



## POOJA ON OXIMETER

Actor Pooja Hegde shares video that teaches the right way to use a pulse oximeter

LEISURE P2



## MASK-FREE US

Top US health agency says it was lifting mask-wearing guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19

INTERNATIONAL P10



## LIVERPOOL SEAL WIN

Liverpool overpower Manchester United 4-2 in their Premier League match at Old Trafford in Manchester

SPORTS P12

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We have successfully suppressed the second wave ...data

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE	PERCENTAGE
SENSEX	48732.55	↓	41.75
NIFTY	14677.80	↓	18.70
DOLLAR	73.84	↓	₹0.14
EURO	88.87	↑	₹0.13
GOLD	₹47,611	↑	₹173
SILVER	₹71,185	↑	₹712

### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	34.7°C	36.4°C
TEMP MIN	22.5°C	22.2°C
Humidity	67%	56%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Light rain very likely

# RECORD SURGE

## State logs highest one-day spike of 12,390 COVID-19 cases, 22 more fatalities

POST NEWS NETWORK/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 14: Odisha Friday registered its highest single-day spike of 12,390 new COVID-19 cases, which pushed the tally to 5,88,687, while a record number of 22 fatalities raised the toll to 2,273, a senior health department official said.

Accordingly, the number of active cases climbed to 1,04,016, the official said. Of the 12,390 new cases, 6,938 were reported from various quarantine centres, and the rest detected during contact tracing, he stated. Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, accounted for 2,201 new cases, followed by Sundargarh at 882, Cuttack at 719, Sambalpur at 677 and Angul at 532.

Taking to Twitter, the health department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of twenty two Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Four deaths were recorded in Khurda, three in Angul and two each in Kalahandi, Kendrapara, Rayagada and Sundargarh. One each succumbed to the infection in



Bolangir, Boudh, Cuttack, Deogarh, Ganjam, Gajapati and Kandhamal.

Besides, 53 COVID-19 patients in the state have died due to comorbidities. As many as 4,82,345 patients have recovered from the highly infectious disease so far. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 5.47 per cent. The coastal state conducted 56,214 sample tests Thursday, the maximum so far in a single day, which took the number of such examinations to 1,07,69,312.

## Sputnik V to cost ₹995 per dose

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Dr Reddy's Laboratories Friday said it has launched COVID vaccine Sputnik V in the Indian market with the first dose being administered in Hyderabad, as part of a limited pilot. The company said the imported doses of the vaccine are presently priced at a maximum retail price of ₹948, with 5 per cent GST per dose, amounting to ₹995.4 per dose. "The imported doses of the vaccine are presently priced at an MRP of ₹948 + 5 per cent GST per dose, with the possibility of a lower price point when local supply begins," Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a statement.

MORE P8

## STATE FLOATS GLOBAL TENDER FOR VAX

BHUBANESWAR: The state government Friday floated a global tender for procurement of Covid-19 vaccine. State-run Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd (OSML) has invited online global bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) from eligible bidders for supply of Covid-19 vaccine which can be stored in a temp of 2 to 8 degree Celsius. The manufacturers can submit their tenders in between May 20 to 28. The manufacturers will enter into agreement to provide 75 lakh doses within 30 days, 2.25 crore doses within 60 days and 3.75 crore doses within 90 days.

## Fuel prices skyrocket

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 14: Petrol and diesel prices Friday touched record high levels across the country after rates were increased for the fourth time this week.

Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 34 paise a litre, according to a price notification by state-owned fuel retailers. The increase propelled rates in Delhi to climb to an all-time high of ₹92.34 a litre for petrol and ₹82.95 per litre for diesel. Rates had already crossed the ₹100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, prices in Mumbai too were inching towards that level.

### CITY FUEL PRICES (MAY 14)

PETROL	₹93.10 (+0.26)
DIESEL	₹90.43 (+0.37)

## Sops rain for farmers

BHUBANESWAR: On the eve of Akshaya Tritiya, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday announced that the state government has transferred a total of ₹920 crore to the accounts of 42 lakh farmers in the state under the KALIA scheme. Wishing the farming community on this occasion, Patnaik said, "I hope that all the small, marginal and landless farmers in the state will make proper use of the KALIA money in the farming activities and in the development of their livelihood."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday released the 8th installment of financial benefits of ₹720.46 crore to PM-KISAN beneficiaries of Odisha. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, as many as 25,90,315 farmers got the financial benefits under the 8th installment in Odisha. The Union government released ₹2.06 lakh crore to 9,50,67,601 beneficiary farmers across the country.

MORE P4

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## REQUEST TO READERS

Dear reader,

At the outset, we would like to thank you for your continued support. As you might be well aware, the past year has been hard on the economic front for all sectors, not excluding the newspaper industry. While advertising revenue has shrunk, the prices of raw materials like newsprint, plates, chemicals have spiked like never before. Add to that, the ever increasing fuel and energy prices and other investment costs to stay updated with technological advances in the print industry, it has become difficult to provide you your chosen paper at the present cost.

We are unwillingly forced to hike the cover price of **Orissa POST** to ₹5 from 16th May 2021.

The paper will be available at the same price on Sundays with Sunday POST.

**Orissa POST** remains committed to provide you unbiased, fact checked news at your doorstep daily. True journalism has no price tag but the costs are real. We appeal to our readers to bear with us and continue to support us in bringing to you our best effort every day.

Thank you

— EDITOR

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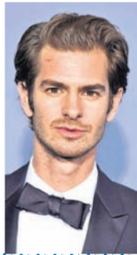
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**NOWHERE ELSE**



## ANDREW TOO 'SENSITIVE' FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Actor Andrew Garfield says he wants to stay away from social media because he is too sensitive. "I don't think it would be beneficial to my mental health. I think I'm too sensitive, and I want to stay that way. What these platforms promise is some form of negative or positive feedback, and either one can be addictive for someone who equates attention with love," Garfield said.

## 'GIMME FIVE FOR PEACE': IDRIS ELBA

British star Idris Elba makes a beautiful appeal for peace in his new Instagram post. Elba's caption seems to be an appeal to the heavens to restore peace in the world, at a time when the Covid pandemic has paralysed life globally, and fresh violence has erupted between Israel and Palestine.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181

**ARIES**  
A favourable day as any can be, says Ganesh. You are happy and content with what you have, and you've planned and are working towards what you want. A romantic date may prove interesting or throw up a controversy — decide where you want to take it.

**TAURUS**  
There is every possibility that you will enjoy a good rapport with people around you, predicts Ganesh. You will think with your stomach today, craving for delicacies. Such a feeling might be because of repressed hunger.

**GEMINI**  
Your highly competitive nature will push you to perform better and better. You don't even know what being second best means. Getting in touch with like-minded people will only make your resolve stronger.

**CANCER**  
Ganesh believes that today you may have to take certain financial decisions at home as well as at work. If you are in-charge of a certain project, you will trust the judgement of those working on it, mostly because they have been hand-picked by you.

**LEO**  
Motivating people through your own actions is one way; the other is to let your words do the talking. Both are equally effective, says Ganesh. With a bit of help from the stars, today, it is your words that shall hold more weight than your actions, as you make optimum use of your presentation skills.

**VIRGO**  
You will remain engrossed in personal matters at the cost of professionalism. Solve your problems today by taking them head-on. Ganesh warns you not to let your emotions suppress your enterprising spirit, especially in the evening.

**LIBRA**  
Trivialities should be the least of your concerns today. Do not let the small things faze you out. Remember that it is the overall picture that matters, and not one small stroke of the brush. Bear this in mind, since you may come under some pressure from subordinates at your workplace.

**SCORPIO**  
You will live the day in two dominant shades, feels Ganesh. One part of your day will be tinted in nostalgia and thinking, while the other will be spent in making up for the time you lost while star gazing and ignoring your work. Do not let the ghosts of your past haunt you because some things are best left behind while making a new beginning, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You will discover a flair for flirting as you puppet words to your romantic will with ease and grace. Most of today will be spent in the company of a loved one, perhaps a picnic for two, or a day-long romantic date.

**CAPRICORN**  
It will be one of those mundane days with nothing remarkable happening on your front. But don't be disheartened, advises Ganesh; planetary movements indicate there may be a change coming soon, most likely a good one. So, perk up and look forward to tomorrow.

**AQUARIUS**  
You do have a way with words and today, you may succeed with your gift of the gab! But Ganesh says that your confused feelings may come in the way of your triumphant achievement. Also, sentiments may lead to a disastrous outcome. Sounds familiar?

**PISCES**  
The fount of your creativity spurts today like there is no tomorrow. For lesser mortals, it takes inspiration, perspiration and a lot of desperation to come up with something creative. You, on the other hand, keenly remember the lessons from your past efforts, and use them today to scale new heights, says Ganesh.

## Witty response to death hoax



**Mumbai:** Veteran actor Paresh Rawal Friday reacted to a social media page claiming that he has passed away. The actor shared screenshot of a Twitter page that has his

photo with a condolence message in Hindi, announcing that "Paresh Rawal ji, a member of the film industry has passed away at 7am on 14th May, 2021". Reacting to the hoax with humour, the 65-year-old actor tweeted: "Sorry for the misunderstanding as I slept past 7am..."

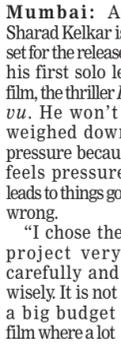
The actor's fans, however, are not amused by the death hoax. While some expressed anger, others prayed for his long life. Some fans also shared memes featuring the actor, for tackling the fake news with humour. "Action should be taken against this page. I can't tolerate such kinds of joke. You are my fav sir. I pray god this day will never come," commented a fan. "Yes, this is bad in taste," suggested another fan. "Some respect must be shown to all the living legends. They can't have more likes n share (asTRP) by announcing someone's death. Not acceptable in civilised Society," tweeted another fan. On the work front, Rawal will next be seen in *Hungama 2*, sequel to the 2003 film *Hungama*. The film also stars Shilpa Shetty, Meezaan Jaaferi and Pranitha Subhas.

## Sanjana helps hapless kids, families down with Covid

**Mumbai:** Actress Sanjana Sanghi Friday announced that she will help Covid-infected underprivileged children and their families. She has joined hands with Save The Children to support such families, residing in remote parts of India. The mission, named *Protect A Million*, aims to reach one million affected underprivileged children and families across the nation. "It is my honour to be joining hands with Save The Children, a century-old Global Child Rights Organisation in our mission to #ProtectAMillion. Together we will be providing Covid support in the form of oxygen, critical care, essential medicine, psycho-social support, and nutritional packages, to the most underserved and vulnerable communities which is children and their families in remote parts across 57 districts of India. Our aim is to reach One Million such children and families and we just can't do this without you," she said in an Instagram video.

She added: "Join me and save the children as we fight to protect the future and fight for hope. Every single penny, I promise you will better the life or save the lives of those for whom the basics like a thermometer, oximeter, a mask or medicine, are a huge, huge privilege. Let's open our hearts up, like we already have, and help each other and fight for the children of our country." She captioned the post as: "#ProtectAMillion | Save The Children We need all your help in helping us be able to provide critical relief to the most disadvantaged COVID-impacted children & families in the most remote parts of India. @savethechildren\_india and I are on a mission #ToProtectAMillion such children & families and fight for them, as they fight for their lives." IANS

## Sharad on solo lead film



**Mumbai:** Actor Sharad Kelkar is all set for the release of his first solo lead film, the thriller *Deja vu*. He won't get weighed down by pressure because he feels pressure only leads to things going wrong. "I chose the project very carefully and wisely. It is not a big budget film where a lot

of money is riding on me, because the content is very good. I believe that the film will be appreciated because of the way we shot it and I have full faith in the director Abhijeet Warang," Sharad declares, speaking to IANS. He adds: "I am not feeling

any kind of pressure. If you take pressure, things might go wrong, and if you don't take any pressure they go very smoothly." Sharad, who is known for his performance in films like *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, *Laxmi* and *Darbaan*, will soon be seen alongside Ajay Devgn, Sonakshi Sinha and Sanjay Dutt in *Bhuj: The Pride Of India*. IANS

# Pooja's tips on right use of oximeters

**Mumbai:** Actor Pooja Hedge is among the latest celebrities who recovered from COVID-19 recently and ever since then, she has been actively sharing information with her fans on battling the deadly virus. In the latest, she shared a video that teaches the right way to use a pulse oximeter, a device that monitors the oxygen levels

of a patient. She took to her Twitter handle and further shared her experience with the infectious corona virus and wrote, "When I was down with COVID-19 and home quarantined, I was told to monitor my O2 levels very closely. I didn't know there was a right way to do it until my doctor told me. I hope this helps. No detail is too small in our efforts to fight this disease. Stay safe everyone." Previously, the actress announced the good news with her fans that she has tested negative for COVID-19 after weeks of treatment in home isolation. "Thank you for all the love ya'll have sent my way. I have recovered well, kicked stupid corona's butt and finally tested NEGATIVE! yeyy! All your wishes and healing energy seemed to have done it's magic. Forever grateful. Stay safe out there" she penned.

