seen in the Salman Khan-starrer *Radhe*, is more than happy with the kind of roles he is getting now as he says makers are willing to experiment while casting him. "I love it. They are all experimenting with me. Someone is doing OK Computer, Phone Bhoot, Hello Charlie, Criminal Justice, Sooryavanshi. I am just flowing with the tide," he said. "Then, I am lucky to work in a film like *Radhe*. It is a lot of fun," he added. "I am just keeping my health, my disciples, keeping the respect for people. Trying to spread good knowledge as much as I can about plants," said the veteran artiste.

IAN S

## RETURN GIFT

# Ruskin Bond's delectable collection in the offing

*The compilation brings together some of the evocative episodes from Bond's life that are sure to become firm favourites with readers*

**A**head of his 87th birthday May 19, Ruskin Bond, one of India's most-loved writers of children's stories, has carefully curated a mixed bag of 25 of his most cherished stories in a new book, *All Time Favourites for Children*.

The collection brings together some of the evocative episodes from Bond's life that are sure to become firm favourites with readers. Heart-warming, funny and spirited, this is a must-have on every bookshelf!

The book, in fact, is the perfect complement to *A Song of India* released last July to mark the beginning of Bond's 70-year writing career, in which he takes the reader back to 1951, his last year in Dehradun before he set sail for England and which later became the

basis for his first novel, *The Room on the Roof*.

"*A Song of India* marks 70 years of my long writing career which began when I was sixteen. In these seven decades, I have written hundreds of stories for children and just as many for adults too, and I am still continuing to do so. I am very fortunate to have lived in a beautiful part of the country, in the mountains. I am blessed to have received inspiration from the natural world around me, from children and animals, and all of this is reflected in my works," Bond said.

Born in Kasauli (now in Himachal Pradesh) in 1934, Bond grew up in Jamnagar (Gujarat), Dehradun, New Delhi and Simla (now Shimla).

*The Room on the Roof*, written when he was 17, received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. Since then he has written over 500 short stories, essays and novellas including *Vagrants in the Valley* and *A Flight of Pigeons* and more than 40 books for children.

He received the Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in India in 1993, the Padma Shri in 1999, and the Delhi government's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012. AGENCIES



# Karishma excited about shooting in London



**Mumbai:** Actress Karishma Kotak recently shot for a song with singer Yasser Desai on the streets of London and, being on home turf in the UK Capital city, she says she could show around the crew, too.

"It's an out and out romantic track. We had a great time shooting for the song in the lanes of London. It's my home and I could show the crew around as well. I have always loved a New York, London kind of set-up for songs and here I am shooting for one," Karishma said.

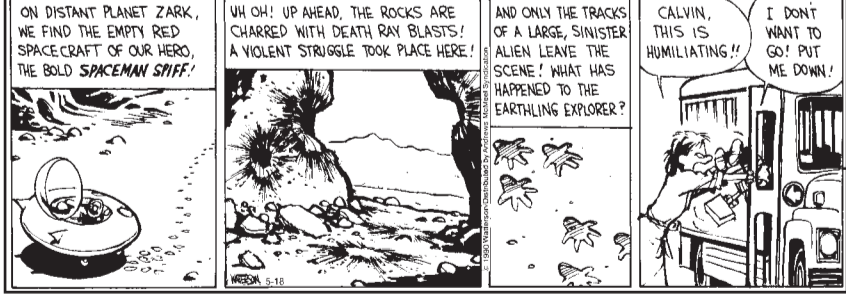
"I couldn't ask for more. It would be out soon. My prayers are with Indians during this difficult time. Let's all stay strong and this too shall pass," added the England-based model and actress who presented a televised show called *Extraa Innings T20* during IPL 2013.

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### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

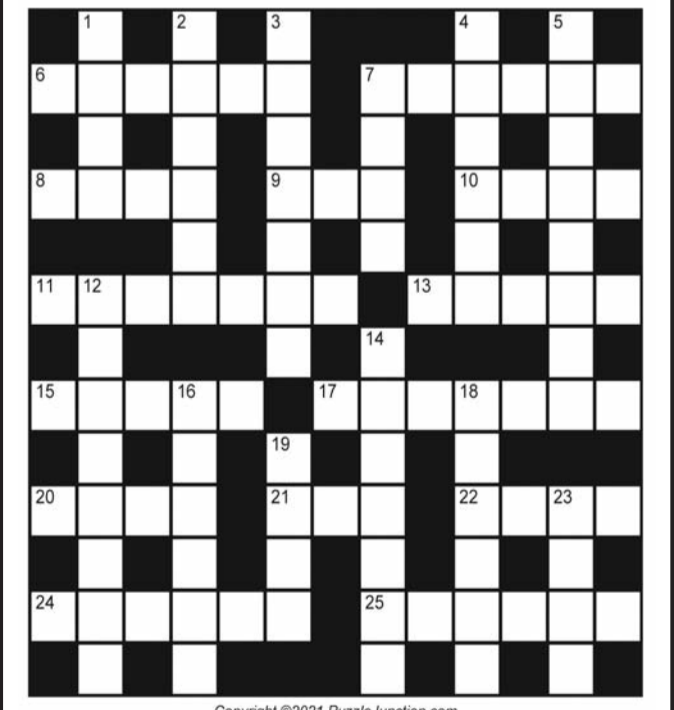


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 6 Gentle breeze
  - 7 Prey
  - 8 Pen pals?
  - 9 Swiss canton
  - 10 Narrow street
  - 11 In good shape
  - 13 Mug
  - 15 Involuntary twitch
  - 17 On target
  - 20 Recipe direction
  - 21 Sphere
  - 22 King
  - 24 City on the Danube
  - 25 Magical drink
- Down**
- 1 Persian spirit
  - 2 Carpentry tool
  - 3 In a bad mood
  - 4 Card carrier
  - 5 Armagnac, et al.
  - 7 Throw in the towel
  - 12 High spirits
  - 14 Math question
  - 16 Salty
  - 18 Blackcurrant liqueur
  - 19 Fizzy drink
  - 23 Harness part

### 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.

				1				
8								5
		2		3	6			
	1			6		5		
		6				2		
3	4	7		1		9		
	6						7	9
4	8							
				9	4			

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

A	X	E	S	G	E	N	A	B					
S	E	E	S	A	W	S	F	I	B	R	E		
I	N	P	A	I	T	A	I	A					
S	U	S	H	I	T	I	T	A	N	I	C		
T	T	Z	E	H									
M	E	R	I	T	F	L	U	T	E				
A	R	H	E	R	E	T	O	T	A	S	T		
W	H	E	R	E	T	O	T	A	S	T	E		
O	L	B	L	R	E	O	A						
K	A	B	O	L	B	E	S	T	M	A	N		
E	I	O	W	I	T	H	E	T	M	A	N		
T	O	Y	O	W	I	T	H	E	T	D	E	B	T

**SUDOKU**

3	6	8	2	1	9	4	5	7
7	1	4	6	5	8	3	2	9
9	5	2	7	3	4	1	8	6
5	9	6	4	7	2	8	1	3
8	4	7	1	6	3	2	9	5
2	3	1	8	9	5	6	7	4
1	8	5	9	4	6	7	3	2
4	2	9	3	8	7	5	6	1
6	7	3	5	2	1	9	4	8

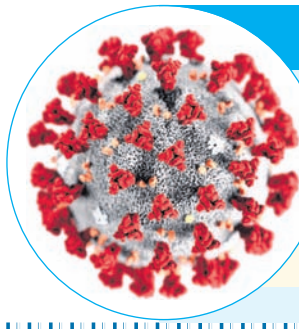
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## HIT BY STORM

The Patitapabana flag atop Srimandir has been tilted under the impact of Nor'wester that hit Puri, Tuesday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,00,47,652	13,77,68,772	33,24,242
India	2,29,92,517	1,90,27,304	2,49,992
Odisha	5,54,666	4,65,133	2,215

# SC asks Bolangir man to move HC over khap order

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, May 11:** The Supreme Court Tuesday asked a petitioner from Bolangir district to approach the Orissa High Court against the decision of a khap panchayat that ordered a 10-year boycott of the petitioner's family.

A two-judge bench of Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Vineet Saran observed that since the matter pertains to only one state and the petitioner has sought relief for himself, it would not entertain the petition. The court dismissed the petition with liberty to the petitioner to approach the Orissa High Court in the matter.

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court by Satyabadi Nayak of Bolangir district contending that a khap panchayat in Odisha had



in September 2018 ordered social boycott of the petitioner and his family for 10 years for alleged violation of norms of the panchayat. The petitioner was ordered to live in isolation without any cooperation from the community.

Nayak had prayed the apex court to direct the state government to

**A** khap panchayat in September 2018 had ordered social boycott of the petitioner and his family for 10 years for alleged violation of norms of the panchayat

**T**he petitioner was punished for alleged violation of khap panchayat laws during the marriage of his son

**T**he petitioner alleged that his daughter-in-law suffered miscarriage due to the trauma caused by the decision of the khap panchayat

constitute a special cell in each district and launch prosecutions against such unlawful acts by khap panchayats through kangaroo courts. He contended that the constitution and by-laws of khap pan-

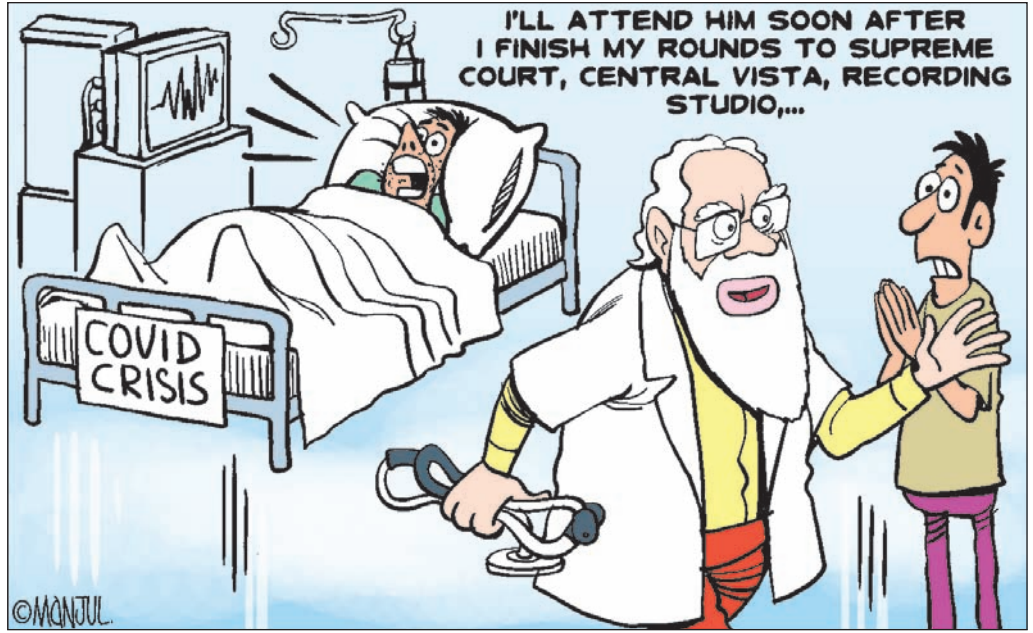
chayat are in violation of the Fundamental Rights.

The petitioner submitted that the khap panchayat, 84 Ghar Agharia Samaaj, was established in 1937 in Western Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh with an objective to uplift the Agharia Samaaj.