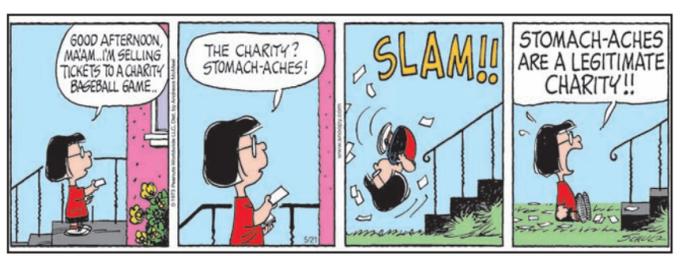


On the work front, Pooja Hedge will be seen with Prabhas in *Radhe Shyam*.

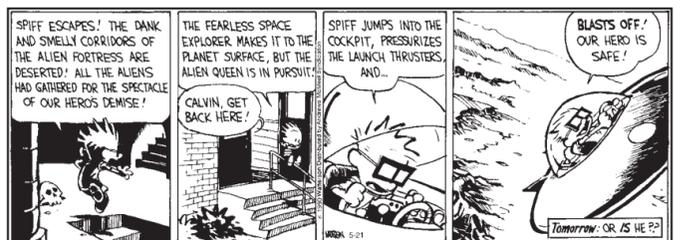
AGENCIES

### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



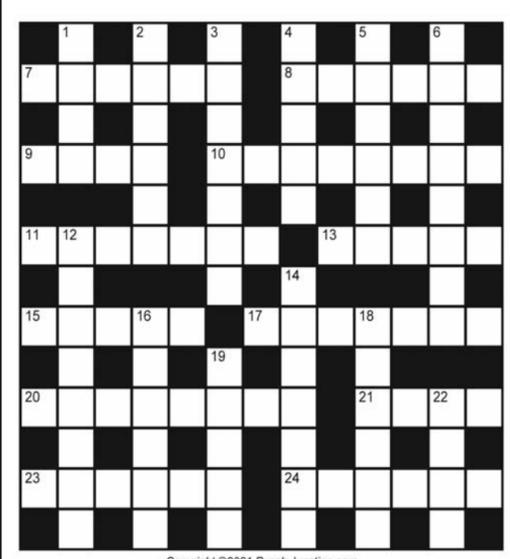
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



#### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Baroque
  - 8 Take off
  - 9 During
  - 10 Copies
  - 11 Sticks to
  - 13 Tooth trouble
  - 15 Heroic tales
  - 17 Famous rock group
  - 20 Garden plant
  - 21 Shacks
  - 23 Heavy fabric that resembles velvet
  - 24 Bright fish
- Down**
- 1 Streetcar
  - 2 Don't burn it at both ends
  - 3 Longed
  - 4 Show flexibility
  - 5 Fairy tale figure (5,3)
  - 6 Chimpanzee
  - 12 Circle measurement
  - 14 Hard hats
  - 16 South American river
  - 18 Island in French Polynesia
  - 19 Journal
  - 22 Kind of spirit

#### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



#### SOLUTIONS



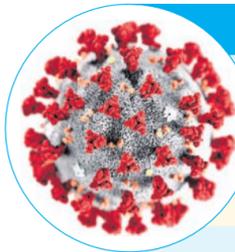
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## CAR FEST PREP

A fresh batch of logs for the construction of chariots for this year's Rath Yatra reaches Puri from Boudh forest division, Friday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,21,66,296	14,00,05,854	33,63,143
India	2,40,46,809	2,00,79,599	2,62,317
Odisha	5,88,687	4,91,674	2,273

# Docs caution youths against lax attitude



MANISH KUMAR, OP

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** Doctors working in several Covid hospitals have blamed the lax attitude of young patients for loss of many precious lives to the deadly virus. The health experts opined that timely diagnosis of the viral infection and its treatment could reduce the chances of the infection

turning severe. They also added that the second wave of the pandemic has affected the youths more and thus the young people should be more cautious. "In the second wave, we witness more number of people below the age of 40 years infected with the virus. They are the ones who spend more time outside and are more exposed to risk environ-

## DELAY MAY PROVE FATAL

- Timely diagnosis of the viral infection and its treatment could reduce the chances of the infection turning severe
- The second wave of the pandemic has affected the youths more and thus the young people should be more cautious
- Several asymptomatic Covid patients are also at risk due to 'happy hypoxia' - a condition where youths are unaware about the declining oxygen levels

ments. Also, most of them are not vaccinated," said Dr Siba Prasad Dalai, who has treated many Covid patients in the last few

months.

He also added, "Delay in testing certain key parameters which prognosticate the disease severity and course, and delay in starting medications during the appropriate window period increase the mortality and morbidity of the disease."

The physicians opined that the youth should never ignore flu-like symptoms and get tested themselves as early as possible and start Covid medicines soon, if tested positive. However, most of them opined that youths with other comorbidities are prone to severity of the disease.

Some others, however, claimed that several asymptomatic Covid patients are also at risk due to 'happy hypoxia' - a condition where youths are unaware about the declining oxygen levels.

Dr Pooja Sah, who is working in a private Covid Hospital, said, "There are instances when the youths are asymptomatic or infected but their infection is not detected during RT-PCR test. In many of them the oxygen level sometimes declines and they remain unaware of the situation which could turn severe or fatal at any moment."

She also added that youths should monitor their oxygen levels at regular intervals especially if they are comorbid or living in a house shared by other Covid patients.

The experts also said that undernourished and obese people can face severity of the disease if they ignore the symptoms or delay the testing and treatment.

# Newborn wins battle against nCoV

**BHUBANESWAR:** In what can be termed as a hope amid the gloom surrounding the spike in Covid-19 cases and resultant deaths, a 25-day-old newborn from Kalahandi recovered from the viral infection after a 10-day struggle for survival on a ventilator, becoming one of the country's youngest survivors.

According to sources, after developing symptoms for Covid, Gudia was admitted to a private healthcare facility in Bhubaneswar. Almost all in her family were

The baby had complains of poor feeding, fever, respiratory distress and found to be suffering from pneumonia

Covid positive. Later, she was too tested positive for the virus.

"The baby had complains of poor feeding, fever, respiratory distress and found to be suffering from pneumonia. The team of doctors treating the newborn

put her on ventilator for 10 days. Chances of her survival were thin due to involvement of a host of organs and the tender age," a senior doctor at the City's Jagannath Hospital said.

The doctor added that round-the-clock monitoring, medical assistance and use of essential drugs, including Remdesivir as well as steroids, helped a lot.

After her treatment for around three weeks, the baby was discharged in a healthy condition and doing well, the doctor pointed out.

# Panel to monitor black fungus cases

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** In view of the reported rise in mucormycosis (black fungus) cases amongst Covid patients on corticosteroids and other immunosuppressive drugs, the state government Friday formed a committee to address the issue.

The seven-member committee is headed by Nirupama Chinai, Head of the Department of Microbiology at SCB Medical College and Hospital.

The other members are: Jyoti Patnaik (Pulmonary Medicine HOD, SCB), Jayanta Kumar Panda (Medicine HOD SCB), Subhabrata Parida (HOD Medicine SCB), Subrat Behera (HOD ENT SCB), Prasanjit

Mohanty (HOD Dermatology SCB) and Niranjana Mishra (Director of Public Health).

The committee will monitor the incidence of black fungus in patients admitted to different hospitals in the state and formulate guidelines for early detection and management of such cases.

Also, all government medical colleges in the state shall constitute one expert committee each at their institutions comprising members from department of Medicine, Pulmonary Medicine, Dermatology, ENT, Ophthalmology and Neurology for coordination of diagnosis and management of such cases. All government medical colleges have been asked to create facilities for detection and management of such cases.

# No vax in 10 districts today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** The Health department Friday said that there would be no vaccination drive in 10 districts Saturday.

According to details, the vaccination drive will remain suspended in districts like Angul, Balasore, Bargarh, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Rayagada and Sonepur.

The department has planned only 217 vaccination sessions for Saturday owing to shortage of Covishield doses.

As per data shared by the government, the state has now a total stock of 33,390 doses of Covishield obtained from the central share.

The government Friday conducted the vaccination drive at 321 sites where a total of 44,344 persons were inoculated.

## EID GREETINGS



People greet each other on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr by maintaining social distance at a mosque in Satya Nagar area of Bhubaneswar, Friday

## RATH YATRA AHEAD

# SJTA ORDERS 5,000 FACE MASKS FROM ITI-BHUB

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** In a bid to safeguard the Srimandir servants and employees from the novel coronavirus ahead of the Rath Yatra, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), Puri has ordered a consignment of 5,000 masks from ITI, Bhubaneswar.

The world famous Rath Yatra of Srimandir deities will be organised July 12, 2021.

In a letter to the principal of the ITI recently, the SJTA has approved the samples of face masks of three shades (green, black and yellow) at a cost of ₹30 per mask.

They asked the ITI to send 5,000 single color face masks of three shades at earliest. The colours are based on colours of the three chariots of the deities.

The ITI principal, Jeetamitra Satpathy, told Orissa POST that 10 students of ITI are preparing the masks for Puri temple with all dedication.

"Last year, the students sent 7,500 face masks for the sevayats (servitors) for the Rath Yatra and Bahuda Yatra in Puri," Satpathy



The temple administration has approved the samples of face masks of three shades - green, black and yellow

added. Though it was a difficult task, everybody was happy and enthusiastic as their work was an offering indirectly to the Trinity's service, she mentioned.

She feels that this rare honour would bring in blessings for all and

especially to the students of the institute as the Puri district administration has chosen the institute to provide the service.

Last year, the servitors pulled the chariots in absence of devotees.

Apart from Rath Yatra, the face masks prepared by the ITI students are being sold in many places across the state said the principal of the institution.

Skilled Odisha, OCAC and others procure masks from us regularly. "We sold more than 10 lakh masks last year," she said.

# Pvt hospital in dock for overcharging patients

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** Cracking down on private hospitals overcharging Covid patients in City, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday issued a show-cause notice to the Sunshine Hospital here.

A patient had alleged that Sunshine Hospital had charged ₹2.08 lakh for his and two of his family members' Covid treatment during their eight-day stay. The BMC has asked the hospital authorities to reply within three days, failing which appropriate action will be taken against it.

"I along with two of my family members got admitted to the hospital May 4. We were told that we would be charged ₹2,000 per day and accordingly I had deposited ₹30,000 as advance amount. However, we got discharged on May 12 and for this period we were asked to pay ₹2.08 lakh," the complainant alleged. The complainant also stated that they were charged extra ₹3,000 per bed per day as Covid charge and ₹7,800 per bed per day as extra cost towards PPE kits.