The khap panchayat has its own constitution and laws. The people of Agharia caste are being punished for violation of these laws framed by it.

The petitioner was punished for alleged violation of khap panchayat laws during the marriage of his son. He also alleged that his daughter-in-law suffered the miscarriage due to the trauma caused by the decision of the khap panchayat and no one from the village came to the rescue of his daughter-in-law.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# Naveen for action against nCoV hosps fleecing patients

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 11:** Expressing concern over the reported exploitation of patients at some private Covid hospitals, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday asked senior officers to keep close watch on such hospitals.

"They must charge within the ceiling fixed by the government. In case of any lapses, strict action should be taken against the hospital management," Naveen said in a virtual meeting with all senior government officers, district Collectors and superintendent of police (SPs).

He asked the officers to strengthen the helpline numbers in Covid hospitals and inform the patients' status to their families regularly. "Use Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) to help people in distress during this difficult time," he said.

Many districts in Odisha have witnessed a huge surge in the Covid-19 cases in the last one month. However, with the hard work of all Covid warriors and the cooperation of people, the state has been able to manage the situation, Patnaik said, adding, "Still the challenge is huge and the battle is long."

To slowdown the infection rate, the government has imposed lockdown for two weeks. So far, the lockdown enforcement has been going on well. However, there is still scope for improvement in some places, the Chief Minister pointed out.

"Our successful model of disaster management is based on community involvement and that is the sustainable way to face a pandemic as well. Involve local communities and various associations in urban areas, and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas to effectively reach out to people," he said.

He further advised the officials to take necessary countermeasures for a possible third wave of Covid-19. The Health department and Puri district officials were told to complete vaccination of all servants and their family members before Rath Yatra.

Stating that the state government is providing testing, treatment, food, accommodation, and

## TACKLING EXPLOITATION

**T**he officials have been told to continue taking feedback from patients under Mo Sarkar initiative. They have been instructed to take direct feedback from doctors who are manning the ICUs & HDUs, and act on their suggestions

**T**he Health dept and Puri district officials have been told to complete vaccination of all servants and their family members before Rath Yatra



medicines free of cost to the people, Patnaik asked the officers to ensure quality services.

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On supply of medical oxygen to other states, the CM directed the Collectors and SPs to give top priority to the mission and monitor it round the clock. Patnaik further told the officials to prioritise vaccination programme and make fog-proof arrangements for it.

"Vaccination will be our main strategy to control the pandemic in future and bring back normalcy in the state. Till then we have to be extremely cautious. Take care of elderly, women and other vulnerable sections in the vaccination drive. We are trying our best to mobilise adequate vaccines at the earliest possible time," he said.

The CM again appealed to people to wear masks, wash hands regularly, maintain social distancing and stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to go out.

# Nor'wester leaves 540 slum dwellers homeless



Damaged sheds at the rehabilitation centre at Nuapara Balisahi in Cuttack, Tuesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 11:** At least 540 members of 134 slum dwellers' families were rendered homeless when several sheds at a temporary rehabilitation centre at Nuapara Balisahi here were damaged by the Nor'wester, Tuesday.

At least four persons including two children sustained injuries in the incident. One of the injured has been admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, sources said. The administration had earlier

evicted these slum dwellers from Pilgrim Road, Chhatra Bazar and Ranihaat areas of the city to facilitate the expansion of SCB and widening of Taladanda canal road, sources added.

Venting their anger on the administration, the homeless slum dwellers entered into a heated exchange with the police personnel who reached the spot for rescue work.

The slum dwellers hurled stones at the police personnel and vandalised two police vehicles.

"The slum dwellers are adamant to return to their old places. A few security personnel were injured as the slum dwellers hurled stones at the police party," said a police officer. On being informed, senior officials including Cuttack Sub-Collector Pratap Chandra Beura, Cuttack deputy commissioner Abinash Rout and local tehsildar Sambit Gadnayak reached the spot and tried to pacify the angry slum dwellers.

"The officials proposed to relocate the homeless to a few schools

**T**HE ADMINISTRATION HAD EARLIER EVICTED THE SLUM DWELLERS FROM PILGRIM ROAD, CHHATRA BAZAR AND RANIHAAT AREAS OF THE CITY TO FACILITATE THE EXPANSION OF SCB AND WIDENING OF TALADANDA CANAL ROAD

**V**ENTING THEIR ANGER ON THE ADMINISTRATION, THE HOMELESS SLUM DWELLERS ENTERED INTO A HEATED EXCHANGE WITH THE POLICE PERSONNEL WHO REACHED THE SPOT FOR RESCUE WORK

for the time being. However, the slum dwellers rejected the proposal," said a source in the CMC.

Choudhury-Cuttack MLA Souvic Biswal and former legislator Pravat Biswal too held discussions with the

slum dwellers and tried to bring a solution to the impasse.

"We are ready to shift the homeless people to the schools which have been shut due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the slum dwellers are not cooperating with us," said an official of the district administration.



A vandalised police van



A face-off between the slum dwellers and police

OP PHOTOS

## Capital records 16.9mm rainfall

**BHUBANESWAR:** Thunderstorm with lightning accompanied by strong wind lashed several parts of the state including Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Waterlogging was witnessed at several low-lying areas in the twin city while trees were uprooted under the impact of gusty surface wind along the Ring Road in Cuttack. According to India Meteorological Department, highest 39 mm recorded at Balasore, followed by 37 mm at Sonepur and 30.2 mm at Bolangir Tuesday. Similarly, Puri recorded a rainfall of 29 mm, whereas it was 24 mm at Cuttack, 16.9 mm at Bhubaneswar, 26 mm at Talcher, 24.6 mm at Phulbani, 23.4 mm at Titilagarh and 22 mm at Boudh. Many others places including Paralakhemundi, Chhatrapur, Nayagarh, Sambalpur, Hirakud, Angul, Jharsuguda, Baripada, Gopalpur and Paradip have also received showers.

## RESPIRE FROM HEAT



Capital city witnesses showers due to the impact of a Nor'wester, Tuesday evening

OP PHOTO

## CM enquires about LoP's health

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 11:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday discussed with doctors about the health condition of Leader of Opposition Pradipta Kumar Naik who is being treated at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar after he contracted the novel coronavirus.

**The doctors at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar briefed the CM that Naik is currently Covid negative**

Naik is under treatment at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for the last 16 days.

The Chief Minister interacted with the doctors at AIIMS and SCB who are taking care of Naik. The doctors briefed Patnaik that Naik is currently Covid negative. However, there is widespread inflammation and lungs infection because of which he is on ventilator support and his condition continues to be serious.

They are making best possible efforts for his early recovery, sources at the CMO said.

The AIIMS Director Geetanjali Batmanabane thanked the state government for its support to the treatment of the Leader of Opposition, especially timely support of critical medicines.

Patnaik appreciated the efforts of the doctors and requested them to provide the best health care to Naik and assured all support from the state government. The CM wished speedy recovery of Naik.

Earlier, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan discussed with the doctors of AIIMS Bhubaneswar & New Delhi and SCB Medical College.

# MCL comes forward to set up vaccination centres



A youth takes the Covid jab in Cuttack, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 11:** Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) has offered the state government to establish Covid-19 vaccination centres at five healthcare facilities in Angul, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh districts.

In his letter to the state government, MCL director (Personnel) Keshav Rao has offered to establish Covid-19 vaccination centres while seeking its help for the noble initiative.

MCL, a Mirratna Subsidiary Company of Coal India Limited, will establish the vaccination centres for inoculating company employees, contractors' workers, their family members and peripheral population, a company release said.

## NOBLE INITIATIVE

**M**CL has supported the Odisha government and district authorities to set up and run Covid-19 hospitals with 1,405 beds

**I**n the first quarter of current fiscal, MCL has taken a series of measures at an estimated cost of over ₹32 crore to strengthen the fight against Covid-19

**T**he company had spent ₹135 crore in different Covid-19 mitigating activities in Odisha during last fiscal

In the first quarter of current financial year, MCL has taken a series of measures involving over ₹32 crore to strengthen the fight against Covid-19, besides ensuring increased quantity of coal to power plants.

It spent ₹135 crore in different Covid-19 mitigating activities in Odisha during last financial year, and has further extended its support to state government in establishing Covid-19 hospitals and providing other infrastructure support.

The company is procuring 200 oxygen cylinders and concentrators to help Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh and Angul districts to combat Covid-19 pandemic.

Anticipating a rise in power demand in the country, the company ensured adequate daily supply of coal from its mines during the cur-

rent fiscal, which was 15 per cent higher than the dispatch of dry fuel during the same period of last financial year 2020-21.

MCL CMD PK Sinha has stressed on regular health monitoring of coalfield workers, who are under treatment at various hospitals as well as at their residences.

MCL has lost 18 employees to Covid-19 pandemic, while 420 officers and staffers are still under treatment for the infection.

MCL, which contributes about 20 per cent to the country's total coal production, has supported the state government and district authorities to set up and run Covid-19 hospitals with 1,405 beds, including 189 ICU ones. The company is also conducting sanitisation drives in peripheral localities, using fog cannons.





FOCUS INDIA COVID CRISIS

# GLOBAL CONCERN



The international community must join forces and develop a collective approach to support India in this crisis, not only as a moral imperative, but also because the health of other countries' populations and economies are at stake... no country is safe until every country is safe

When I was growing up in northern India's Kashmir Valley, my physician father would often accompany me when I received my annual vaccinations. I used to ask him how vaccines worked and where they were developed. After explaining the basic biology of the human immune system, my father would highlight how vaccines were the result of global efforts, with scientists and firms around the world working meticulously to ensure that all who received them were protected.

Today, only global action can address the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in India, where the number of daily cases recently exceeded 400,000 (a world record), and more than 245,000 people have died. Epidemiological models from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington project that infections in India will continue to grow exponentially, peaking in mid-May, and that the country's total COVID-19 death toll could eventually top one million. While the implications for India are dire, global policymakers would be reckless to think that the impact will be limited to one country.

That is because the more the coronavirus spreads and replicates in India, the more it will mutate. Uncontrolled circulation of the virus will lead to the emergence of novel variants that can prolong the pandemic. The B.1.617 variant responsible for the carnage in India has already been observed in 19 other countries, including the United States. Recent reports also suggest that this variant can potentially evade the immune response, which would further exacerbate the strain on health systems. In addition, we do not yet know how much protection currently approved COVID-19 vaccines can provide against B.1.617, which could threaten the effectiveness of global vaccination campaigns.

Worryingly, the emergence of this variant also threatens vulnerable health systems in other low-resource countries, including India's neighbours, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have high population densities, insufficient intensive-care capacity and ventilators, and current COVID-19 vaccination rates below 5 per cent. Healthcare capacity is also se-

verely limited in poorer countries in Africa and in South America, which is still recovering from the unchecked spread of the Brazil variant. If B.1.617 can cause so much damage in India – a country with moderate health-system capacity – its spread could devastate less well-equipped countries.

India's travails represent a sudden and sharp reversal. The country supplies more than 60 per cent of vaccines globally, and it was supposed to lead efforts to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines for numerous countries. But with the new variant crushing India's health system, it is unclear how long it will take to increase production capacity. India is currently running out of COVID-19 vaccines, and the Serum Institute of India – the world's largest vaccine manufacturer – is unable to boost production for the time being. Economists were already projecting that low-resource countries may not achieve widespread COVID-19 vaccine coverage until 2023. The current crisis will further impede global post-pandemic recovery.

The international community must now join forces and develop a collective approach to support India in this crucial phase, not only as a moral imperative, but also because the health of other countries' populations and economies are at stake. Governments can take several

steps to mitigate the impact.

First, the US, which has lost almost 600,000 citizens to COVID-19 (more than any other country), should play a leading role. Although President Joe Biden's administration has promised to donate 60 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, recent reports suggest that it could take up to two months to deliver them. This process needs to be expedited. The US should also lead efforts to share the raw materials required to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines to help increase production capacity in India.

Second, the international community should join the US in supporting a worldwide waiver of intellectual property (IP) related to COVID-19 supplies, including vaccines – a move that India and South Africa have long advocated at the World Trade Organisation. With less than 2 per cent of Indians fully vaccinated, the urgency of the waiver cannot be overstated. And as Jeffrey D. Sachs recently explained, there are mechanisms for maintaining pharmaceutical innovation while promoting vaccination efforts in India and elsewhere, including compensating IP holders and limiting the scope and duration of any waiver.

Countries should also coordinate with the World Health Organisation to increase India's health-system capacity. China,

which built a hospital in five days when infections surged in the country earlier this year, can advise on how to scale up capacity. Nigeria and the US can provide technical assistance in converting large sports facilities into COVID-19 patient-isolation units in order to reduce the burden on hospitals.

Countries that have partly recovered from the pandemic should also share oxygen concentrators and ventilators. And international professional medical organisations can combine their resources and develop protocols to deliver essential supplies, including oxygen, personal protective equipment, and medications.

As some countries finally start to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, policymakers should not forget the pandemic's most important lesson: no country is safe until every country is safe. While India's crisis has highlighted the global nature of public health, it has also presented an opportunity to demonstrate once again the benefits of international collaboration.

*The writer, a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute, is a member of the Working Group on Regulatory Considerations for Digital Health and Innovation at the World Health Organisation.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE

## Virus Sans Frontier

At a time when India is fast turning into a crematorium due to the fury of the second wave of COVID-19, a ruthless and cynical private business has started within the country and outside over the production and supply of vaccines to tackle the pandemic. The government and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi seem to have lost their voice and are watching the agony and helplessness of millions of people like mute spectators. The letter written by the BJP president JP Nadda to Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi for her trenchant criticism of the government's handling of the pandemic is even worse. He accuses the Congress of "weakening the fight against COVID-19" and makes the ludicrous claim that India's fight against the pandemic, led by Modi, is "driven by unwavering belief in principles of science, support to innovation, trust in our Covid warriors and cooperative federalism." The BJP is still continuing with its bombast.

In fact, the government's policy of liberalising the two vaccines - Covishield and Covaxin - looks like a ploy to wash its hands off the botched up delivery system and tailor-made for the private operators to make windfall profit cashing in on the people's fear for their life. In the first place, all over the country, it has led to wide differences in the prices that private hospitals are charging for the shots. In metros, this is not just inter-city, but also intra-city. One report reveals as per the Co-WIN portal at the beginning of this week the H N Reliance Hospital in Mumbai is charging ₹700 per dose for Covishield – ₹100 more than the price at which the Serum Institute of India (SII) sold the vaccine to private hospitals. The Nanavati Hospital in the city has set a price of ₹900 for one shot. Other hospitals like Dr BL Kapur Hospital in Delhi and Max Healthcare in North India which, like Nanavati, are also charging this rate as per Co-WIN data.

Similarly, the current rate specified by Apollo Hospitals and Fortis Healthcare for a dose of Covaxin across the country is ₹1,250 on Co-WIN which is ₹50 more than the price set by Bharat Biotech for the private market. However, those seeking Covaxin at Kolkata's Woodlands Hospital would have to pay ₹1,500 per dose, going by Co-WIN. As of May 5, Bangalore's BGS Gleneagles Global Hospital was also charging ₹1,500 per jab for Covaxin. It, however, clarified that its ₹1,500 charge was set for walk-in patients "only for the first two days, before the pricing and delivery mechanisms were optimised." It currently administers Covaxin at ₹1,250 and charges ₹1,500 when it administers the vaccine in corporate offices or apartment buildings, as they involve additional travel and logistic costs.

According to some experts, the different rates are likely to cause disparity in access to vaccines. Most of the supply to private operators is now cornered by select private hospitals which are setting their own prices, while states are scrambling to access doses. The Orissa government has been forced to float a global tender for getting enough vaccines to inoculate the state's entire population as the Centre and the private hospitals have simply failed to supply adequate number of doses. There is complete lack of transparency in the system and it looks like the prices may stabilise if the supply picks up following the simple rule of demand and supply. In other words, even in such times of national calamity the government has left vaccination to the profit-making, blood-thirsty market forces leaving the common man to wolve.

On the other hand, in the US, the Biden administration's laudable announcement last week that it would support waiving patent protections for Covid-19 vaccines has remained only a statement of intent without tangible action till now. The gesture cannot be translated into reality as yet because of the vaccine manufacturers' strong lobby which is pleading that the step would reduce their profits. Experts in the USA point out these companies have already made phenomenal profits by supplying their vaccines to different countries. Leaders of some wealthy European nations, including France and Germany, have opposed the relaxation of patents and are closing ranks among the member nations of the World Trade Organisation on the same page with them. But, in their own selfish interest they should stop thinking of profiting from vaccine business as the current superspread of the virus in India or anywhere else would also affect their lives since the virus does not bow to geographical boundaries.

Merely waving patents is not enough. The need of the hour is to gear up manufacturing vaccines, Richard Besser, former acting director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention under President Barack Obama told the New York Times (NYT). "It's going to take a concerted effort to transfer technology" to the rest of the world. What is of vital importance is ramping up indigenous production of vaccines with whatever technology is available. An international non-profit organisation, CARE, according to a NYT report, has pointed out equal emphasis has to be given on effective distribution of vaccine doses. It has estimated that effectively distributing a vaccine dose costs, on an average, five times as much as producing them. Even in countries where a large number of vaccine doses are available, many are going unused for lack of distribution infrastructure, including scarce medical staff to administer the doses. India is a victim of such a situation and paying for it with uncounted precious lives.

### WISDOM CORNER

- Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work. **THOMAS A. EDISON**
- Nothing ever comes to one, that is worth having, except as a result of hard work. **BOOKER T. WASHINGTON**
- A smile is the light in your window that tells others that there is a caring, sharing person inside. **DENIS WATLEY**

### WORDSWORTH

#### Mumchance

This is a rare recent appearance: His attendance was perfect. He attended every possible meeting. And he sat mumchance throughout every meeting. I suppose it's how you define work. You can sit like a lump throughout hundreds of meetings. Or you can engage your brain to question and to challenge (Selkirk Weekend Advertiser, 11 March 2010). You may deduce that to remain mumchance is to stay silent, with a hint that to do so may be a sign of inferior intellect. In fact, in some English dialects its main sense has been remaining stupidly or solidly silent. However, its first meaning was of a game of dice: But, leaving cards, lets go to dice a while, To passage, treitrippe, hazarde, or mumchance. Machivell's Dog, an anonymous satire of 1617. The second of these games is frequently spelled trey-trip, because success in playing it depended on the casting of a trey, a three. Nobody now seems to know the exact rules, though as it was often mentioned in the same breath as the dice game hazard, ancestor of craps, it's assumed that it was similar. The form and meaning of mumchance suggest it ought to be a close relative of mum in phrases like keep mum, stay silent. There is indeed a close connection, though the words have different origins. Mum is an imitative term known from the fourteenth century, while mumchance is sixteenth century, from Middle Dutch mommeance, which has cousins in other Germanic languages and in French. Paradoxically, the link between the dice game and silence is the notoriously noisy carnival, since it was traditionally played in the Netherlands during such festivities, in particular by mummers, masked actors in dumb-show. Mumchance was always played in silence, hence the sense. The game of hazard, by the way, is the source of our word meaning a risk or danger. Mumchance seems to have been similarly perilous, as it evolved to mean a high-risk venture and continued in use in that sense after the dice game had been forgotten. The same name was also given to a card game, whose rules are as poorly recorded as those of the dice game, but which was also played in silence.



Junaid Nabi

**THE MORE THE CORONAVIRUS SPREADS AND REPLICATES IN INDIA, THE MORE IT WILL MUTATE. UNCONTROLLED CIRCULATION OF THE VIRUS WILL LEAD TO THE EMERGENCE OF NOVEL VARIANTS THAT CAN PROLONG THE PANDEMIC**

### IN JEST THIS

# Consider all factors before getting a divorce

Bill and Melinda Gates announced recently that they are getting divorced after 27 years of marriage. The Microsoft co-founder and his wife are worth a combined \$124 billion and have given away a portion of their wealth through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

"After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage," the couple said in a statement.

Their words indicate that they did not take divorce lightly. That's probably why their marriage lasted 27 years. Most celebrity couples have trouble getting their marriages to last 27 months.

Actor Nicolas Cage, for example, was married to Lisa Marie Presley for only 108 days. But you have to give the couple some credit. At least their marriage lasted 27 times longer than Cage's marriage to Erika Koike, which lasted four days.

While most western countries have divorce rates above 40 per

cent, India's divorce rate is estimated to be around 1 per cent, among the lowest in the world. Does that mean that 99 per cent of married people in India are happy in their marriages? No, it means that 99 per cent of married people in India are unable to find anyone better.

The truth is more complicated than that, of course. Divorce is a messy process and most people just don't want to go through with it, even if it means staying in a marriage that brings them as much happiness as a genital wart.

But as divorce becomes more acceptable in India, the divorce rate is bound to increase. If you're in an unhappy marriage and contemplating divorce, I have just one word of advice for you: Don't.

Well, perhaps that's a little too strong. Divorce may indeed be the right move for you, depending on your circumstances. But before you go through with it, here are some points to ponder:

1. It's not all about you. Personal

happiness should not be your only consideration. Think of the kids. How is it going to affect them? If you don't have kids, think of your parents and your in-laws? How is it going to affect them? Okay, perhaps you may not really care how your divorce might affect your in-laws, but don't be surprised if your mother-in-law cries for weeks or your father-in-law calls you names he normally reserves for other motorists on the highway.

2. Don't use another couple's marriage as a model. They may look really happy, especially in those romantic photos they share on social media, but do you really know what's going on in their marriage? Perhaps he's smiling in the photo because he just received a text from the woman he's having a torrid affair with, and perhaps she's smiling because she just wrote a love letter to a man she met online, a soon-to-be-single billionaire named Bill.

3. Divorce won't necessarily make you happier. A study conducted in America found that

among couples in unhappy marriages, those who get divorced are just as unhappy five years later as those who stay married. It's better to be unhappy with a little company than to be unhappy all alone. 4. Things could get better. Don't assume that a bad marriage will always be a bad marriage. In ten years, it might become an "okay marriage." And ten years after that, it might become an "almost-good marriage." You might find yourself saying, "I'll get a divorce only if a divorce lawyer sends me a discount coupon."

5. Think of all the shared assets you have. Do you really want to split them? It's not just the kids you'll be fighting over – it's also the pets, the furniture, the yellowing copies of Reader's Digest that you just can't part with.

There are many good reasons to consider divorce, of course. It's up to you to decide whether to keep the marriage going or, like Bill and Melinda Gates, split your wealth with a divorce lawyer.