The Health department has fixed ₹1,200 for general beds per day at non-National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) and ₹3,000 per bed per day at NABH hospitals. A hospital can also charge ₹1,750 per day per pa-

## Govt warns pvt labs over high charges

**Bhubaneswar:** Expressing concern over collection of exorbitant charges by some private labs for RT-PCR tests, the state government Friday warned of stringent action against such labs. The Health and Family Welfare department has issued an advisory for the private laboratories which are conducting Covid tests. The labs have been asked to display the rate chart prominently on their premises and through promotional literatures and advertisement. The government has fixed ₹400 for conducting RT-PCR test, but some private labs in Bhubaneswar are charging between ₹750 and ₹1,200 for the test.

tient for both kinds of beds which include laundry, sanitizers, food, medicines, PPE kit, investigations and consumables. The government has also fixed ₹2,000 for ICU beds at non-NABH institutions and ₹5,000 for beds at NABH hospitals per day. Meanwhile, ICU beds with ventilators are also priced the same for NABH and non-NABH hospitals.

However, the consolidated charges remain ₹8,000 for non-NABH hospitals and ₹12,000 for NABH hospitals. However, for ICU beds it is ₹10,000 for non-NABH hospitals and ₹13,000 for NABH hospitals for ICU-beds with ventilators.

# Covid throws spanner in bamboo craft biz

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khurda, May 14:** The statewide lockdown to tackle the second wave of Covid-19 has dealt a body blow to the livelihood of scores of bamboo artisans in the district headquarters town here.

Although the administration has allowed the artisans to sell bamboo products at their roadside stalls between 6am and 12noon during the lockdown, poor demand has played spoilsport on their business, sources said.

"We have been selling bamboo-made baskets, decorative pieces and other household goods at Khurda for the last several years. My family used to earn around ₹1,000 per day by selling these products. Now, we are unable to earn even ₹100 a day. The lockdown has taken a heavy toll on our livelihood," said artisan Siddharth Patra of New Bus Stand area. Patra claimed that the bamboo



An artisan selling bamboo-made goods at Khurda

OP PHOTO

## SLUGGISH DEMAND

■ Although the administration has allowed the artisans to sell bamboo products at their roadside stalls between 6am and 12noon during the lockdown, poor demand has played spoilsport on their business

■ Artisan families that used to earn around ₹1,000 per day by selling the household products are now unable to earn even ₹100 a day

artisans have been reeling under severe financial miseries since the outbreak of novel coronavirus in state in March last year. "Last year, the prolonged lockdown imposed by the Centre and state government had dampened our business. We thought that the situation would

improve this year. However, the second wave of the pandemic has shattered our hopes," Patra rued.

The bamboo artisans have urged the state government and the district administration to provide them financial assistance in the trying times. "The authorities are

advising people to stay home and help the state government to tackle the pandemic. However, they should also think about our survival. The administration should come forward to provide some assistance to the bamboo artisans," Patra said.

## 8 sustain burns as LPG cylinder leaks

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 14:** At least eight people sustained severe burn injuries in a major fire mishap caused due to leakage from an LPG cylinder near Melana Padia at Patrapada under Khandagiri police limits here, Friday.

The injured were identified as Pabitra Swain, Plaban Kumar Ray, Gobinda Jena, Basanti Jena, Kananbala Das, Manjulata Jena, Nailini Barik and Bishnupriya Mangaraj.



According to sources, one of the injured, the wife of Gobinda who was staying on rent at Pabitra's house asked his husband to repair some problem with the gas cylinder and burner. Gobinda failed to notice the leakage of cooking gas from the cylinder while fixing the problem. Fire broke out as soon as he lit the matchstick in the kitchen.

The fire soon spread to other rooms and outside the house. Several members of the both families sustained burn injuries.

The locals present nearby rushed to spot and saved the house owner's son, Plaban, who was burning severely. Three of the injured persons have been admitted to the ICU of AIIMS. Meanwhile, Plaban has been shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack for advanced treatment. Others are undergoing treatment at Bhubaneswar AIIMS.

## 2nd jab of Covishield after 12 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** A day after the Centre increased the interval between two doses of Covishield to 12-16 weeks from 6-8 weeks, the state Friday asked officials to follow suit with effect from May 14 midnight.

Health and Family Welfare department said no online or on-site appointment for second dose of Covishield will be allowed if the gap period is less than 12 weeks. The government advised beneficiaries to reschedule their appointments for second dose of Covishield.

## Khurda allows home delivery of liquor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** A day after the state government's green signal, the Khurda district administration has allowed home delivery of liquor during the lockdown.

As per an order issued by Khurda Collector, India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and country-made liquor shops can sell liquor through home delivery.

The liquor can be delivered at home between 7am and 5pm from Monday to Friday. No shop is allowed to conduct counter sale or serve liquor on their premises.

As per the order, the liquor shops will remain closed during the weekend shutdown. The shops situated in containment zones cannot sell liquor.

The delivery boys have been asked to carry an identity card issued by the retailer and an invoice which will act as a pass to facilitate movement.

They will have to follow all Covid norms like social distancing, wearing mask and use of sanitizers.

## OMSA demands vax for kin of healthcare workers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** The Odisha Medical Services Association (OMSA), a body of serving doctors and healthcare workers, Friday demanded vaccination of their family members.

The association Friday wrote to the state Health department demanding the right of their family

# Naveen disburses ₹920Cr Kalia aid to 42L farmers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** On the eve of Akshay Tritiya, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday announced that the state government has transferred a total of Rs 920 crore to the bank accounts of around 42 lakh farmers in the state under Kalia scheme.

The amount has been released to the bank accounts of 36.98 lakh small & marginal farmers and 4.88 lakh landless agricultural labourers through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode for use in Kharif 2021 crops. While Rs 2,000 has been released to each of small and marginal farmers, the landless agricultural labourers have received an amount of Rs 2,500 or Rs 5,000 per head.

Wishing the farming community on this occasion, Naveen said, "I hope that all the small, marginal and landless farmers in the state will make proper use of the Kalia money in the farming activities and in the development of the livelihood."

While calling Kalia the best scheme for the upliftment of farming community in the entire country, he said, "It has been able to bring back smiles in the faces of farmers. It has also helped alleviate the debt burden of farmers."



Praising the farmers for their sacrifice, the Chief Minister said, "The farmers are our pride and glory. No one could pay the price of the farmers' sacrifice."

"At present, while there is lockdown in the entire state, farming activities have been exempted from the restrictions. So I urge all our farmers to continue their work by adhering to all Covid regulations," said Patnaik.

"I have always worked for the welfare of the farming community of the state and will continue

## Include farmers under PM-Kisan: Pradhan

**Bhubaneswar:** Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has again urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to include all registered farmers of Odisha under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

to do so in future," he stated while wishing for a bumper crop this year.

## GPS trackers in ambulances soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** In a bid to monitor the movement of its emergency vehicles efficiently, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday initiated GPS-tracking in all its ambulances for better Covid management and quicker transfer of patients to Covid hospitals and Covid care centres (CCCs).

As per sources, the city authorities have a fleet of 64 ambulances under the Covid management programme. 40 of those have already become GPS enabled. The rest 24 ambulances will be upgraded with the tracking devices soon.

Presently, three ambulances are deployed in each BMC zones. Their number will be increased to seven in order to have 10 ambulances



available in each zone.

Meanwhile, the rest ambulances will be put at the disposal of the Capital Hospital here. "When a patient is referred for shifting to a Covid hospital or Covid care centre through tele-consultation, the BMC allocates an available bed in one of the hospitals or CCCs. An ambulance is then alerted to pick the patient from

Presently, three ambulances are deployed in each BMC zone. The number will be increased to seven in order to have 10 ambulances available in each zone

his/her residence. These ambulances are now enabled with on-board GPS units for real time tracking. This provides an estimated time of arrival of the ambulance to the patient's residence just like we know the location of a taxi when we book through various apps on our mobile phones providing taxi rental services," explained a BMC official.

## Patia crematorium to operate from May 25

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** Taking cognizance of increasing number of dead bodies and overburdening of Satya Nagar crematorium, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday stated that the operations at new crematorium in Patia will commence May 25.

Taking stock of the proposed crematorium at Patia, BMC Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Singh instructed the officials to make the crematorium up and ready for operation by May 25 to help people

perform the last rites without difficulty.

"We have discussed and decided to expedite the works and make the crematorium ready within the deadline to lessen the burden on Satya Nagar crematorium. The burden on the Satya Nagar crematorium has increased due to restrictions on funeral at Swargadwar, Puri. This crematorium will be solely designated for the cremation of deceased Covid-19 patients and suspects," Singh said.

It can be mentioned that Orissa Post had earlier reported how

## NGO to run facility at Bharatpur

The civic authority Friday signed an agreement with a city-based NGO to start functioning of the defunct crematorium at Bharatpur Mouza, on the outskirts of the Capital City. As per the terms and conditions, the crematorium will be under operation round-the-clock and will be a traditional one. The crematorium will be used for burning both Covid and non-Covid bodies. The firewood will be arranged by the NGO and will be used for performing the cremation of the deceased on receipt of Rs 2,500 only from the family members or relatives of the deceased. Moreover, the NGO shall be allowed to provide materials required for last rites to public at par with market rate.

BMC's negligence has led to delay of proposed crematoriums in the city. October last year, the city here saw massive spike in Covid cases. The BMC had then declared to set

## ECoR cancels two more trains

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** In view of poor occupancy and surge in Covid-19 cases, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has decided to cancel two more pairs of Express Special trains.

The trains are Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Special and Visakhapatnam-Kacheguda-Visakhapatnam Special.

The Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Special (08493/08494) will remain cancelled May 15, 16, 22 and 23 from both the directions.

Visakhapatnam-Kacheguda-Visakhapatnam Special (08561/08562) will remain cancelled from Visakhapatnam from May 14 to 31 and from Kacheguda from May 15 to June 1.

Earlier, ECoR had announced cancellation of four pairs of Special Express trains-Puri-LTT-Puri weekly Express Special, Bhubaneswar-LTT-Bhubaneswar bi-weekly Express Special, Visakhapatnam-Cuddapah-Visakhapatnam daily Express Special and Visakhapatnam-Lingampalli-Visakhapatnam daily Express Special.

## Man loses ₹1 lakh to cyber fraud

**Bhubaneswar:** A government official here Friday lost around Rs 1 lakh to the cyber fraud. The victim was identified as Anup Rao. According to sources, Rao has an account at the local branch of RBL Bank. The victim Friday received a call from the miscreant who impersonated a staff of the RBL bank. The cyber fraudster informed Rao that a large sum of money has been withdrawn from his account. Upon asked, the accused said that someone has illegally bought an insurance plan using the victim's name and other personal details by hacking his credit card. Later, the victim requested to guide him so that he could get back the money. The cyber fraudster assured Rao that the bank would fix up the problem. Subsequently, the fraudster sent an OTP to Rao's phone which he shared in turn with the accused. Few minutes later, Rao received a message in connection with the withdrawal of around Rs 1 lakh from his account. He has lodged a complaint with the cyber help desk of commissionerate police.

# Covid situation grim in Puri villages

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, May 14:** The Covid-19 infection has been on the rise in a number of villages in Puri district for the last few days. Locals blame the district administration for the rise in Covid cases.

The district administration should send mobile testing vans to the villages and create awareness among the residents regarding the dangers associated with Covid-19, observed Jitendra Kumar Majhi, a resident of Nuagaon village under Krushnaprasad block.

According to sources, the situation in Nuagaon, Phulabari, Titipi, Deopada, Badajhar and Gomundia villages are turning worse by the day. There are symptomatic patients in almost all families. However, fearing ostracisation, the families are hiding the cases. Even when people are dying, the real cause behind the deaths is not being disclosed.

Vaccination is running at a very



slow pace in the district. Locals claimed that the officials are allegedly laying emphasis on vaccinating people in Puri town only. Hence, in rural areas, people who received first dose of vaccine two months ago are still waiting for the second jab.

Intellectuals have asked the administration to give equal importance to vaccination in rural areas

as well. Since the supply is not adequate, the doses should be distributed equally, they observed.

In villages of Brahmagiri, Puri Sadar, Krushnaparasad, Sakhigopal and Delang, some villagers alleged that 42 days have elapsed since they received their first dose. They have been waiting for the second dose, but still have not got any messages on their mobiles.

Officials are allegedly laying emphasis on vaccinating people in Puri town only. Hence, in rural areas, people who received first dose of vaccine two months ago are still waiting for the second jab

District health officer Biraja Shankar Rath blamed the CoWin app. He said it is not functioning properly and so communication with people has suffered.