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Ensure vaccine equity

Sir, The article "Patent Waiver Necessary" by Ajit Ranade rightly points out the bottlenecks associated with the production and distribution of the vaccine. Governments across the globe are intensifying their combat against Covid-19 and mass vaccination drives have been their top most priority in this direction. But the mass vaccination drive is being adversely affected because of low scale production vaccine and unequal distribution of it among all the countries. To increase production there has been demand for waiver of Trade Related aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). A few big pharmaceutical companies have been able to produce the vaccine and these are reluctant to share the techniques and process of production. The monopoly of these companies needs to be addressed and other companies with requisite parameters must be allowed to manufacture the vaccines. The US plays a crucial role in this regard too, which holds the larger share of production of the vaccine. The US must be humanitarian in its approach for the greater production and distribution of vaccines. Along with it the equal distribution of vaccines among all countries is also a prime concern. The developed countries with a lesser demographic concentration are ahead where as the developing and underdeveloped countries with a higher density of population are lagging behind the vaccination drive. As the inoculation process is heavily relying on the internet for its mass distribution through online registration, the people with greater accessibility to information technology in the urban areas have an edge over those who do not have access to it living in rural areas. To ensure global peace and prosperity all the countries must work in tandem and the policy of equity must be followed to put a check on the casualty caused by the pandemic.

**Sanjib Kumar Sahu, BHAWANIPATNA**

### Dignity to deceased

Sir, Bodies of suspected COVID-19 victims floating at Mahadeo Ghat of the Ganga at Chausa village in Bihar have sent alarm bells ringing. Villagers stumbled upon the decomposed and bloated bodies numbering about a dozen on Monday. The sight of stray dogs near the bodies has raised concerns that the virus could spread. Reports suggest that the skyrocketing cost of cremation could have forced the poor to dump the bodies in the river. The authorities would do well to slash firewood prices so that families could give the deceased a dignified farewell.

**NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

# Gujarat govt faces HC fire over Covid hospital blaze

# Only 45+ in Maha to get vax for now

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 11: Maharashtra Tuesday said it is 'slowing down' the Covid vaccination process for those in the 18-44 age group to focus on those over 45 due to a shortage of doses in the state. There will, however, be no stopping the vaccination process, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope said.

Amid a shortage of COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Maharashtra government Tuesday decided to divert three lakh vials of Covaxin meant for the 18-44 age group for the use of the people aged 45 years and above.

Speaking to reporters, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope also said more than five lakh people above 45 years are awaiting the second dose for the want of the vaccine.

"Efficacy of the vaccine is largely affected if the second dose is not administered in a stipulated time. To avoid such health crisis, the state government has decided to divert three lakh vials (of Covaxin) purchased for the 18-44 age category for the people above 45 years," Tope said.

He said only 35,000 vials of Covaxin are currently available with the state government for administering the second dose to the people above 45 years.

According to the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy, COVID-19 vaccination is free at government vaccination centres that receive doses from the Centre for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above the 45 years of age.

However, states and private hos-



Central Railway staff members wait to receive COVID-19 vaccine doses at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai, Tuesday. PTI PHOTO

**Efficacy of the vaccine is largely affected if the second dose is not administered in a stipulated time. To avoid such health crisis, the state government has decided to divert three lakh vials (of Covaxin) purchased for the 18-44 age category for the people above 45 years**

RAJESH TOPE | HEALTH MINISTER

pitals have to procure 50 per cent of the vaccines in order to immunise persons in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

Maharashtra reported 40,956 new COVID-19 cases Tuesday, a sharp rise from 37,236 logged a day ago, taking the tally to 51,79,929, while 793 more patients succumbed

to the infection, said the state health department. Monday, the number of daily coronavirus cases (37,236) in the state had dropped below 40,000 for the first time since March 31. A day later, the state recorded a jump of 3,720 cases to again breach the 40,000-mark. With 40,956 COVID-19 infections, the state's caseload increased to 51,79,929, while 793 deaths upped the fatality count to 77,191, said the health department.

Maharashtra, the worst COVID-19-hit state in the country, had reported 39,544 cases March 31. The state had registered 54,022 cases May 7, 53,605 May 8 and 48,401 May 9. Of the 793 fatalities, 403 had occurred in the past 48 hours, while 170 took place last week and 220 people died before the last week, but were added to the toll Tuesday, the department said.

**A BENCH OF JUSTICES BELA TRIVEDI AND BHARGAV D KARIA SAYS, "SOMEBODY HAS TO BE MADE ACCOUNTABLE" FOR THE DEADLY FIRE**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 11: The Gujarat High Court Tuesday criticised the state government over the recent fire at a COVID-19 hospital in Bharuch, saying it was contemptuous on its part to not remain vigilant and avoid such incidents, and cited many orders passed in this regard in the past.

A division bench expressed surprise over Advocate General Kamal Trivedi's submission that the COVID-19 facility at the trust-run Bharuch Welfare Hospital, where the fire May 1 killed 18 people, was set up "surreptitiously, without intimating the authorities".

Sixteen COVID-19 patients and two nurses were killed in the blaze.

The bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Bhargav D Karia said that "somebody has to be made accountable" for the deadly fire. The bench was hearing a petition filed by advocate Amit Panchal seek-



ing a direction to hold government officials accountable and punish them for failing to comply with the court's previous directions related to fire incidents in COVID-19 hospitals.

"The anxiety of the court is what are you supposed to do to prevent such incidents in the coming days... Ultimately, what are the measures that you are going to take?" the court asked.

The judges said the government failed to take action on the court's previous orders pertaining to all hospitals in the state so that fire incidents do not occur again at these medical facilities.

"It amounts to the contempt of

courts of all the orders passed by the courts in the past. Ultimately, it amounts to the contemptuous action on the part of the state for not being vigilant so that such incidents are not repeated again and again," the bench said.

The court said the government's affidavit, filed in the matter, only talks about letters issued by top authorities but was silent on actions taken by lower-level officials pursuant to previous orders passed by the court.

Trivedi said the fire-hit COVID-19 facility in Bharuch town was set up "surreptitiously, without intimating the authorities," and hence no-objection certificate (NOC)

on fire safety could not be issued by local authorities to the new unit.

The court expressed surprise over Trivedi's submission and said if the state was not intimidated about a COVID-19 facility, how was it possible for it to compile data on coronavirus patients who are hospitalised. The bench also issued notices to the Bharuch municipality, the trust which runs the hospital, its nodal officer for fire safety and the government, and kept the matter for hearing after two weeks.

On the petitioner's plea to make public, the DA Mehta Commission of Inquiry report on fire incidents at two Gujarat hospitals, the government told the HC the report was submitted late in the evening March 31 this year and could not be tabled in the Assembly as its session got over April 1.

The Mehta commission had probed the fire incidents at two hospitals - one in Rajkot (November 11, 2020) and the other in Ahmedabad (August 2020) - in which altogether 13 COVID-19 patients were killed.

"As per the provisions of the Commission of Inquiry, the report is required to be studied, prepared, and thereafter tabled before the Assembly. There is no question of keeping the report under carpet or else we should not have appointed a commission," Trivedi told the court.

# ED case against Anil Deshmukh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 11: Maha Vikas Aghadi allies NCP and Congress Tuesday termed the Enforcement Directorate's move to file a criminal case against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh as the politics of revenge and said the action was aimed at diverting the people's attention from 'failure' of the Modi government in tackling the pandemic.

The NCP accused the BJP of trying to defame the state government as well as the Sharad Pawar-led party. The ED filed the case under the anti-money laundering law in an alleged "bribery" case after studying a CBI FIR that was filed against Deshmukh late last month.

The Bombay High Court had earlier directed the CBI to conduct a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) against Deshmukh after former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh raised allegations of corruption against the senior NCP leader.

Maharashtra Minority Affairs

Minister and NCP's national spokesperson Nawab Malik Tuesday said Deshmukh, a senior NCP leader, will cooperate in the probe.

The Congress, which is one of the constituents of the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government besides the NCP, dubbed the ED's move as an attempt to cover up the Modi government's "failure" to manage the pandemic by diverting the public attention.

"Right from Singh's allegations to the filing of the case by the ED, it is all politically motivated and aimed at defaming him (Deshmukh) by misusing power. It is clear that the BJP is playing politics using the CBI, ED and other Central agencies," Malik said in a statement.

The ED filed the case with a "political motive" to defame the state government and the NCP, he said. "Whatever the legal aspects, Deshmukh ji will cooperate in the probe," he added. In a series of tweets, Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant alleged the ED case reflects the "dangerous politics" being pursued by the Modi government which is "detrimental" to democracy. "...It's an attempt to cover up Modi govt's failure to handle Corona crisis & divert public's attention, as well as political revenge," Sawant tweeted. Sawant said the action has been taken based on the "lies" of Singh.

# Mumbai hospital moves SC seeking O2



A patient, having breathing issues, carries an oxygen cylinder on her lap while being taken home after her discharge from a hospital, at Dharavi in Mumbai. PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 11: A Mumbai-based private hospital has moved the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre and the Maharashtra government to take urgent steps to ensure sufficient supply of Oxygen to it for saving lives of COVID-19 patients.

The plea said it is a COVID hospital with 90 beds of which 13 are hi-tech ICU facilities and the hospitals which are requisitioned by BMC can retain 20 per cent of the beds for non-COVID patients. It said that from April 12, 2021, oxygen was denied by a private medical gas provider to it and the hospital had to shift the pa-

tients to other hospitals.

"At a time when there is great shortage of beds and ICU facilities for the treatment of COVID patients, the petitioner Hospital, one well equipped with all modern, hybrid facilities for COOVID treatment, is forced to remain hand-capped, practically closed," the plea said. The hospital claimed it was even willing to pay five times the approved rates for oxygen but the private medical gas provider demanded a minimum of 10 times the official rate. The petitioner hospital said that they had complained to BMC, police authorities and even made representations to various other authorities but it had not

received any help of any kind.

"The said representations to the various authorities unfortunately fell only on deaf ears at a time when the state continues to face an extreme emergency where death stares in large numbers of COVID patients, who are struggling to breathe and require immediate supply of oxygen", it said. The hospital also alleged black marketing of medical grade oxygen in the state and sought action by authorities against the medical gas providers. The top court is currently seized of a suo motu case on ensuring supplies of essential commodities and services for management of COVID-19.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit

# MVA delegation meets Guv over Maratha quota issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 11: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Tuesday met Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari and requested him to take up the issue of Maratha quota with President Ram Nath Kovind and the Union government.

A delegation of the ruling coalition leaders led by Thackeray met the governor days after the Supreme Court struck down the quota in education and government jobs for Marathas in Maharashtra.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government will also approach Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue, Thackeray told reporters later.

The MVA - which has often been at loggerheads with the BJP-led Union government - hoped for a decision on the issue soon as the law granting quota to the community had been backed by all parties including the BJP, he said.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit

Pawar and ministers Ashok Chavan, Jayant Patil, Balasaheb Thorat, Eknath Shinde, Dilip Walse Patil and state Congress chief Nana Patole were part of the delegation.

The Supreme Court May 5 held the Maharashtra law granting quota to Marathas as unconstitutional. The majority ruling also said that states cannot decide the list of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) and only the President has the power to notify it.

"The verdict says the power to grant reservation is with the President, Centre and not states. So we met the governor, requesting him to convey our sentiments to the President and Centre. He (Koshiyari) said he will convey our sentiments," Thackeray said.

"We have also decided to meet the honourable prime minister as soon as possible," he added.

He has also written a letter to the prime minister on the issue, Thackeray informed.



# Curbs extended in 36 Guj cities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 11: The Gujarat government Tuesday extended night curfew and other restrictions in 36 cities in the state for another week in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

The curfew between 8 pm to 6 am in 36 cities including Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara, imposed May 6, will be in force till May 18, said a government release. Originally it was to last till May 12. The decision was taken by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani after a meeting of the government's core group on the pandemic.

During the day, the shops selling essential things including medicines, milk and vegetables will be allowed to remain open in these 36 cities. Vegetable and fruit markets, grocery shops, tiffin services, bakeries, takeaway counters at hotels and restaurants, petrol and CNG pumps can also remain open.

Newspaper distribution, telecom services, security services,



postal services, transport and e-commerce services are allowed. Factories can continue to run and construction activities can go on. Educational institutions, auditoriums, theatres, malls, community halls, water parks, commercial complexes, spas, gyms, gardens, swimming pools, beauty parlours will remain closed.

As in the previous week, there will be a total ban on all kinds of religious, political or social gatherings across the state.

While religious places will remain shut for the public between May 12 and 18, sports complexes and stadiums can remain open without spectators, said the release.

# Docs warn against cow dung 'therapy' to boost immunity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 11: Doctors in Gujarat have warned against a so-called 'cow-dung therapy', saying smearing of cow dung on the body does not give protection against coronavirus but may cause other infections including mucormycosis.

A small group of people has been visiting a cow shelter run by Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Vishwavidya Prathisthanam (SGVP) here to take the therapy, believing that it increases immunity against COVID-19.

The shelter houses over 200 cows. For the last one month, around 15 persons visit it every Sunday to apply cow dung and cow urine on the body. It is then washed off with cow milk, said an SGVP official.

Those taking the therapy include some frontline workers and people working at medical stores, he said.

Doctors, however, do not vouch for its efficacy. "I don't know if this



therapy would really help people. I have never come across any re-

search which suggested that application of cow dung on the body

would increase immunity against coronavirus," said Dr Dileep

Mavlankar, Director of the Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar.

Dr Mona Desai, a senior doctor from the city, termed the therapy as "humbug and inauthentic".

"Cow dung is nothing but body waste. Applying cow dung and urine can never boost immunity or protect you from coronavirus. People should consult doctors and stay away from such therapies," said Dr Desai, chairperson of the women's wing of the Indian Medical Association (IMA).

"Instead of proving helpful, cow dung would give you other infections, including mucormycosis," she said.

Mucormycosis, also called black fungus infection, has been observed among some COVID-19 survivors and can be fatal.

"Since cow dung also carries several fungi, they may enter into the body and infect you. I urge people to be little aware and not put their lives in danger," said Desai.



At present, there are only two companies which are developing Covid vaccines. However, India is scrambling to get adequate vaccines. We should not be dependent on just two firms on vaccines as demand has increased at multiple folds in the county

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

PM HAILS SCIENTISTS, INNOVATORS ON NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY

PM Narendra Modi Tuesday said that in any challenging situation, the country's scientists and innovators have always risen to the occasion and over the last year have worked industriously to fight COVID-19. The National Technology Day marks the anniversary of the underground nuclear tests conducted in Rajasthan's Pokhran in 1998



of the day quote

BJP government spending a small amount of Rs 20,000 crore for the Central Vista including a modest new house for the PM. Criticism unjustified

Now, there is a new trend in the Congress party to put all the blame on the Central Vista project. I would like to remind you that the need for a new Parliament was raised as early as the UPA times

JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

People from across the world helped in realisation of the dream of this centre. We got cylinders from Dubai, monitors from London, oxygen concentrators from Germany and we are expecting five ventilator beds from London in the next 2-3 days

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

TMC leader shot at in Hooghly dist

Chinsurah (WB): A TMC leader was shot at by unidentified miscreants in West Bengal's Hooghly district Tuesday when he was buying vegetables at a local market, a police officer said.

Train knocks tiger cub dead

Betul (MP): A tiger cub was mowed down Tuesday by a speeding train in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district, a forest official said.

Oxygen tanker leak injures 1

Panaji: One person received minor injuries due to leakage of an oxygen tanker at a South Goa hospital Tuesday, an official said.

3 die in firecracker factory blast

Harda (MP): At least three people were killed while two others were reportedly injured following an explosion in an alleged fire cracker factory operating from a house in Madhya Pradesh's Harda district.

WHO warns against ivermectin use to treat Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 11: A day after Goa's Health Minister Vishwajit Rane recommended ivermectin to all above 18 to combat Covid in the state, the World Health Organisation Tuesday has warned against its use.

Safety and efficacy are important when using any drug for a new indication. @WHO recommends against the use of ivermectin for #COVID19 except within clinical trials, Soumya Swaminathan, the global health body's chief scientist, said in a tweet.

The Goa state government

Monday cleared a new Covid treatment protocol which recommends all residents above the age of 18 to take five tablets of the ivermectin drug, in order to prevent the steep and sometimes fatal viral fever, which accompanies a Covid-19 infection.

Rane, while speaking to reporters, said that the ivermectin drug would be made available at all health centres in the state and should be taken by all residents, irrespective of whether they have Covid-19 symptoms or otherwise.

Last week, a peer-reviewed research had claimed that global ivermectin use can end Covid-19 pan-



dem, as the medicine significantly reduces the risk of contracting the deadly respiratory disease when used regularly.

The peer review, which included

three US government senior scientists and was published in the American Journal of Therapeutics, touted the common anti-parasitic ivermectin as a miracle cure for

Covid-19 by doctors and campaigners the world over.

In her tweet, Swaminathan also attached a warning issued by the German health care and life sciences giant Merck.

Scientists continue to carefully examine the findings of all available and emerging studies of ivermectin for the treatment of Covid-19, read the statement from Merck.

The WHO had, in March, issued a similar warning against the use of ivermectin in treating Covid patients. The global health agency said that there was a very low certainty of evidence on ivermectin's effects on mortality, hospital ad-

mission and getting rid of the virus from the body.

Rane also stated that expert panels from the UK, Italy, Spain and Japan, found a large, statistically significant reduction in mortality, time to recovery and viral clearance in Covid-19 patients treated with ivermectin. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had also, in April last year, recommended against the use of ivermectin in treating Covid patients. Besides, the Union ministry of health and family welfare had also reportedly opted out from including Ivermectin in its official Clinical Management Protocol for Covid-19 last year.

Recoveries outnumber new cases after 61 days

In the last 24 hours, India reported 3,29,942 fresh cases, while as many as 3,56,082 people recovered from the disease. India's cumulative recoveries stood at 1,90,27,304 Tuesday, with a national recovery rate of 82.75 per cent



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 11: For the first time in 61 days, recoveries outnumbered new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, providing some relief to the country which is reeling under the raging second wave of the pandemic for some time now.

In the last 24 hours, India reported 3,29,942 fresh cases, while as many as 3,56,082 people recovered from the disease during the same time period. India's cumulative recoveries stood at 1,90,27,304 Tuesday, with a national recovery rate is 82.75 per cent.

An early trend of decline in daily new COVID-19 cases and deaths has been noted in the country, the government said Tuesday.

According to the government,

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana were among 18 states and union territories showing continued plateauing or decrease in daily new COVID-19 cases.

Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal, however, said Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Assam, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura were among 16 states and union territories showing continued increasing trend in daily new COVID-19 cases.

The number of districts with a week-on-week increase in weekly tests and decline in positivity rate has increased from 73 (April 15-21) to 182 (April 29-May 5).

Prioritise beneficiaries for 2nd dose: Centre

New Delhi: The Centre appealed to states Tuesday to prioritise vaccinating those due for second dose of COVID-19 vaccine and reserve at least 70 per cent of the shots supplied from the central pool for the purpose. States have also been urged to minimise wastage of vaccine doses, the health ministry said in a statement.

States have also been urged to minimise wastage of vaccine doses, the health ministry said in a statement. All wastage more than the national average hereafter, is to be adjusted from the subsequent allocations to that state or union territory. The urgent need to address a large number of benefi-

ciaries waiting for second dose of vaccine was stressed in a meeting held by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Dr R S Sharma, the Chairman of Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management to Combat COVID-19, with state officials to review the status of COVID-19 vaccination Tuesday. This however is indicative. States have the liberty to enhance this to as much as 100 per cent. State-wise numbers on CoWIN have been shared with states for their planning purposes.

Districts which are showing continued decline in cases since last two weeks include Pune, Nagpur, Palghar and Nashik districts of Maharashtra; Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar (Uttar Pradesh); Bhopal, Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh); Surat (Gujarat); Patna (Bihar); Ranchi (Jharkhand); Raipur, Durg (Chhattisgarh); and Kota (Rajasthan).

Districts showing continued increase in cases since last two weeks are Bengaluru Urban and Mysuru in Karnataka; Chennai, Chengalpattu and Thiruvallur in Tamil Nadu; Ernakulam and Malappuram in Kerala; 24 Paraganas North and Kolkata in West Bengal; Jaipur in Rajasthan; Dehradun in Uttarakhand; East Godavari and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh; Satara in Maharashtra;

and Khordha in Odisha.

Thirteen states have more than 1 lakh active COVID-19 cases each and 26 states have a positivity rate of over 15 per cent, the government said. Citing the case of Pune, he said night curfew alone with no restriction on gatherings has shown less significance in terms of controlling the growth trajectory of daily new cases.

He said stricter measures such as restrictions on mass gatherings and shutting of non-essential activities for a period of 15 days have helped reduce the rate of infection growth and the cases started plateauing.

India has been reeling under a calamitous second wave of the coronavirus infection. However, the daily numbers of deaths and infections have started to go down.

Cong forms panel to probe poll debacle

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 11: Interim Congress President Sonia Gandhi Tuesday constituted a committee to investigate the reasons for the party's losses in the recently concluded assembly polls.

The Committee will be headed by Maharashtra Public Works Department Minister Ashok Chavan while former ministers Salman Khurshid, Manish Tewari and Vincent Pala are among its members. The other member is Tamil Nadu MP Jothi Mani. The committee will give its report in two weeks.

The significant inclusion is Tewari who was part of the group which wrote the letter to Sonia Gandhi for organisational elec-



tions. Earlier, Gandhi had said in the CWC meet I intend to set up a small panel to look at every aspect that caused such reverses (in the elections) and report back very quickly. We need to candidly understand why we failed to dislodge the incumbent governments in Kerala and Assam, and we drew a complete blank in West Bengal,

This CWC meeting was convened to discuss the results of the recently-held Assembly polls. She had said that party has to take note of the serious setbacks. "To say that we are deeply disappointed is to make an understatement," she said.

"These will yield uncomfortable lessons, but if we do not face up to the reality, if we do not look the facts in the face, we will not draw the right lessons," she added.

During the meeting, all the state in-charges presented their views on the recent poll debacle, with the party's West Bengal in-charge Jitin Prasad saying the alliance with the Indian Secular Front (ISF), formed by preacher-turned-politician Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui, ruined the Congress' prospects in the state.

AUTO AMBULANCE



Three wheeler auto union starts the Auto Ambulance service for COVID-19 patients in Lucknow, Tuesday

Japan, UNDP join hands to boost O2 supply in northeast India

TO ENSURE UNINTERRUPTED OXYGEN SUPPLY, THE SUPPORT FROM THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN HAS ENABLED JAPAN IN PROCURING AND INSTALLING EIGHT OXYGEN GENERATION PLANTS IN THE NORTHEASTERN STATES OF MEGHALAYA, NAGALAND AND TRIPURA

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 11: As the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread virulently in India, the government of Japan and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) have partnered to provide oxygen generation plants to northeastern states.