Shortage of oxygen cylinders is another headache for the district administration. Krushnaprasad tehsil can be taken as a case in point. The tehsil has a population of over one lakh. However, it has only 10 oxygen cylinders to cater to the need of the people.

When contacted, drugs inspector Satyabrata Giri however, contradicted the information. He said for exigencies, 543 oxygen cylinders have been kept ready at the district headquarters hospital. Similarly, the Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH), which is functioning as a Covid-19 treatment centre, has 199 cylinders. He added that the district has 149 D-Type cylinders which can be used for ICU patients and 394 B-Type cylinders.

## RUSH BEFORE SHUTDOWN



Unit-1 market in Bhubaneswar witnesses a huge rush, Friday, a day before the two-day weekend shutdown

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# High chromite price sparks fear of closure, lay-offs

**THE INDUSTRIES' BODY HAS SENT A MEMORANDUM TO THE CHIEF MINISTER SEEKING HIS IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION**



The OMC was accused of arbitrarily fixing the floor price of chromite ores based on the advice of the consultancy firm KPMG. The Mahasangh alleged that the OMC has missed the opportunity to liquidate the stockpiles of the ores due to a wrong formula and price set by the KPMG. The mining corporation and the state exchequer have suffered huge losses due to lower dispatches of chrome ore.

They have urged the OMC to revise the formula as suggested by the Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). The PWC had suggested to fix the floor price of chrome ores at ₹13, 457 per tonne. But the OMC fixed the floor price at ₹16, 527 in bidding process in April

LAYING STRESS ON REVISION OF THE CHROME ORE PRICE FORMULA AND PROTECTION OF THE END-USERS' INTERESTS, THE MAHASANGH HAS REQUESTED THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE OMC TO DO THE NEEDFUL. ITS MEMBERS HAD EARLIER URGED THE OMC TO FIX THE FLOOR PRICE OF THE CHROME ORES AT ₹12, 214 PER TONNE. BUT, THEIR PLEAS WERE ALLEGEDLY IGNORED

have closed down their plants.

The Kalinganagar Silpa Mahasangh has attributed the shut-down of plants to the sharp rise in chromite ore price. The Mahasangh has forwarded a memorandum to the Chief Minister seeking his immediate intervention.

The industrial firms were hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. The sharp rise in chromite ore price has

pushed them into deeper problems when they were already battling the slump caused by the pandemic. The ferrochrome firms dependent on the chromite ores supplied by the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) have halted production in their plants.

This is because these firms find it difficult to participate in the bids. The floor prices of the

chromite ores are fixed arbitrarily. The Mahasangh members alleged that OMC has failed to arrive at any solution despite repeated requests.

The Mahasangh members, in their memorandum to the Chief Minister, said OMC, while determining the chrome price, overlooks the contemporary market price of the chrome products in the international market.

The OMC arbitrarily fixes the floor price of chromite ores based on the advice of the consultancy firm KPMG. They alleged that the OMC has missed the opportunity to liquidate the stockpiles of the ores due to a wrong formula and price set by the KPMG. The mining corporation and the state exchequer have suffered huge losses due to lower dispatches of chrome ore.

They have requested the OMC to revise the formula as suggested by the Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). The PWC had suggested to fix the floor price of chrome ores at ₹13, 457 per tonne. However, the OMC had fixed the floor price at ₹16, 527 in the bidding process held in April 23, this year.

It has also urged the OMC not to add additional royalty to the floor price of the chrome ores. The floor price of the chrome ore is linked to ferrochrome price, said the industries' body. The Mahasangh has requested the state government and the OMC to revise the chrome ore price formula and protect the interests of the end-users. The Mahasangh had earlier urged the OMC to fix the floor price of the chrome ores at ₹12, 214 per tonne. However, their pleas have been ignored.

# Encroachment bars residents from using boat ambulance



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mahakalpara, May 14:** In spite of the state government providing a boat ambulance to the residents of Batighar panchayat of Mahakalpara block in Kendrapara district, the service has remained elusive. Batighar panchayat is surrounded by rivers and rivulets from all sides. Hence the boat ambulance has been provided to cater to the medical emergency needs of the people.

The boat is stationed at Khola ghat. It takes patients to the Kharinasi and Jambu ghats from where they are taken by road to the Paradip, Mahakalpara or Kendrapara district headquarters hospital (DHH).

However, reaching near the boat ambulance has become a headache for the local residents. The approach to the boat has been completely obstructed due to the misdeeds of some contractors who have piled up sand, stone chips, bricks and tractors. These contractors have also moored their own boats at the ghat making it difficult for ambulance to move.

Villagers alleged that there have been times when they have been forced to carry back critical patients to their homes as they could not approach the boat ambulance. They said they have taken the issue up with the concerned officials, but to no avail. A similar senti-

**Batighar panchayat under Mahakalpara block in Kendrapara district is surrounded by rivers and rivulets. Hence the boat ambulance is provided to cater to the medical emergency needs of people**

ment was expressed by the staff engaged in the boat ambulance.

Batighar sarpanch Debabrata Maiti said he has already informed the concerned officials about the problem but till date there has not been any solution. "The contractors and businessmen have been asked several times to remove materials near the ghat but they have not listened to comply with the request," alleged Maiti.

When contacted, district programme manager (DPM), Kendrapara district Health department, Prakash Banerjee said they are aware of the issue and they have urged the local administration to do the needful to get the space free from encroachment.

Mahakalpara tehsildar Soubhagya Ranjan Panda said they will soon visit the spot to take stock of the situation and then necessary steps will be taken.

# HAL to briefly shut Sunabeda unit



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput/Sunabeda, May 14:** Even as there is no let-up in Covid-19 in Koraput district, the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has decided to close all its offices and divisions including the one in

Sunabeda of Koraput district temporarily from May 15.

In a letter to its employees, the HAL stated that it was considering the request of some unions and officers' associations in light of the pandemic situation. It has been decided to close all divisions and offices from May 15 to May 23, 2021.

The number of infections rises in Koraput district while over 10 persons were identified as Covid positive in Sunabeda township where HAL's plant is located

The HAL has a plant at Sunabeda. Essential services like healthcare, fire safety, security and surveillance including the sanitisation of plant as well as the township areas will continue during closure, an administrative official of HAL stated.



Mobile patrolling service by policewomen launched in Umerkote area of Nabarangpur district

OP PHOTO

# Drinking water project fails; ₹63L goes down the drain

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, May 14:** As summer progresses, water woes of people in many villages under Rayagada block of Gajapati district are mounting with ponds and tube wells fast drying up. Drinking water projects are dysfunctional making the life of people much worse, a report said.

Though the government has set up a drinking water project at a cost of ₹63 lakh at Narayanpur, it has failed to serve its purpose for some technical issue.

"The project has flopped despite lakhs of rupees having been spent. Our drinking water problem has been a major one in summer," villagers lamented.

Water level has gone down, leaving three out of every four wells dry in the area. "The water we avail from a well and two solar-powered tube wells is insufficient to cater to our daily needs. The authorities concerned have not taken any steps to make the project functional despite our repeated pleas," the locals lamented.

Narayanpur Sarpanch Jamunadevi has warned of an agitation at the Collectorate May 25, if no immediate step is taken to set the project in motion.

According to reports, the RWSS set up the drinking water project with a provision of water sup-



ply from Mahendranaya river through pipes. In 2018, the project was badly damaged by cyclone Titli.

In 2019, the RWSS floated a tender for laying pipelines up to the river and construction of an overhead tank (50,000 litres). ₹38 lakh was allocated for pipe laying and ₹25 lakh for the tank construction and other ancillary works.

Pipe connection work was completed in December 2019 while other works of the project were completed by July 2020.

"The pipe laying work was botched up on a stretch of two km. At some places, the pipes have breakages. Iron pipes were laid only for only 30 metres," the sarpanch said.

The Collector and the RWSS au-



thorities were apprised of the issue, but nothing is being done to repair the project, she added.

Executive engineer of the RWSS, Prakash Chandra Das said the department is aware of the problem. "The head office has been intimated for fund allocation. The project will be repaired only after the fund allocation," he said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

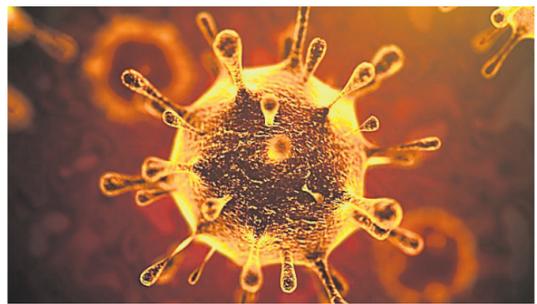
**Buguda, May 14:** Amid return of migrants from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, the second wave of Covid-19 is playing spoiler in Buguda town and its peripheral areas in Ganjam district.

Although there are no official records on Covid casualties, unofficial sources said 21 people have died of the disease. But it is not clear if they have died of Covid while scores of people in villages have been down with fever and cold. They are under treatment at their homes. Reports said, 1,729 migrants have returned to Buguda while 34 of them are Andhra returnees. The Andhra returnees have become a cause of concern for local residents as the Andhra strain of the virus is said to be more lethal than others. Locals alleged that the problem was that there are no TMCs and Covid hospitals in nearby areas till now.

It was learnt that 26 people Thursday tested positive for the virus. The administration has provided Covid medicine kits to 131 infected people while scores of people are under treatment in hospitals.

The government has proposed three Covid Care Centres (CCCs) in the block. Golia Adarsh Vidyalay, one of the three CCCs, is to be equipped with 100 beds including 30 oxygen beds.

The local sarpanch has provided electricity, drinking water, toilets and other facilities at a cost of ₹2 lakh, but the CCC is yet to be functional when the pan-



dem is spiraling.

Only critical patients are being sent to MKCM Medical College and Hospital, Berhampur.

Locals said the administration claims to have made a provision for TMCs for the migrants, but the latter bypass TMCs and stay at their homes. The administration has opened antigen and RTPCR tests at Balipadar and Manitar. But it was alleged that people with fever and cold don't come out for Covid test.

**46 inmates positive at Berhampur Circle Jail**

Forty six undertrial prisoners (UTPs) in Berhampur Circle Jail located at Lanjipalli Square have tested positive for Covid-19, Friday.

Swab samples of 84 inmates were collected and sent for RT-PCR testing a couple of days ago after a person serving a life term tested positive. When reports came in, 46 of them were found positive.

The infected prisoners are in iso-

lation at the 100-bed dedicated Covid-19 health centre (DCHC) on the jail premises, informed a prison official.

"We have made arrangements for shifting of the prisoners by ambulances to other hospitals, in case their health condition deteriorates. Doctors of the DCHC and from different other hospitals are treating the patients, the jail superintendent said.

The prisoner who first tested positive is in critical condition at MKCG Medical College, he added.

**33 Ashram school students in Nuapada Covid positive**

Two Ashram schools under Khariab block in Nuapada district are in the grip of Covid-19 as 33 students have reportedly tested positive. Notably, Nuapada district has been categorised as Red Zone in the second wave of the pandemic. The district reported 204 positive cases Friday.

Reports said, 22 students of

Although there are no official records on Covid casualties in the area, unofficial sources said 21 people have died of the disease. But it is not clear if they have died of Covid while scores of people in villages are down with fever and cold

Kaunya Bal Niketan at Gadramunda have contracted the virus. Similarly, 11 students of Nava Prabhat Ashram School have tested positive for the virus.

**Villagers turn to gods to get protection from Covid**

Panicked over rapid spread of the lethal virus, residents of Bobaria village of Temara panchayat under Koksara block in Kalahandi district have been worshipping village deities for last three days to ward off the virus.

Many of the families allegedly have people suffering from cough, cold and fever. However, most of them are not ready to undergo Covid-19 tests in fear of ostracisation in their locality. To get respite from the virus, people offer prayers round the clock at the shrines of Maa Thakurani, Maa Lankeswari, Maa Manikeswari, Maa Panchmukhi Kali, Maa Kali Bauri, Maa Paradeshiani, Mati Maa and Baba Kaleshwar.

# RAYAGADA WOMEN FISHING SUCCESS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandrapur, May 14:** The state government is laying a lot of stress on women empowerment through the Mission Shakti. It has taken a host of measures to impart training on various income-generating activities, boost skills and provide bank linkage for loans.

The efforts seem to have proved fruitful for hundreds of women affiliated to Daya Sagar SHG at Belamguda under Chandrapur block in Rayagada district, a report said.

The women members of the SHG have scripted a success story through fishery. They hope they will earn a few lakhs of rupees from fish farm-



ing. Seven months ago, they decided to take up fish farming in a sprawl-

ing water body in the locality. "We invested ₹20,000 and bought

By taking up fishery, the SHG members have become self-sufficient. They hope they will earn a few lakhs of rupees from the fish farming. Seven months ago, they decided to take up fish farming in a sprawling water body in the locality

"We have invested ₹20,000 and bought 75,000 fingerlings which were released in the pond. Besides, ₹30,000 was spent towards fish feeds. Fish is being sold now at good price," said SHG president Gita Bibhar

75,000 fingerlings which were released in the pond. Besides, ₹30,000 was spent towards fish feeds," said

SHG president Gita Bibhar.

Till date, they have sold over three quintals of fish. There are still quintals of fish in the pond that will be sold gradually, said members of the SHG.

Members like Surmi Koushalya, Saraswati Koushalya, Reshma Koushalya, Madana Pani and Sureskhi Koushalya claimed that fish farming is a profitable business and they have become self-sufficient.

Given the success of the fish farming, villagers of Belamguda suggested that the panchayat pond where fish farming has been taken up should be renovated for betterment of the farming.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION, PHULBANI**  
Phone-06842-253708, E-mail: rw\_phulbani@yahoo.co.in  
No. 2227 RWDP, Dated the 06.05.2021  
No.O-158- Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice  
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/01/EERWD PHULBANI/ 2021-22

- Name of the work : Road Works (16 Nos.)
- Estimated cost : Rs.30.45 lakhs to Rs.6.96 lakhs
- Period of Completion : 2(Two) calendar months
- Date & time of : From 17.05.2021 to 26.05.2021 availability of bid documents in the Portal
- Last date/ time for : 26.05.2021 up to 5.00 P.M. receipt of Bids in the portal
- Name and address of : Executive Engineer, Rural Works the Officer Inviting Bid Division, Phulbani

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website <https://tenders.ori.nic.in/nicgp/app>  
**Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Phulbani**  
OIPR-25077/11/0001/2122

FOCUS INOCULATION

# FORGET VAX PATENT WAIVER



**Efforts to increase capacity by relaxing patent protections would do nothing to accelerate vaccinations in lower-income countries. A far more promising strategy is to help lower-income countries purchase vaccines, while channeling surplus doses from richer countries to wherever they are needed most**

worldwide immunity. Providing this support, either through additional funding for the COVAX AMC facility or by sending surplus vaccines to developing countries as soon as possible, should not be too difficult or costly for high-income countries to manage.

Second, the World Bank needs to relax its conditions for extending loans for vaccine pre-purchases. Currently, such loans can be used only for vaccines approved by three stringent regulatory authorities (SRAs) in three different regions. Among these are Japan and certain Western countries, which naturally prioritise approval of vaccines intended for their own populations. They have little incentive to grant emergency-use authorisation to alternative vaccines that have shown high efficacy in Phase 3 clinical trials, such as Bharat Biotech's Covaxin (India), Gamaleya's Sputnik V (Russia), and Sinovac Biotech's CoronaVac (China). Extending the list of national regulators classified as SRAs would go a long way toward increasing lending for vaccine purchases.

Finally, existing vaccine manufacturers will be unable to meet their production targets if vaccine nationalism gives rise to export restrictions on critical inputs and raw materials. We saw such behavior early in the pandemic with respect to personal protective equipment, but the resulting export restrictions proved short-lived. One hopes the same will be true for vaccines. International cooperation and coordination will be crucial in the coming months.

There are many ways for advanced economies to assist poorer countries in vaccinating their populations as soon as possible. But relaxing patent protections – however appealing the idea may be in other contexts – is not one of them. The focus should be on providing additional funding and less restrictive lending for pre-ordering vaccines, and on funneling surpluses from high-income countries to the rest of the world.

*The writer is Professor of Economics at Yale University.*

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The surge of Covid-19 cases and deaths in India shows that the pandemic is far from over. While most developing countries in Asia and Africa managed to keep their death tolls low over the past year, it is only a matter of time before the new, more contagious variants that have emerged in India and elsewhere spread to countries that seemed to have their infections under control. Absent, a miracle – such as a mutation that renders the virus less lethal – only universal vaccination can end this cycle of misery.

With that goal in mind, a global movement has emerged to demand a World Trade Organization waiver of patent protections for Covid-19 vaccines. But patent protections are not the primary cause of the vaccine-supply bottleneck. If anything, a waiver might divert scarce materials from vaccine production facilities that are already up and running, not to mention discourage investments in pharmaceuticals to ward off future pandemics.

Intellectual-property protection for pharmaceuticals has a long, uncomfortable history, especially in developing countries. When the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was signed in 1995, an overwhelming majority of economists – including those strongly in favor of free trade – condemned it. They objected to an agreement that obliges all WTO member states to recognise and enforce patents in all fields of technology, including pharmaceuticals. While the case for general patent protection has a strong foundation in economic principles, there is no rationale for harmonising patent protection across rich and poor countries.

As I argued in 2010, the pharmaceutical industry at the time was losing only a tiny sliver of its profits from patent infringements in developing countries. And worse, IP enforcement could result in lost or delayed access to life-saving medicines in countries that would no longer be able to produce or import generic versions of patented drugs.

Against this historical backdrop, the demand for a Covid-19 patent waiver is understandable.

The problem is that the underlying issues have changed fundamentally. As a recent World Bank working paper by Ruchir Agarwal and Tristan Reed finds, “production capacity for vaccines does not appear to be the binding constraint” in global procurement.

After all, there are now at least ten Covid-19 vaccines with a demonstrated efficacy above 50%. Though efficacy varies across vaccines and variants tested, all of the vaccines being administered provide significant protection against hospitalisation and death. Moreover, the ten companies producing them have production targets for 2021 that would be sufficient to vaccinate 93% of the world population.

What's the issue, then? According to Agarwal and Reed, it is that companies are reluctant to activate their existing production capacity without pre-purchase commitments. There is currently a large gap between the number of doses that could be produced and the number that have been pre-ordered. And, as one would expect, this gap is unevenly distributed. High-income countries have ordered more doses than they need and thus will end

up with a surplus, whereas lower-income countries are far behind in pre-purchasing vaccines.

Under these circumstances, efforts to increase capacity by relaxing patent protections would do nothing to accelerate vaccinations in lower-income countries. A far more promising strategy is to help lower-income countries purchase vaccines, while channeling surplus doses from richer countries to wherever they are needed most.

To a large extent, this strategy is already being implemented, thanks to the efforts of the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment facility, together with concessional loans by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, and regional initiatives such as the one being led by the African Union. Remarkably, Agarwal and Reed show that the COVAX AMC facility and the AU initiative already have ensured that most African countries have ordered enough vaccines to cover at least 50% of their populations.

Still, three critical challenges remain. First, closing the pre-purchase gap of 350 million vaccines will require an additional \$4 billion – a trivial cost relative to the potential benefit of achieving

Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg

**A GLOBAL MOVEMENT HAS EMERGED TO DEMAND A WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION WAIVER OF PATENT PROTECTIONS FOR COVID-19 VACCINES. BUT PATENT PROTECTIONS ARE NOT THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE VACCINE SUPPLY BOTTLENECK**

SPECTRUM PANDEMIC

# Of Covid and an insensitive govt



Aditya Pratap Swain

**OBSESSED WITH THE DESIRE TO BUILD A 'KING-SIZE IMAGE' OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE GOVERNMENT ALLOWED MORE THAN 60 MILLION DOSES OF OUR VACCINES TO BE EXPORTED, IGNORING THE DEMAND BACK HOME**

About 18 months back when coronavirus engulfed the entire world, we were celebrating 'Namaste Trump' and when the world was awash with the second wave of Covid-19 we were celebrating the 'Dance of Democracy' and Kumbh Mela. When the Union Health Minister told the nation in February this year that 'India is now at the endgame of Covid' it was clear that the Central government was not serious in pandemic management. In January, we had already an idea regarding the more infectious Brazilian and UK strains but the government kept on saying that they are aware of it and keeping a close watch on the development. But in reality, nothing was done for which we are paying a heavy price today.

Obsessed with the desire to build a 'king-size Image' of the Prime Minister, the government allowed more than 60 million doses of our vaccines to be exported, ignoring the demand back home. The only protection available now is vaccination. But for reasons best known to the government, it decentralised the vaccine procurement policy by diverting the burden to procure vaccines for 18-44 age groups to the state governments through di-

rect negotiation with the manufacturers. To make matters worse, there is differential pricing of vaccine procurement. This was done clearly to shift the blame on the state government in case of any difficulty in procuring vaccines. The Central government has compelled the state governments to fend for themselves by shifting the responsibility and abdicating its own responsibility.

The vaccination programme is in a mess now. As a result there is a mad rush for the second dose and the states have gone dry of vaccine supply. Left to fend for itself, the Government of Odisha as well as many other states have decided to float global tenders for vaccines as the Central government has almost abdicated its duty in supplying the required vaccines to the states. On the other hand, the governments in the West have centralised the procurement to make vaccination a smooth process.

The situation is grim now. Limited ICU and ventilator beds have been filled completely. As of today India has more than 37 lakh active Covid cases. But the current health infrastructure is not capable of handling even 25 lakh active cases, which is being reflected

on the ground. When the country was yelling for more medical facilities, the Central government was doing 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' propaganda. As a result, procuring medical equipment and essentials from abroad have become a herculean task for the importers. Now India is literally begging the world to get Covid-related medicines, equipment and vaccines.

To make matters worse, a section of the media too played a dirty role in covering up the actual situation on the ground. The mainstream media was too busy in working as BJP's PR agents during the recently concluded Assembly elections. They were doing 'Duo Worship' instead of fighting Covid-19. They never put the facts before the people. Instead of asking hard questions to the government, they kept on asking questions to the Opposition.

The Central government is completely insensitive. It still charges GST on essential medicines, medical equipment and even oxygen. Many state governments, including Odisha, have urged for waiver of GST on Covid medicines and vaccines. Only recently, the Union Finance Minister clarified that withdrawing GST from these items

would increase their prices further. How much more insensitive can this government be?

On the one hand, the Central government urged the WTO to relax IPR during the pandemic which the US considered sympathetically. But while applying the same, the Government of India is doing just the opposite. In an affidavit in response to the question as to why the two vaccine manufacturers cannot be asked to part with their IPR during the pandemic, it told the Supreme Court that “exercise of statutory powers would be counter-productive at this stage”.

We are fighting a virus, a deadly virus. There will be casualties which is understandable. But how can you allow someone to die just because you cannot give them basic the ingredient of life – oxygen? How can you allow the State to get away with the fact that it couldn't and still now cannot provide lifesaving drugs or medical beds? How can a government allow its citizens to die on the roads? If this is not mismanagement, then what is it?

*The writer is an advocate practicing in the Supreme Court.*

Need for academic change

Sir, The article “Beware Economists” by Dani Rodrik rightly points out the need for a complete overhaul in the discipline of economics to create economists in particular and aware the public in general on the unexpected and unprecedented inequality that has come up in the society. It also points out the models of development that were developed and adopted in the past have failed to address the widening gap and further deepening the lines of division between the different classes. Ensuring equality and adopting comprehensive development models have been the new catchphrase at the current times. Rodrik aptly points out for the need for a change in the discipline of economics at the academic level; where economists are groomed for designing holistic models of development. Rodrik holds economists responsible for the failure in the past models of growth and in ensuring equality in all realms of life. Integrating the ecological, social and cultural dynamics have the new concerns of the economists while developing a model for growth. The US has been the economic superpower in the last several decades and the entire global economics heavily rely on the growth models adopted by it. Hope the Biden regime will bring in a complete renovation to ensure equity.