A statement issued by the UNDP India said that since June 2020, the Japanese government and the agency have been jointly supporting the Centre's battle against the pandemic by strengthening health and social protection systems and reviving livelihoods of the most vulnerable population.

In the ongoing pandemic, which is overwhelming health systems across the country, one of the key

challenges has been acute shortage of medical oxygen.

To ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply, the support from the people of Japan has enabled UNDP in procuring and installing eight Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants in the northeastern states of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

The hospitals, with a capacity of approximately 1,300 beds, have been identified in the region for the oxygen generation plants.

Excess oxygen will be distributed among other health facilities in the hospitals' vicinity.

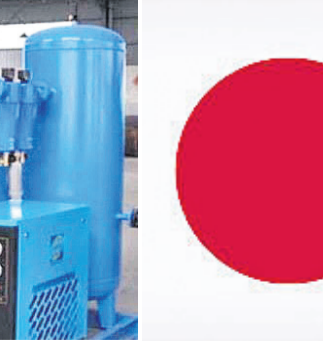
The installation sites are being prepared so that the oxygen production can start at the earliest possible, the UNDP India said.

In addition, the UNDP has also



been supporting the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with digitisation of supply chain of vaccines and tracking beneficiaries across states to ensure better access and coverage.

It has also helped build capacities of 820,500 frontline workers across



the country to support the 'world's largest vaccination drive', the statement said.

The government of Japan has also committed a sizable commitment of providing critical items to India, including ventilators and oxygen concentrators.



In a statement, Satoshi Suzuki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to India, said Japan stands with India, our friend and partner, in her efforts to fight against Covid-19 pandemic in this critical time. I am pleased that Japan is working with the UNDP to

provide vital oxygen generation plants for the people of India's northeast. The northeast occupies a special place for Japan-India relations and I sincerely hope that the oxygen generation plants will help those people in need.

Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India, thanked the people of Japan for this critical support that will allow the agency to ensure uninterrupted flow of oxygen in hospitals and health centres in the region, especially those in hard-to-reach areas.

The situation in India is devastating and the pandemic continues to threaten millions of lives. The UNDP urgently needs additional support to ensure that we reach the last mile to leave no one behind, she said.



# national

## of the day quote

I have given directions to the police not to use force but we need people's cooperation for at least 14 days to make lockdown successful



**BASAVARAJ BOMMAI** | KARNATAKA HOME MINISTER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted this pandemic as a challenge and the government is doing everything possible to tackle this challenge



**RAJNATH SINGH** | DEFENCE MINISTER

The Delhi government will float a global tender for procuring coronavirus vaccines



**MANISH SISODIA** | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Elected legislators take oath in TN

**Chennai:** The newly elected legislators of the Tamil Nadu assembly started taking oath Tuesday with Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin was the first among them. Pro-term Speaker K. Pitchandi administered the oath to Stalin. The oath taking ceremony of all the 234 legislators will be completed on Tuesday itself as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will be elected Wednesday, May 12. The DMK won 133 seats including 8 of its coalition partners (MDMK, MMK, TVK and MNMK) who won in the "Rising Sun" symbol of the party. The Congress, its alliance partner won 18 seats while VCK, CPM and CPI won 4 seats each.

### 1971 war veteran passes away

**Mumbai:** Squadron Leader Anil Bhalla (Retd), who as a young Flying Officer flew MiG-21 sorties during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, has died after battling coronavirus, his family sources said Tuesday. The 74-year-old flying ace, a native of Mumbai, died Monday night at Hyderabad where he had settled after retirement from the Air Force in 1984, the sources said.

### Cloudburst hits Devprayag

**New Tehri (U'khand):** A cloudburst hits Devprayag in Tehri district of Uttarakhand Tuesday, razing two municipal buildings to the ground and damaging several shops. It also damaged pedestrian bridges, water pipelines and electricity supply lines, an official said. The cloudburst occurred over the Shanta river, causing inundation of areas along its banks with a huge amount of slush containing boulders, SHO of the Devprayag police station Mahipal Singh Rawat said. A number of shops in the Dashrath Danda Parvat area of Devprayag were also damaged in the cloudburst, the SHO said.

### PM Modi speaks to Bhutan PM

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with his Bhutanese counterpart Lotay Tshering Tuesday as the two leaders noted that the coronavirus crisis has further highlighted the special friendship between the two countries. The Bhutanese prime minister expressed solidarity with the government and the people of India in their efforts against the recent wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.



The government is unable to provide treatment, vaccines and even honorable last rites to the deceased

**AJAY MAKEN** | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

## ASSAM GETS FIRST WOMAN FINANCE MINISTER

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Tuesday allocated the finance portfolio to Ajanta Neog, making her the first woman Finance Minister of the northeastern state



# MORE BODIES FISHED OUT FROM GANGA



Dead bodies float on the banks of Ganga river in Bihar's Chausa town

PHOTO: TWITTER

AGENCIES

**Patna, May 11:** The Bihar government Tuesday said altogether 71 bodies have been fished out from the Ganga in Buxar district, where these were found floating in the river, triggering suspicion that the abandoned corpses could be those of Covid-19 patients.

State Water Resources Minister Sanjay Kumar, a key aide of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, came out with a series of tweets, asserting that the bodies had flown downstream from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.

"The Bihar government is seized of the matter of unfortunate case of floating mortal remains in river Ganga. The bodies have floated into Bihar from UP," said Jha, adding, doctors have confirmed upon post-mortem that the deaths had taken place "four-five days" ago. He said the Chief Minister was pained at both the tragedy as well as the "harm" to river Ganga.

## QUARTER OF A MILLION DEAD

The seven-day average of daily infections hit a record 3,90,995 Tuesday, with 3,876 deaths, according to the health ministry. Official COVID-19 deaths, which experts say are almost certainly under-reported, stand at just under a quarter of a million. The World Health Organization said on Monday that it regarded the coronavirus variant first identified in India last year as a variant of global concern, with some preliminary studies showing that it spreads more easily.

"He has always been particular about the purity and uninterrupted flow of the river and has asked the administration to intensify patrolling to ensure this is not repeated. Last rites of 71 bodies performed as per protocols. A net has been placed in the Ganges in Ramghat, bordering UP and Bihar. We have advised the UP adminis-

tration to be vigilant. Our administration is keeping vigil, too. Advise all to give respect to the dead and also to Maa Ganga," Jha added. Around two dozen bodies were found on the banks of the Ganga at adjoining Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, an official said Tuesday. AK Pandey, the SHO of Gahmar police station in Ghazipur, said that the bodies were found in a decomposed stage on the bank of the Ganga river.

Meanwhile, the Centre Tuesday asked states along the Ganga to ensure strict vigilance and check future incidences of people dumping bodies in the river and its tributaries. In a letter to District Ganga Committees which are chaired by district magistrates or collectors, the National Mission for Clean Ganga - the apex body that monitors rejuvenation of the river and its tributaries - also asked the authorities to dispose unidentified bodies of suspected Covid-19 victims in accordance with safety protocols.

## VAX PROCUREMENT

# Several states to float global tenders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Bangalore, May 11:** The governments of Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Tuesday joined several other states which have decided to issue global tenders for procurement of Covid vaccines as the domestic supply fails to keep up with the rising demand amid the fierce second wave of the pandemic.

The Centre said it has so far provided more than 18 crore vaccine doses to states and UTs free of cost, but many of them have complained of an acute shortage of the jabs and are now prioritising people who need to be given their second dose within a prescribed period.

Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha have also taken the global tender route for procuring vaccines swiftly. Two crore Covid vaccine doses will be procured through global tender to meet the increased demand and to facilitate vaccination of the age group of 18-44 years, Karnataka Deputy

Chief Minister and state Covid task force head C N Ashwath Narayan said.

"Till now, we had depended only on vaccines supplied by the central government and it was not procured from the open market by floating tender. Now, it has been instructed to float the tender and to complete the process within seven days," Narayan said. Delhi government too said it will float a global tender for procuring coronavirus vaccines.

Addressing a press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that the BJP-ruled Centre was "forcing" state governments to invite global tenders for vaccine procurement. The Telangana cabinet also decided to invite global tenders for procurement of Covid-19 vaccine, an official statement said. Officials said the Andhra Pradesh government will float a global tender in a day or two for the procurement of Covid-19 vaccines from foreign manufacturers to complete the vaccination process as quickly as possible.

## EXPLOSIVES CASE Vaze dismissed from service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 11:** Suspended Assistant Police inspector Sachin Vaze, arrested by the NIA in the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, was Tuesday dismissed from police service, an official said. The order terminating Vaze's service was issued by Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant

Nagrle, said a spokesperson of the city police. A 1990-batch officer of the Maharashtra cadre, Vaze, also known as an "encounter cop", was earlier suspended after his arrest by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the SUV-cum-murder case March 13.

"API Sachin Hindurao Vaze has been dismissed from police service. Order has been issued today under Provision of 311(2)(B) Constitution of India by Commissioner of Police, Greater

Mumbai," a top official said. Vaze was reinstated in the Mumbai police in June 2020 after being suspended for 16 years in a case related to alleged custodial death of a bomb blast accused.

Post-reinstatement, he was heading the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the crime branch and handling high profile cases, including the fake TRP case, fake social media followers case, the DC car finance scam and the Ambani security scare case.

## Eight killed as heavy rain lashes south Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, May 11:** Eight people were killed in different parts of West Bengal as thunderstorms and heavy rains battered the southern districts of the state Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

Lightning and gusty winds with speed reaching up to 54 km per hour lashed Kolkata, Howrah, North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Bankura, Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur, Birbhum and Purulia districts, a Met Department official said. In Alipore, 102 mm rainfall was recorded.

The rainfall led to waterlogging in several areas across Kolkata, including the arterial Central Avenue, slowing down traffic during the evening rush hours. A man was electrocuted to death while returning home from office through the flooded street outside the North Gate of the Raj Bhavan in central Kolkata, police said.

Firefighters and police rescued the body and sent it for post-mortem. "We are trying to ascertain the person's identity," an officer said.

## Farmers returning to protest sites: SKM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Apr 11:** The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of over 40 farmer unions, Tuesday said that farmers were returning to Singhu and Tikri border protest sites after finishing harvesting their crops.

In a statement, the SKM said that large convoys of farmers arrived at the two border points Monday and this will now continue. "Yesterday, large convoys of farmers arrived on the Singhu border and Tikri border. Farmers were welcomed at many places on their way to these sites from Punjab. These farmers, who have travelled

in tractors, cars and other vehicles, have made arrangements to live in tents and trolleys as they were living before harvesting," it said. "The farmers' strike is getting stronger and the protest sites are also becoming larger. Farmers' tents, trolleys and other vehicles have been permanently there for the last five months in long queues. The pattern of farmers coming back after the harvesting season will now continue," it added.

The farmers' outfit said that the government was "promoting privatisation" even at a time when "thousands of people have lost their lives due to the mismanagement of the public health system".

## ON THE WAY



A man rides a bicycle holding an umbrella during rain in Srinagar

UNI PHOTO

# Youth getting more affected in Covid 2nd wave: ICMR

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 11:** The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is impacting slightly more number of younger people as they might have begun going out and also because of some variants of SARs-COV-2 prevalent in the country, the ICMR chief said Tuesday.

In response to a question on whether younger population were getting more affected, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director General Dr Balram Bhargava said the comparison of data during the first and the second wave of Covid-19 has shown that there is not much age difference. People above the age of 40 are more vulnerable for adverse outcomes. "We have found that younger



Representational image

people are getting slightly more involved because suddenly they have gone out and there are vari-

ants also prevalent in the nation which may be affecting them as well," he said. India has been reel-

ing under a calamitous second wave of the coronavirus infection.

An early trend of decline in daily new Covid-19 cases and deaths has been noted in the country even as Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, and Punjab are among the 16 states still showing continued increase in daily cases, the government said Tuesday. According to the government, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana were among the 18 states and union territories showing continued plateauing or decrease in daily new Covid-19 cases. Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal, however,

said Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Assam, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura were among the 16 states and union territories showing continued increasing trend in daily new COVID-19 cases. In the current wave, it is not clear whether the age composition of cases and deaths has changed since the central government has not released nationwide data. Data for states is also not publicly available. But a cursory glance at data reported by the media shows no major change in the demographic profile of coronavirus patients.

A government official in Chhattisgarh said not only were more younger patients infected, they were more severely infected than last year.

## US looking at joint production of J&J vax in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 11:** The US is looking at joint production of Johnson and Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine in India and ways to help manufacturers like the Serum Institute of India (SII) to boost production, Daniel B Smith, the Charge D'Affaires of the US embassy, said Tuesday.

Smith also said that the efficacy of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine manufactured at a production facility in Baltimore is not yet clear and the Food and Drug Administration has not yet certified that the doses are available for anyone's use or for export.

Last month, the White House said that the US plans to share 60 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine globally as soon as they become available, and India expected a significant chunk of the total stockpile. At



a media briefing, Smith said the US was concerned over the current course of the pandemic in India, not simply because of the humanitarian catastrophe but also due to the fact that it has global implications, noting that the Biden administration was standing with New Delhi to help deal with the crisis.

"I know that there are a number of doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine (with the US). They were manufactured in the US. They were manufactured at a plant outside of Baltimore but there were problems with this plant. So far the Food and Drug Administration of the US has not certified that these vaccines are available for anyone's use; for export or not," he said. "So I cannot say when that will happen or what will be done exactly as we go forward on this," Smith said when asked whether the US was going to make available the AstraZeneca vaccine doses to India on an urgent basis. He said the US was eager to supply the vaccine doses to the world but not before it is sure that they are safe and effective.

# international



My government's priority is to deliver a national recovery from the pandemic that makes the United Kingdom stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before  
ELIZABETH II | QUEEN OF UK

## ILLEGAL FOR HIGH-RISK PEOPLE TO OWN ARMS

The NZ government will make it illegal for high-risk people to own firearms by introducing Firearms Prohibition Orders that will strengthen action already taken to combat the influence of gangs and organised crimes



### of the day quote

The shocking global disparity in access to vaccines remains one of the biggest risks to ending the pandemic. We cannot defeat this pandemic through competition, we can't. If you compete for resources, or if you compete for geopolitical advantages, then the virus gets advantage



TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

Singapore is 725 sq km of rock. We have to make a living by being open to the world. We will fail if we allow racism and xenophobia to become prevalent, and it's contrary to everything that has made us successful and proud to be Singaporean



K SHANMUGAM | LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER, SINGAPORE

It shows how our two countries have really developed and advanced our relationship, in a purposeful and transformative way; which to be very candid, we did not have previously. Putting mobility at the heart of this relationship is a real change, a real pivot



PRITI PATEL | HOME SECRETARY, UK

## 'Give India resources to make vax'

FAUCI SAID THAT THE 'ENDGAME' IN FIGHTING THE PANDEMIC IS VACCINATING EVERYONE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID THAT ALL OF INDIA SHOULD 'SHUT DOWN', AS SOME STATES HAVE DONE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, May 11: Anthony Fauci, the top US expert on Covid-19, has called on countries to provide India with resources to make its own vaccines or donate vaccines.

"India is the largest vaccine-producing country in the world. They've got to get their resources - not only from within but also from without and that's the reason why other countries need to chip in to be able to get either supplies for the Indians to make their own vaccines or to get vaccines donated," he told in a TV interview. "One of the ways to do that is to have the big companies that have the capability of making vaccines to really scale up in a great way to get literally hundreds of millions of doses to be able to get to them," he said.

He said that the "endgame" in fighting the pandemic is vaccinating everyone.

At the same time, he said that all of India should "shut down", as



some states have done.

Vaccines are one of the ways of "breaking the transmission", but others "like shutting down the government" should be undertaken, Fauci said. "I have advised them in the past that you really need to do that. You've got to shut down. I believe several of the Indian states have already done that but you need to break the chain of transmission," he said.

Fauci said that a priority for

India should be to set up field hospitals like China had done.

"They have really got to get hospital beds and do really what the Chinese did way back a year or so ago, where you essentially build up with - the equivalent of field hospitals. You've got to get that. You can't have people out in the street not having a hospital bed," he said.

In fact, during the Covid crisis last year, tents were also set up in New York's Central Park to treat

those who could not find hospital beds and convention centres and sports venues were also made into emergency medical facilities.

Fauci called the oxygen shortages in India "really tragic".

President Joe Biden has ordered the supply of vaccine manufacturing equipment and ingredients to India along with oxygen and devices for making the gas and medications to treat Covid-19. The total Covid-19 aid package for India is expected to run to \$100 million, according to his Spokesperson Jen Psaki.

Biden's administration has also agreed to a request made by India and South Africa to the World Trade Organisation to waive the intellectual property rights. However, it faces opposition from other countries, including Germany and Switzerland, blocking WTO approval.

Fauci dismissed suggestions that dropping the patent rights to allow others to make the vaccines would hamper the manufacture by companies now making them.

## China against B'desh joining US-led Quad



Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship

LI JINGMING | AMBASSADOR, CHINA

We're an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position

DR AK ABDUL MOMEN | FOREIGN MINISTER, BANGLADESH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, May 11: China has warned Bangladesh against joining the US-led Quad alliance, saying that Dhaka's participation in the anti-Beijing "club" would result in "substantial damage" to bilateral relations.

The unusual warning from Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jingming came weeks after visiting Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe emphasised to Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid that Beijing and Dhaka should make joint efforts against powers from outside the region establishing a "military alliance" in South Asia and practising "hegemonism".

"Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship,"

Reacting to the Chinese envoy's controversial remarks, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said Dhaka maintains a non-aligned and balanced foreign policy and it will decide what to do according to those principles.

"We're an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position," he told reporters Tuesday.

Naturally, he (Chinese ambassador) represents a country. They can say what they want. Maybe they don't want it (Bangladesh joining the Quad)," Momen said, adding that no one from the Quad has approached Bangladesh yet.

The comment has been pre-emptive, the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency reported, quoting said the foreign minister as saying.

Initiated in 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Quad for short, is an informal grouping of India, the US, Australia and Japan. "Quad says it is only for economic purposes and security and so on. But that's not true. We know that Quad is aimed at China," the envoy was quoted as saying.

"Japan, together with the US, has stated it very clearly - they are participating in [Quad] because of China," Li said. Li described the Quad as a "narrow-purposed" geopolitical clique, and Bangladesh should not join it as the country will not derive any benefit from the initiative.

"History has proved again and again such partnership surely damages our neighbours' own social, economic development and people's well-being," said Li.

## US fires warning shots at Iran boats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, May 11: A US Coast Guard cutter fired two volleys of warning shots Monday as a group of 13 Iranian fast boats sped toward US Navy vessels in the Persian Gulf's Strait of Hormuz in what the Pentagon called "unsafe and unprofessional" maneuvers by the naval arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

It was the second time in two weeks that a US ship opened fire to warn off vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. The encounters come as the United States and Iran are in indirect talks in Vienna aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which the United States left in 2018.

Asked whether it appeared the Revolutionary Guard are trying to pick a fight with the US Navy, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby declined to comment on the Iranians' intentions. "Sadly, harassment by the IRGC Navy is not a new phenomenon. It is something that all of our commanding officers and the crews of our vessels are trained to for," Kirby said.

"This activity is the kind of activity that could lead to somebody getting hurt and could lead to a real miscalculation there in the region, and that doesn't serve anybody's interests." In the latest incident, Kirby said Iranian vessels maneuvered at high speed toward six Navy ships that were escorting the guided missile submarine USS Georgia through the Strait Monday. After the Coast Guard cutter Maui unleashed a second volley of warning shots, the Iranian boats backed off, Kirby said.

"They were acting very aggressively," Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon. He said they got within 150 yards of the US ships, which included the guided missile cruiser USS Monterey. A day earlier, the Monterey had intercepted an arms shipment aboard a dhow in the Arabian Sea apparently headed for Yemen, whose Houthi rebels are supported by Iran.

"The conflict escalated relentlessly throughout the day, and Israel vowed that its strikes would only increase. The latest exchange of

## COMMEMORATING CASUALTIES



A woman lights a candle to commemorate all Czech victims of the coronavirus pandemic, at Prague Castle, in Prague, Czech Republic

## ISRAEL RETALIATES WITH ROCKETS

Since sundown Monday, 26 Palestinians including nine children and a woman were killed in Gaza, mostly by airstrikes, Gaza health officials said. The Israeli military said at least 16 of the dead were militants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gaza City, May 11: Israel unleashed new airstrikes on Gaza early Tuesday, hitting a pair of high-rise buildings believed to be housing militants, as Hamas and other armed groups bombarded southern Israel with hundreds of rockets.

The conflict escalated relentlessly throughout the day, and Israel vowed that its strikes would only increase. The latest exchange of

### TENSIONS SURGE



fire was sparked by weeks of tensions in contested Jerusalem.

Since sundown Monday, 26 Palestinians - including nine children and a woman - were killed in Gaza, mostly by airstrikes, Gaza health officials said. The Israeli military said at least 16 of the dead were militants.

During the same period, Gaza militants fired hundreds of rockets toward Israel, killing two Israeli civilians and wounding 10 others.

## Attorneys urge FB to drop 'Insta for kids'

### Palestine ups contacts with int'l community

Palestine is intensifying its contacts with the international community in an effort to curb the ongoing violent clashes in East Jerusalem, President Mahmoud Abbas said. The aim of the contacts is to stop the dangerous escalation of violence against Muslim and Christian holy sites in East Jerusalem, Abbas told his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a phone conversation Tuesday. "During this hard time Palestine is passing through, we need to be united to face what is happening in East Jerusalem, end the internal division and form a unity government," Xinhua news agency quoted the President as saying. For his part, Erdogan reaffirmed Turkey's support for the Palestinians' right to defend East Jerusalem and its holy places from the Israeli assaults.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, May 11: A coalition of 44 US attorneys general signed a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg urging Facebook not to launch "Instagram for Kids", citing mental health and privacy concerns.

The "Instagram for Kids" app will allow children under the age of 13 to begin using the popular photo-sharing app. However, the attorneys general urge Facebook to abandon its plans to launch this new platform.

The letter lists reasons and cites research to show that Facebook should not go forth with its plans to develop and market a kid-friendly version of the Instagram app, reports GSMarena.

Among the reasons listed in the letter are - Facebook's poor history of protecting children's privacy and data on the platform, research showing that social media can be harmful to children on physical and psychological levels, children do not have a fully-developed understanding of privacy and can easily be targeted by anonymous predators.

In the release published by the coalition head Attorney General Maura Healey, she cited Zuckerberg's dismissal of the idea that social media is harmful to children.

The release points out there is much strong evidence and research that contradicts Zuckerberg's denial. Currently, children under 13 are not allowed to have an Instagram account unless it is explicitly written in the profile description that the account is being managed by a parent or guardian.