Sanjib Kumar Sahu, BHUBANESWAR

Focus on rural India

Sir, Apropos, “Probe ordered into reports of bodies buried on river bank”, Orissa POST, May 14. When Covid-19 first hit India, the biggest fear among both policymakers and public experts was that the pandemic would travel to India's Hindi heartland – primarily across the rural belt of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Given the size of the two states, the density of population, the abysmal health care infrastructure, and the manner in which the virus could quickly transmit in these regions, this fear was legitimate. There was never any scientific and cogent explanation for why this was the case, but this did not deter speculative, and clearly misplaced, theories about the innate immunity of those in rural India to resist the virus. And now, the tragic sight of bodies floating in the Ganga confirms that the numbers of reported Covid and fatality are much higher than the official figures. Away from urban hubs, India's Covid-19 trajectory will be decided by what happens in rural India particularly in Bihar and UP. The state governments, with help from the Centre, must step up.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

# 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)

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# Covid deals a body blow to the steel frame

Watch the too indignantly righteous. Before long you will find them committing or condoning the very offence which they have so fiercely censured.

SRI AUROBINDO



Is India's fabled 'steel frame' only creaking or is it screaming? The coronavirus pandemic surge has devastated big cities including the Capital and brought the healthcare system to its knees. India has now been recording the highest number of new coronavirus cases in the world and the death toll is mounting.

The second wave of the pandemic has spared no one, not even the elite administrative services that are charged with oiling the wheels that run the nation. According to sources, more than 100 senior officials, including IAS, IPS, IRS and others, have lost their lives to Covid. The news of the deaths of senior babus including Bihar Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Singh and three of his 1985 batchmates – former CBI director Ranjit Sinha, former secretary Department of Land Resources R Buhiril and serving Director of the Panchayati Raj Department in Bihar and many others has got the babus rattled.

Further, the president of the UP IAS Association Deepak Trivedi and Additional Secretary of Health in Bihar RS Chowdhury too died, both within a week. In recent weeks, nearly two dozen top babus across Central government ministries and departments, including the Health Ministry, have tested positive for the coronavirus.

The severity of the epidemic has hit home. When even the powerful in the land are not safe and anxious about their health and that of their families, they are pushing the panic button. The “System”, normally a bulwark against the vicissitudes of fate that often visit upon the citizenry, has collapsed this time. It must be a novel experience for the nation's elite administrators. Clearly, the old trusted “networks” and reliable connections have failed.

Naturally, none of them can say this openly but India's once-fabled “steel frame” has bent and buckled in the face of the pandemic headwinds. The creaking is audible, even if it actually feels like screaming.



BABUDOM BYTES  
Dilip Cherian

MAMATA REINSTATES COPS TRANSFERRED BY EC

After her hard-fought victory in the recently concluded state Assembly elections, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is busy setting her house in order. This has primarily meant that she is bringing back a large number of senior IPS officers who had been transferred by the Election Commission during the campaigning. Sources say that within hours of taking oath for the third consecutive time, Didi brought back senior IPS officer Virendra as Director General of Police. Virendra will be retiring this month. Similarly, Vivek Sahay has been reinstated as Director of Security.

Sources say that the state government has decided to clean up the mess in police administration and issued transfer orders to a large number of IPS officers whose role during the election period has been seen as not only doubtful but in violation of norms.

However, the return to 'normalcy' may take longer. After reports about the violence that erupted in certain parts of Bengal after the elections, the Ministry of Home Affairs has deputed a team of top Home Ministry officials led by an additional secretary-level officer to undertake a fact-finding exercise in the state to assess the “ground situation”. This again is likely to set off a fresh round of friction between Didi and the Centre.

EC SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE

The Election Commission (EC) is split down the middle over its response to the censure by the Madras High Court on its role in conducting elections during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EC has approached the Supreme Court against the censure, but its petition was swiftly rejected. One of the panel's counsel has resigned stating that his “values are not in consonance with the EC's”.

After Sunil Arora's retirement as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on April 12, the three-member Commission has Sushil Chandra as CEC and Rajiv Kumar as Election Commissioner. The position of the third EC is vacant.

Many remember what happened the last time when there was a schism within the Election Commission. In the 2019 general elections, the then Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa had opposed the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on charges of violating the election model code of conduct. We all know what went.

Share a babu experience! Follow [diliptherchian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/diliptherchian). Let's multiply the effect.

WISDOM CORNER

Every truth passes through three stages before it is recognized. In the first, it is ridiculed. In the second, it is opposed. In the third, it is regarded as self evident. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

The difference between a successful person and others is not lack of strength not a lack of knowledge but rather a lack of will. VINCE LOMBARDI

I don't believe you have to be better than everybody else. I believe you have to be better than you ever thought you could be. KEN VENTURI

WORDSWORTH

Butler

There has been some tut-tutting, head-shaking and general adverse comment in the more intellectual British newspapers this past week following the news that the former butler of the newspaper magnate Rupert Murdoch is about to publish his reminiscences of life with the boss. Mixed with a certain quiet schadenfreude over the king of the tabloid exposure being hoist by his own petard, so to speak, the consensus has been that such things are not done, or at least should not be done, and that butting has sadly come down in the world since the grand days described by P G Wodehouse. It's always Reginald Jeeves that's mentioned in these articles, usually coupled with the name of Bertram Wilberforce Wooster, despite the indubitable fact that Jeeves was not a butler, but a manservant, gentleman's gentleman or valet. Those genuinely holding the job of butler in the Wodehouse canon, such as Silversmith, Bulstrode, Beech, Keggs (and several dozen others) are rotund and magnificently dignified, often with a magisterial presence that was much statelier than their masters'. The butler in the medieval household was nothing like so exalted. He was the yeoman servant in charge of the beer cellar and of the buttery, from where he served out the beer. Since then, he has both literally and figuratively come up in the world. His name derives from the old French *bouteillier*, the cup-bearer or the one in charge of the bottles. Our bottle and the French equivalent both come from the medieval Latin *butticula*, a diminutive of *buttis*, a cask, which is also the origin of our word *butt* for a large wooden container for liquid; the beer cellar in medieval times would have contained wooden casks, not glass bottles. So the buttery, therefore, had originally nothing to do with butter, but was the place of the butts; only later was the word extended to mean somewhere that provisions in general were stored, perhaps because people did mistakenly make that association.

1.2MN WORKERS RETURN

# Kerala hit hard by drop in remittances

The exodus of foreign workers from the seven member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last year hit Kerala hard



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**United Nations, May 14:** Kerala has been hit hard by the drop in remittances from the Gulf countries from where about 1.2 million workers returned to the state due to the Covid-driven layoffs, according to the World Bank.

Overall, though, the total remittances from Indian workers abroad was \$8.3 billion in 2020, a drop of only 0.2 per cent from the previous year, the Bank's Migration and Development Brief released Wednesday revealed.

India's remittances from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recorded a steep decline of 17 per cent, but it was offset by resilient flows from the US and other host countries, it said.

India remains the world's top recipient of remittances in total value, a status it reached in 2008, according to the brief.

However, remittances to India are nowhere near the top when it comes to their share of the gross domes-

tic product (GDP).

Remittances make up a far more important share of the GDP for smaller countries like Tonga and Lebanon. The exodus of foreign workers from the seven member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last year hit Kerala hard, according to the brief.

The Bank said that in "Kerala, an estimated 1.2 million migrant workers, out of more than 4 million who worked in the GCC countries and contributed 30 per cent of the state's income, returned in 2020 after the global pandemic left them jobless. Low-skilled workers were the hardest hit".

In that state the monthly remittances to families receiving them fell on average by \$267, the brief said. The brief listed the US as the largest source of remittances, followed by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Russia.

For the South Asian region, remittances rose by about 5 per cent because of increased flows to Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan and

Sri Lanka, according to the brief.

Like India, Nepal also experienced a small drop in remittances, it added.

For next year, the bank projected the remittances to the region to dip slightly to 3.5 per cent "due to a moderation of growth in high-income economies and a further expected drop in migration to the GCC countries".

The main factor in the level of remittances holding up was family loyalties and the stimulus payments in some countries where the workers were located.

The author of the report, Dilip Ratha said: "The willingness to help family members was enabled by fiscal measures in almost all host countries that resulted in better-than-expected economic performance."

"A second enabling factor was that businesses in many host countries were better prepared for remote work and remote provision of services which also supported employment."

# Black fungus claims 52 lives in Maha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 14:** As many as 52 people have died due to Mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection, in Maharashtra since the COVID-19 outbreak last year, a senior health department official said Friday.

Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, became a much talked about subject after some recovering and recovered coronavirus patients were found infected with the disease, whose symptoms include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision.

As many as 52 people in Maharashtra have died due to the Mucormycosis disease since the COVID-19 outbreak last year. All of them were COVID-19 survivors, but succumbed to the black fungus infection, the official told PTI.

"For the first time, the state Health Department has compiled

a list of deaths caused by black fungus," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Wednesday, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope had said there were 1,500 cases of black fungus in the state, which is in the throes of a severe second wave of COVID-19.

Rising Mucormycosis cases, whose treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach, is expected to put a further burden on the state's healthcare infrastructure which is already under a strain.

The state will float a tender to procure one lakh Amphotericin-B antifungal injections to treat Mucormycosis patients, Tope had said a couple of days back.

Mucormycosis has a very high fatality rate and this has increased the woes of the health department which has deployed all its resources to combat COVID-19.

Mucormycosis was not a notified disease like malaria and hence its

**The symptoms of Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision**

cases were not mapped and a database was not prepared, the official said. With the rise in COVID-19 cases and preliminary reports of growing infection of black fungus, the state started creating a database. This exercise revealed that so far 52 people have died due to the black fungus infection, the official said.

All the 52 patients died after the coronavirus infection spread in the country. However, very few deaths took place in 2020 in Maharashtra. A sizeable number

of deaths have taken place in the current calendar year, he said.

As per health experts, Mucormycosis is mostly found among COVID-19 patients who have diabetes, fluctuation in sugar level or increased iron level in the blood. Tope has said patients with suppressed immune system and comorbidities are vulnerable to contract the disease.

As part of a contingency plan to treat Mucormycosis patients, the state government has decided to set up separate wards for them at hospitals attached to 18 medical colleges.

The treatment requires multidisciplinary expertise because the fungal infection spreads through the nose, eyes and can reach the brain, Tope has said.

The Maharashtra government has already admitted that at least eight patients in the state have lost vision in one eye due to Mucormycosis.

## TRIBUTE TO YESTERYEAR STARS



Ranjit Dahiya of Bollywood Art Project makes graffiti as a tribute to Hindi film actresses Asha Parekh and Helen at Bandra in Mumbai, Friday

PTI PHOTO

## MARATHA QUOTA

### BJP wants Maha govt to move SC, package for community

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nagpur, May 14:** Accusing the Maharashtra government of passing the buck on the Maratha quota issue to the Centre, the BJP Friday demanded that the state also file a review petition in the Supreme Court, and provide a ₹3,000 crore package to the community.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur, BJP leader Devendra Fadnis said the Union government has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court which May 5 struck down the quota for the Marathas in education and government jobs.

"But the state is yet to file a review petition seeking to increase the 50 per cent cap on reservation," the former Chief Minister said.

The BJP-led Union government had made it clear in Parliament that the 102nd Constitutional amendment does not affect states' rights to grant reservation, he said.

"The state government is only passing the buck on the Maratha quota issue," he alleged.

On Thursday, the Centre moved the apex court seeking review of the May 5 majority verdict which said the 102nd amendment took away states' power to declare any community as 'Socially and Educationally Backward'.

Speaking to reporters in Kolhapur, state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil demanded a ₹3,000 crore package for the Maratha community. He too demanded that the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra government move the SC for a review, accusing it of shirking its responsibility.

Reacting strongly, state minister Ashok Chavan said the BJP was frustrated over the loss of power in the state and the so-called 'fool-proof' Maratha quota law passed by the Fadnis government getting exposed in the apex court.

It has affected Patil's "mental health" and he needs "treatment", the Congress leader who heads the state Cabinet's sub-committee on the quota issue said.

# Left consolidates position in Kerala

ARM-TWISTING TACTICS OF KERALA CONG (M) WON'T WORK WITH LEFT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 14:** Gone are the days when Kerala Congress (M), as the third biggest ally in the Congress-led UDF, could be a bother with their arm-twisting tactics for in the present ruling CPI-M led Left such designs will not work.

For a long time, KM Mani used to take things up with the UDF - the way he wished, on account of his stature and for being one of the founders of the UDF in the eighties.

Following his death in 2019 and the party splitting with the faction led by his son Jose K Mani last year crossing over to the ruling LDF, many thought, when they were given 13 seats to contest the April 6 Assembly polls, they will get key position as well.

However, with the shock defeat of Jose K Mani from Pala in Kottayam, his father's citadel from 1967 till he died, despite five of KC (M) winning the elections, their first demand of two Cabinet minister's was shot down by the all-prevailing Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

At the end of talks with them, Vijayan has more or less agreed to give them the Chief Whip post, which comes with cabinet status.

Jose though is now trying to bargain for a prime portfolio and wished to get the 'revenue' portfolio which was held by his father. This appears unlikely as with the Left in power, it's normally handled by the CPI - the second biggest ally of the Left. The CPI is already upset with the

arrival of Jose into the Left fold, as they had to forego two seats in Kottayam district. When Jose's demand surfaced, Kanam Rajendran, the secretary of the CPI has said under no circumstances will they let go of 'revenue' portfolio.

The CPI-M is now planning to give the Power portfolio and along with it there are talks of giving the Public Works Department too. Incidentally both these portfolios were handled by two different CPI-M ministers in the outgoing Vijayan Cabinet. A media critic on condition of anonymity said by now Jose would have realised that the Left is not like the UDF, especially with Vijayan at the helm of affairs.

"Looking back, Mani was a master of taking away more than what he actually deserved. Whenever he was able to flex his muscles, he did it and he got Rajya Sabha seats, when his party actually never deserved it.

"In 2001 when the UDF won with 99 seats, the Congress did not give the finance portfolio, but in 2011, the UDF had a margin of just two seats in the 140 Assembly and then he extracted his pound of flesh and got the finance portfolio. So it would be really doubtful, if Jose will get all what he desires," said the critic.

Jose won the 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha polls from Kottayam and in 2018 he quit the Lok Sabha after his party was offered a Rajya Sabha seat as part of a patch up with KM Mani to return to the Congress-led UDF in 2018.

# Woman forced to lick spit for second marriage

A 35-year-old woman, who married for a second time post-divorce, was ordered by a 'caste panchayat' of her community to lick spit as punishment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 14:** A 35-year-old woman, who married for a second time post-divorce, was ordered by a 'caste panchayat' of her community to lick spit as punishment in Maharashtra's Akola district, an official said Friday.

The caste panchayat also ordered the woman to pay ₹1 lakh to it for her act, he said.

Showing courage, the woman defied both the diktats and lodged a police complaint.

The shocking incident took place last month, but came to light when a case was registered against the unofficial village council, he said.

On a complaint of the victim, who stays in Jalgaon district, an FIR under Sections 5 and 6 of the Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention,

Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016, has been registered against ten members of the caste panchayat, the official said.

The FIR was registered Thursday evening at Jalgaon's Chopda city police station, under whose jurisdiction the woman resides, and later the case was transferred for investigation to the Pinjar police station in Akola where the incident took place, he said.

According to the complaint, the incident took place April 9 at Wadgaon village in Akola, where the caste panchayat was called to take a decision on the second marriage of the victim, he said.

The victim belongs to the 'Nath Jogi' community, whose caste panchayat did not accept her second marriage, the official said.

The victim got married for the second time in 2019 after taking



divorce from her first husband in 2015, the official said.

Her first marriage took place in 2011, he said.

At the caste panchayat meeting, members discussed the woman's second marriage and called her sister and other relatives, and delivered their "verdict" on the issue (the victim was not present at the meet), the official said. According to the verdict, members of the caste panchayat were to spit on banana leaves and the victim was to lick it as a punishment, the official said. Besides, the caste panchayat sought a payment of ₹1 lakh from the victim, he said.

After fulfilling these demands by the panchayat, the victim was told she can "return" to her community, the official said, quoting from the complaint.

The decision of the caste panchayat was conveyed to the victim by her relatives.

Shocked by the decision, the victim approached the Chopda city police station and lodged the complaint against members of the panchayat, said Pravin Munde, Superintendent of Police, Jalgaon.

As the incident took place in Akola, the case has been transferred there for further investigation, he said.

# Heavy rains and sea incursion: Kerala on high vigil

Several people, living on the banks of these rivers and low-lying areas were shifted to safer places and relief camps as a precautionary measure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 14:** In view of heavy rainfall warning, Kerala was put on high alert Friday with the government opening relief camps and shifting people living in low-lying areas to safer places as rains were lashing several parts of the state since Thursday night.

The shutters of the Aruvikkara dam here were opened Thursday night due to heavy inflow and continuous downpour resulted in the Karamana and Killi rivers in the state capital to overflow.

Several people, living on the banks of these rivers, and low-lying areas were shifted to safer places and relief camps as a precautionary measure, authorities here said.

Overnight rains led to water-logging and uprooting of trees in many parts of southern Kollam district. High waves and sea incursion damaged several houses in coastal hamlets of Kollam,

Alappuzha and Ernakulam districts since Thursday night.

Chellanam, a coastal village in Ernakulam, was one of the several places which suffered the wrath of rough sea since Thursday.

Several houses were damaged as sea water seeped in due to high tidal waves, local people complained.

Sea erosion was reported at Velinakode in Ponnani in Malappuram district and Kasaba in Kozhikode.

According to Rekha Nambiar, Commandant, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), as a precautionary measure, nine teams of NDRF have been sent to Kerala.

"In Wayanad and Idukki districts, which are prone to landslides, we have sent equipment which would be required in case of landslides," she said.

She also said they were taking all precautions in view of COVID-19. "The personnel have been scanned and we have ensured that they do not have any comorbidity symptoms. While engaging in res-



People pull a boat ashore, which sailed away amid strong winds, after a red alert in view of a cyclonic formation in the Arabian Sea, in Thiruvananthapuram, Friday

PTI PHOTO

cue operations, they will be taking all precautions," Nambiar told a TV channel. The Land Revenue Commissionerate here said a total 87 people have been shifted to four relief camps opened in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam,

Idukki and Ernakulam districts so far. A total of 3,071 buildings have been identified to be converted as relief camps. It can accommodate at least 4,23,080 people at a time, sources added.

Authorities, however, said in

many places people seemed reluctant to move to relief camps in the wake of the COVID-19 situation.

However, Disaster Management officials here said the camps were arranged in adherence to pandemic protocols.

Those who are tested positive for the virus, those under quarantine and others would be accommodated separately and so there was no need to be panic to move to relief camps, they added.

Though the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had Thursday sounded a Red Alert in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta indicating the possibility of extremely heavy rains under the influence of a low pressure area over the Arabian Sea, it was withdrawn Friday morning.

As per the latest IMD forecast, a yellow alert was issued in Thiruvananthapuram while an orange alert in Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Thirissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts.



There was bloodshed in the state. I should not say much as the matter is under investigation but the Chief Minister's silence is a matter of concern and worry for me  
JAGDEEP DHANKAR | WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

## CENTRE TO SUPPLY 192L VAX DOSES TO STATES/UTS

The Centre Friday announced to supply nearly 192 lakh Covid-19 vaccines 'free of cost to the states and the Union Territories (UTs) in the next fortnight from May 16 to 31



## of the day quote

We are hoping that the Centre will supply a sufficient stock of vaccines at the earliest. We all are aware of the fact that Delhi has been one of the most severely affected states and is still grappling with the virus. A sigh of relief is that the second wave is witnessing a declining trend. However, an impending third wave can be stopped only through mass vaccination

ATISHI MARLENA | AAP MLA

Let the doctor decide the course of treatment, don't get into diagnosis and medication yourself

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

I have provided all the details in writing to the Delhi Police like from where stocks of medicines or oxygen cylinders or concentrators were purchased. We also shared details about the distribution process we adopted like cross checking prescriptions with our own medical experts

GAUTAM GAMBHIR | LOK SABHA MEMBER FROM EAST DELHI

## Monsoon to make early arrival over Kerala: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 14: The southwest monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala May 31, a day earlier than its normal onset date, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Friday.

The normal onset date of monsoon over Kerala is June 1. "This year, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be May 31st with a model error of plus or minus 4 days," the IMD said. In the Indian monsoon region, initial monsoon rains are experienced over south Andaman Sea and the monsoon winds then advance north-westwards across the Bay of Bengal.

According to the new normal dates of monsoon onset or progress, the southwest monsoon advances over the Andaman Sea around May 22. As a cyclone is expected to form over the Arabian Sea, the cross-equatorial south westerlies have temporarily strengthened over the Arabian Sea. The cross-equatorial flow is very likely to strengthen



and deepen over the Bay of Bengal from May 20 and a sustained rainfall activity is likely over the south Bay of Bengal and Andaman Nicobar Islands from May 21.

Hence, the monsoon advance over Andaman and Nicobar Islands is very likely around May 21.

In the last five years, monsoon arrived early in 2017 (May 30) and 2018 (May 29). In 2016 and 2019, monsoon made an arrival over Kerala on June 8, seven days after its normal onset date. The southwest monsoon, which brings nearly 75 per cent of rainfall to the country, is expected to be normal this year, the IMD said in the first Long Range Forecast for the southwest monsoon 2021 last month.

## Dr Reddy's launches Sputnik V in India

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, May 14: Dr Reddy's Laboratories Friday soft-launched imported COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V, with Deepak Sapra, a senior executive of the drug-maker, taking the first shot here.

The vaccine is priced at Rs 948, with five per cent GST per dose (retail price of Rs 995.40). The first consignment of imported doses of the Sputnik V vaccine from Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) landed in India May 1, and received regulatory clearance from the Central Drugs Laboratory, M V Ramana, CEO of Branded Markets (India and emerging Markets), Dr Reddy's, told a press conference.

"The current prices are based on the imported price that we had from RDIF and we are in discussions with various State governments, though quantities have not been fixed. We are in discussions with RDIF and we have a commitment of, over the couple of months, 36 million doses that we are expecting to get from RDIF. I don't have a very clear monthwise plan to share," Ramana told reporters.



Justifying the price, the official said it was done based on its landing price and other expenses involved in bringing it to people. He said the price may come down once local manufacturing starts.

RDIF has tie-ups with six Indian drug firms to manufacture the vaccine. The two vaccines- Covaxin by Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute's Covishield- which are currently used in the vaccination programme across the country - are priced at Rs 1,200 and Rs 600 per dose

respectively to private hospitals. By mid-June, Dr Reddy's expects stocks for commercial sales from RDIF and the company is in discussions with a couple of State governments and the Centre for supply of the vaccine, he added.

"Local manufacturing is expected to give us the vaccine for commercial usage from July time-frame. After that it will steadily ramp up over the next few months," he said. On launching the product, Sapra said the company would

initially be looking tentatively at 35 cities where cold chain facilities are available for launching the product and span out based on the infrastructure.

Sputnik V needs to be stored at -18 degrees centigrade, Sapra said. On another vaccine Sputnik Light from RDIF, Sapra said the Russian organisation has submitted to Dr Reddy's the interim results of the single dose vaccine's trials which are being studied.

As soon as the vaccine completes the 42-day trial, Dr Reddy's would approach the Indian regulators for necessary approvals. On 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), an anti-COVID oral drug, developed by DRDO for emergency use as adjunct therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus patients, he said it is expected to be launched in mid-June.

The drug, which was approved by the Drugs Controller General of India, has been developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a leading laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories in Hyderabad.