## NASA's 'Osiris-Rex' heads home with asteroid rubble

THE PROBE STILL HAS A VAST DISTANCE TO COVER BEFORE IT LANDS IN THE UTAH DESERT ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

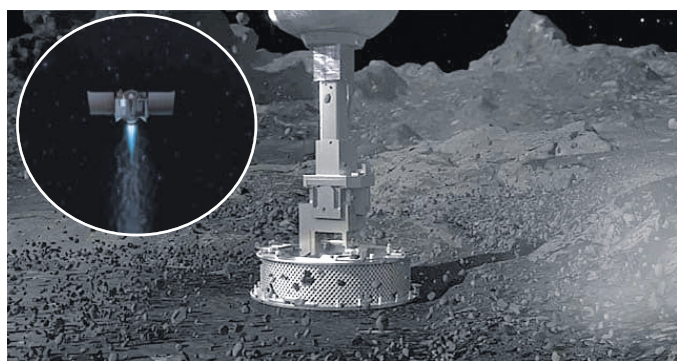
AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, May 11: The US space probe Osiris-Rex Monday left the orbit of the asteroid Bennu, from which it collected dust samples last year, to begin its long journey back to Earth.

Osiris-Rex is "now moving away over 600 miles an hour from Bennu, on its way home," Dante Lauretta, head of the mission, said on NASA's video broadcast of the event.

The spacecraft's thrusters were engaged without incident for seven minutes to put the probe on the correct trajectory home, a journey of 1.4 billion miles (2.3 billion kilometers).

It is carrying more than 60 grams of dust and fragments from the asteroid, the largest sample col-



lected by NASA since the Moon rocks brought back by the Apollo missions.

To achieve this goal, the US space agency launched a high-risk operation in October 2020: the probe came into contact with the as-

teroid for a few seconds, and a blast of compressed nitrogen was emitted to raise the dust sample which was then captured.

The surprise for NASA was the probe's arm sank several centimeters into the surface of the as-

It is carrying more than 60 grams of dust and fragments from the asteroid, the largest sample collected by NASA since the Moon rocks brought back by the Apollo missions

teroid, showing the scientists that "the surfaces of these rubble pile asteroids are very loosely consolidated," said Lauretta.

The whole mission almost came to naught when NASA realized a few days later that the valve of the collection compartment was failing to close, letting fragments

escape into space.

But the precious cargo was finally secured after being transferred to a capsule fixed in the spacecraft's center. In two and a half years, that capsule will be released a few hours before entry into the Earth's atmosphere, and will be slowed down by a parachute system for its landing.

The samples will then be transported to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, but 75 percent will be kept intact to be studied by future generations, who will have advanced technologies that have not yet been created, the agency said.

The analysis should help scientists better understand the formation of the solar system and the development of Earth as a habitable planet.



# Arsenal test awaits Blues

# Indian shooting team leave for Croatia tour



Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta (airborne) would like to continue their strong performance in defense against Arsenal, Wednesday night

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 11: The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage, Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) tweeted just before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy. The Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make the final of the men's skeet event Monday.

The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI. After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning July 23.

The ISSF World Cup in Osijek is being organised in place of the one earlier scheduled in Baku,

Azerbaijan (from June 21 to July 2), which got cancelled due to a surge in COVID-19 cases in that country.

There will be nine coaches for the 13 rifle and pistol shooters but some coaches like Samaresh Jung, Jaspal Rana and Ronak Pandit could not travel with the team for various reasons.

Foreign rifle coach Oleg Mikhailov was also a part of the travelling contingent but longtime pistol coach Pavel Smirnov could not leave Tuesday as he did not get his visa. He is likely to join the team next week.

As per the standard COVID-19 protocols in Croatia, the Indian contingent will serve a mandatory quarantine before starting the training.

World Cup gold medalist Sanjeev Rajput and 10m air pistol shooter Elavenil Valarivan, also issued pre-departure tweets from their respective handles, both hoping to lift the spirit of the coronavirus-ravaged nation with their achievements in the sporting arena.

"Long tour ahead, wish us luck. Hope we are able to win medals and raise spirits of the nation," Elavenil wrote. Alongside a few pictures of the shooters, two-time Olympian Rajput tweeted, "Off to Croatia for our preparation leading up to Tokyo2020. Hopefully the next time we enter India is with a handful of Olympic Medals. Thank you for the support as always. Do keep blessing us with your wishes! Jai Hind."



Sanjeev Rajput (L) and Elavenil Valarivan



## BUMRAH, SMRITI GET 1ST DOSE OF COVID VACCINE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 11: India's star pacer Jasprit Bumrah and women's national team opener Smriti Mandhana Tuesday said they received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Joining the duo was veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik. All three cricketers posted pictures of themselves on their respective social media accounts while urging everyone to get inoculated.

"Vaccinated. Please stay safe everyone," Bumrah tweeted. Mandhana, who last featured in the home series against South Africa in March, posted a picture on her Instagram captioning it: "Please stay safe and get yourself #Vaccinated."

Bumrah is expected to lead the Indian pace attack in the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent away series in England.

Senior India opener Shikhar Dhawan had received his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, May 6. Then several of his teammates, including skipper Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma, had got their first jab in various vaccination centres across the country.

Head coach Ravi Shastri was the first from the Indian cricket team to receive the vaccine. He got his first jab in the first week of March, when vaccination was made open for all senior citizens.

In order to ramp up the coronavirus vaccination drive in the country, the Centre had last month announced a 'liberalised and accelerated' Phase 3 strategy of COVID-19 vaccination from May 1.

As per the order, everyone above the age of 18 is eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Chelsea look to keep their momentum going when they host Arteta's men at Stamford Bridge

AGENCIES

London, May 11: Seeking to avenge their defeat to the Arsenal earlier this season in the Premier League, Chelsea will welcome the Gunners to Stamford Bridge for Wednesday's Premier League London derby.

Thomas Tuchel's hosts are all but assured of a top four place following a 2-1 victory over champions-elect Manchester City - the dress rehearsal of the Champions League final - last time out, while Arsenal kept their fleeting European hopes alive by beating West Bromwich Albion 3-1.

The Blues are third in the table before Wednesday's game - although they could drop to fourth before kickoff - while the mid-table Gunners are languishing in ninth before the short trip across the capital.

In what may have been a sign of things to come in the highly-anticipated European showpiece event summit clash, Chelsea's astonishing away record saw them over the line against soon-to-be champions Man City, who are still being kept waiting for the Premier League crown.

The Champions League crown is of course the ultimate prize for Chelsea and the charismatic Tuchel, who also has an FA Cup final showdown with Leicester City May 15 to take into account, but the Blues' top four standing is all but wrapped up and a derby win would cement their position among the big boys.

Chelsea welcome Arsenal to Stamford Bridge on a seven-game unbeaten run across all competitions - during which time they have shipped a mere two goals - and Tuchel's side have found the back of the net twice in successive triumphs over Fulham, Real Madrid and Man City over the past few weeks.

The unforeseen 5-2 thrashing at the hands of now-relegated West Bromwich Albion has been the only blot on Tuchel's Chelsea notebook so far, with the former PSG boss overseeing 10 wins and five draws from his other Premier League matches in charge.

Notwithstanding their humiliation at the hands of the Baggies, Tuchel's staunch defense have navigated 630 minutes of top-flight football at Stamford Bridge without conceding a goal, and they currently occupy third spot in the



Mikel Arteta, Arsenal manager

table before kickoff, but Leicester have the chance to temporarily leapfrog them when they face Man United Tuesday night.

Furthermore, the Blues certainly seem to have a penchant for success against their capital rivals, as they have claimed 22 points from 27 on

offer in London derbies this season, and the chances of them making it 25 from 30 seem pretty high against the Gunners and their wholly inconsistent nature.

Barring an end-of-season miracle, Arsenal's 25-year spell on the continental stage will come to a bitter end in the 2021-22 campaign, and it is not just the much-maligned owners KSE who are coming under increasing scrutiny in North London.

Gunners fans once again protested against the American-led regime before Sunday's Premier League battle with West Brom, but the pressure continues to pile on rookie coach Mikel Arteta, who is already planning for a major summer overhaul after a dismal season.

The Europa League represented the Gunners' best opportunity to keep their remarkable European run going, but Unai Emery returned to the Emirates to conquer the team who relieved him of his duties as Villarreal easily nullified Arsenal's toothless attack to dump them out 2-1 on aggregate.

A seventh-placed finish in the Premier League is surely out of Arsenal's reach too, but they at least head to Chelsea on the back of a much-needed Premier League win, as a 3-1 triumph over West Bromwich Albion handed Sam Allardyce his first-ever Premier

League relegation.

A spot in mid-table is unacceptable for a club of Arsenal's stature, though, with 13 Premier League defeats representing an alarming downturn since the glory days of Arsene Wenger, and they remain three points behind eighth-placed Everton having played a game more.

It is not entirely doom and gloom for Arsenal, though, as they travel to West London on a five-game unbeaten run in the Premier League away from home - scoring at least twice in four of those matches - and they now have a chance to win three in a row with three clean sheets on the road for the first time since May 2013.

The Gunners also have an unbeaten Stamford Bridge record to maintain, as they have managed to hold Chelsea to four consecutive draws in West London during mid-week fixtures, and they are yet to lose to the Blues on a Tuesday or Wednesday night in the Premier League.

While all the signs may point towards a Chelsea triumph in this game, Arteta's Arsenal have proven capable of springing a surprise against the Blues, who will have a chance to rectify their defeat to Arsenal in the FA Cup final last year both Wednesday and in this year's showpiece event against Leicester City a few days later.

## England players unlikely for re-scheduled IPL: ECB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 11: England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is rescheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year - one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in September and October, while they will compete with Australia

at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by 'ESPNcricinfo'.

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL. "None of us knows what a re-arranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile cricket including the T20 World Cup and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players."

## We benefitted from video analysis: Amit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 11: The Indian men's hockey team defender Amit Rohidas feels that the use of video analysis during preparations has played a big role in the side's recent success during tours of Europe and Argentina.

He said video analysis has also been a useful tool to correct players' flaws in the national camp here. "Video analysis helped us on both the tours. We analysed our opponent's style of play their movement in the attack as well as in defence, and we adapted to the situations accordingly," he said.

"We didn't have much on-field experience, but I can say we did our homework pretty well through the video analysis and it benefited us," said Rohidas, who has played 97 matches for the national side.

Rohidas is currently training with the men's senior core group



Amit Rohidas (R)

at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre here. "At the camp also, with the help of video analysis, we are working on the areas where our team need correcting or

need to improve. So, yeah it's one of the major assets for us to cover our bases for the Olympics."

The team had remained unbeaten in the tour of Europe in

# Hardik, Dhawan vie for India captaincy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 11: Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant all-rounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July.

India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20Is and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale

along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters told this agency on conditions of anonymity. "In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good 'one and half IPLs' in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for

past eight years," an official said.

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either. Pandya was included in the four-Test series at home against England so that his bowling workload is increased keeping the England tour in mind but it is learnt that the Baroda man is unlikely to bowl more than an odd over or two in the shortest format or ODI in near future.

"Hardik, after his back surgery to cure stress fracture, is not the same bowler anymore. He was a fast medium bowler before injury but to bowl at a brisk 135 kmph plus pace consistently, it could impact his back. So he is focussing more on his match finishing skills," a person in the know of things said.