## OPEN INVITATION TO CORONA



People violating Covid-19 protocols in a marriage procession near Ghaziabad

PTI PHOTO

## SHORT TAKES

### Two killed in grenade attack

Tinsukia (Assam): Two persons were killed and another one injured in a grenade blast by suspected ULFA (Independent) insurgents in a market area in Assam's Tinsukia district on Friday, police said. The grenade was hurled in front of a hardware shop at Tingrai market under the jurisdiction of Digboi police station. Terming the incident as "an act of desperation", Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma asked Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta to arrest the culprits and deal with the situation sternly.

### 5 kids, rescuer drown in pond

Chandigarh: Five children drowned in a pond in a village in Punjab's Ludhiana Friday, as well as a migrant who trying to save them, police said. The incident happened in Mangarh village, where the five children, aged between seven and 10 years, accidentally drowned to death. The 22-year-old migrant who jumped into the pond in a futile attempt to rescue them also lost his life.

### Woman gangraped

Chandigarh: A 23-year-old woman was gang-raped in Haryana's Palwal after one of the accused allegedly lured her to a secluded area in the district, police said Friday. In her complaint given to the Palwal police May 12, the victim has named 20 to 22 people as accused who were involved in the incident. A police official said the woman's family, that belongs to Dehradun in Uttarakhand, were presently settled in Uttar Pradesh.

### Arunachal woman scales Mt Everest

Itanagar: Thirty-seven-year-old Tashi Yangjom, a resident of West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh, has conquered Mount Everest, joining the ranks of a handful of women mountaineers who have achieved the feat, official sources said Friday. Yangjom, an instructor at Dirang-based National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS), scaled the world's highest peak May 11 at 6 am, they said. "She is the ninth instructor from NIMAS to have successfully climbed the world's highest peak in a span of three years," Institute's Director Colonel Sarfraz Singh said.

## CRISIS AT GOA HOSPITAL

## 75 killed in 4 days due to lack of O2

AGENCIES

Panaji, May 14: Thirteen Covid patients died at Goa's apex government hospital, the Goa Medical College, in the early hours of Friday owing to oxygen mismanagement, even as the death toll of patients who died between 2 am and 6 am at the premier facility in the last four days reached 75.

Amid the spate of deaths, Goa Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari Friday conducted a review of the Covid-19 situation in a virtual conference with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Vishwajit Rane.

"Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari today reviewed the Covid-19 situation in Goa during his meeting with Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Vishwajit Rane held online," according to the Governor's official Twitter handle.

In all, 61 Covid patients died in Goa's hospitals Friday, taking the total death toll due to Covid-related complications to 1,998. Videos of chaos at the numerous wards of the Medical College have gone viral, with patients and relatives pleading for assistance as

Goa currently has 32,387 active cases, which amounts to more than 2% of the state's entire population of approximately 15 lakh

well as uploading emotive snapshots of helplessness and lack of hygiene in the health facility.

Opposition MLA of the Goa Forward Party, Vijai Sardesai, has called the four hours between 2 am and 6 am - when most of the deaths occurred - as the "dark hour" of death.

While 26 persons died May 10 during the four hours, May 11, 21 persons died due to lack of oxygen. Despite a grilling of government agencies by the Bombay High Court, which is hearing a bunch of public interest litigations related to poor Covid management and shoddy oxygen management at the premier hospital, the spate of deaths did not stop, with 15 persons dying May 12 and

13 dying in the early hours of Friday. Leader of Opposition Digambar Kamat Friday demanded that the state government should compensate the relatives of the deceased Covid patients, saying the deaths occurred due to government blunder. The Bombay High Court has also expressed unhappiness over the shoddy oxygen management practices at the hospital and has recommended a slew of measures to streamline the oxygen delivery systems at the medical college.

Earlier Friday, a team of Youth Congress officials, who have been assisting the patients with refilling of oxygen cylinders, also visited the Covid ward of the medical college.

Meanwhile, the state Health Ministry told the Bombay High Court in Goa, that eight 'trained and experienced' tractor drivers had been hired from Maharashtra for transportation of oxygen trolleys to health facilities.

The status report also said that a liquid medical oxygen tank was also in the process of being installed at the medical college, along with installation of dura cylinders.

## HORROR IN HOSPITAL

## Covid patient raped, dies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 14: A 43-year-old Covid victim was raped by a ward boy at Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre last month, following which she died the next day.

However, soon after the incident the accused was arrested.

Sources said that even after a month, the family members of the victim were not informed about the incident that has brought the police under the lens. The woman was admitted to the facility after she had tested Covid positive. She was raped by the ward boy on April 6 following which her health deteriorated and she died the next day.

Sources said that accused Santosh entered into the woman's ward at 4 am April 6 and asked her to undergo a medical check up. He first molested the Covid victim, took her to the bathroom in the name of the check up and raped her.



After that her health worsened and she was then put on a ventilator but she died the next day.

The matter came light when the organisations fighting for the rights of Bhopal gas tragedy victims, flagged the "pathetic condition of Covid wards" in the hospital.

They had written to Justice (Retd) VK Agarwal, Chairman of a committee for medical rehabilitation of Bhopal gas tragedy victims, about the incident.

The Bhopal Group for Information and Action, an NGO working with the survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, had also written to the officials on Wednesday about this shameful incident, and sought an investigation. They further said that this matter should also be brought to the notice of the High Court.

Former Chief Minister Kamal Nath tweeted, "Rape and molestation of the Covid victim who was hospitalised in Bhopal, is extremely shameful! It is very disgraceful that the victim had died and instead of taking action, the hospital management and the police kept the whole matter discreet." The Bhopal police are in touch with the victims' kin and the case will now be presented in the court for justice.

"No attempt has been made by the Bhopal police to suppress and hide the case," a senior police official added.

## Assam jumbo deaths remain 'mysterious'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, May 14: Even as the authorities are saying that the 18 wild elephants were killed after being struck by a massive 'lightning' bolt in central Assam's Nagaon district, the wildlife experts are saying the tragic incident is very 'mysterious' and demanded a thorough probe.

Nagaon district Deputy Commissioner Kavitha Padmanabhan said that a team comprising wildlife, forest and veterinary department officials went to the forest areas to ascertain the exact cause of the deaths of 18 elephants including calves on Wednesday night in the moun-

tainous Kandali Proposed Reserve Forest (PRF). "Before getting the reports of the official team, I am unable to give all the details of the 18 dead elephants," Padmanabhan said. Various organisations and wildlife experts have demanded in-depth inquiry by independent agencies to know the exact reasons for the death of so many wild elephants at one time.

Wildlife expert and former top official of the Assam government Annarwaruddin Choudhary demanding a thorough probe termed the incident as very mysterious.

"If the elephants died due to the thunderbolt, there might be some burn injuries and other effects of the lightning at the spot. But whatever

visuals I have seen there are some doubts about the nature of the death of the elephants," Choudhary said.

"Only the post-mortems of the bodies of the dead elephants would reveal the cause of the deaths," he added. Green Guard Nature Organisation (GGNO) Secretary General Rituraj Phukan said that there is no telltale evidence visible in the images and videos circulating on social media.

"The GGNO, which has been working in the area since two decades, requested the government to conduct a thorough and independent inquiry to assuage the concerns of conservationists and wildlife lovers all over the world," said Phukan.

## PM releases 8th instalment of ₹19K cr for PM-KISAN scheme

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday released the eighth instalment of financial benefits worth Rs 19,000 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme to benefit more than 9.5 crore farmers that includes first-time beneficiaries in West Bengal.

The Prime Minister released the instalment through video conferencing, saying "farmers in West Bengal for the first time benefitted with the Central scheme and that more farmers will get the support as soon as the Centre receives it".

The instalment will enable the transfer of more than Rs 19,000

crore to over 9.5 crore beneficiary farmer families.

Modi also interacted with farmer beneficiaries during the event and said that around Rs 1.35 lakh crore has been transferred to the bank accounts of farmers under the PM-KISAN and Rs 60,000 crore during the Covid-19 pandemic.

So far this year, the Prime Minister said that "about 10 per cent more wheat has been purchased at Minimum Support Price (MSP) as compared to last year".

"So far, about 58,000 crore of wheat procurement has reached the farmers' account directly".

Under the PM-KISAN scheme, a financial benefit of Rs 6,000 per year is provided to the eligible



beneficiary farmer families, payable in three equal 4-monthly

instalments of Rs 2,000 each. "PM-KISAN is benefitting small

and marginal farmers. In these difficult times, this money is helping these farmers a lot. So far under the scheme, about 11 crore farmers have got Rs 1.35 lakh crore in their bank accounts. There are no middlemen," Modi said.

The government is continuously making efforts to ensure benefits to farmers reach directly at a faster pace, the Prime Minister added.

"Despite COVID-19 challenges, record foodgrains and horticulture products have been grown. The government has also procured record rice and wheat at minimum support price from farmers. New record procurements are being set, first rice and now wheat," Modi said. Talking about procurement

operations, he said the centre has purchased 10 per cent more wheat so far this year at MSP and added that around Rs 58,000 crore payment has been made to farmers directly.

He also mentioned that farmers of Punjab and Haryana are sharing their experiences on social media about how they feel to see money in their bank accounts. Modi said the government is continuously working to provide new solutions in agriculture.

Last year, the Centre provided free rations for eight months under the food law to over 80 crore people. It is again providing free rations for May and June, costing Rs 26,000 crore to the exchequer.

of the day quote

I know many children who have lost both their parents. I want to tell them that I am still there. Do not consider yourself an orphan. The government will take care of their studies and upbringing

The Goa government will launch our Covid vaccination drive for the 18-45 age group from May 15. The vaccines will be administered free of cost across Goa through 35 government centres. Citizens are urged to register themselves on CoWIN portal. Let's work together to defeat the menace of coronavirus in the State

GOI's vaccine policy is compounding the problem. Vaccine purchase should be centralised and distribution decentralised. India cannot afford this



Eid Mubarak to all fellow citizens! This festival is an occasion to strengthen the spirit of fraternity and rededicate ourselves to the service of humanity. Let us resolve to deal with Covid-19 by following the guidelines and to work for the well-being of the society and the country

MALERKOTLA TO BE PUNJAB'S 23RD DISTRICT

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Friday announced the creation of a new district of Malerkotla, carving the state's only Muslim-majority town from Sangrur district. Adjoining Amargarh and Ahmedgarh will also form part of Punjab's 23rd district



'Fight against nCoV on war footing'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said the coronavirus pandemic is rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged citizens to take precautions, wear masks and maintain social distance to check spread disease that has claimed at least 2.6 lakh lives.

The government, he said, is working on "war footing" to control the second wave of infections and is setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines.

He asked states to crack down on black marketing of medicines and other essential items. "I want to warn you about corona. This pandemic is spreading fast in rural villages. Every government is taking efforts to stop this. Awareness about this among rural people and cooperation of the panchayat institutes are equally important



the nation. We hope this time too, to protect yourself and family from COVID, all necessary precautions are taken. Wearing mask properly and regularly is important." Modi said. Modi urged farmers to be aware of this invisible enemy and take precautions and timely medication.

He asked people to wear masks, maintain social distancing and undergo testing if there are any symptoms.

The PM asked farmers not to take COVID symptoms like cold and fever lightly. "Get the test done, isolate yourself and start the medication on time." After

vaccination too, people should not forget to follow the Covid appropriate behaviour, he added. Facing the world's worst health crisis, India reported more than 3 lakh daily infections for 22 consecutive days.

With 3,43,144 new infections over the last 24 hours, the tally of total

cases crossed 2.4 crore. With 4,000 fresh deaths, the toll now stands at 2,62,317, since the pandemic first struck India more than a year ago. A bulk of new infections is said to be coming from rural areas.

On its part, the Prime Minister said, the government is working on a "war footing" to control the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Modi expressed confidence that the country will win the battle against coronavirus, which he described as an "invisible enemy" and "multi-coloured" in nature.

"After 100 years, such a terrible pandemic is testing the world at every step. In front of us, we have an invisible enemy, which is in multiform. We have lost close ones to this enemy, the coronavirus," Modi said.

Highlighting steps taken to boost essential medicines and oxygen supplies across the country, the Prime Minister said that COVID hospitals and oxygen plants using the latest technology are being set up in different parts of the country.

Cyclone Tauktae to lash Guj, Maha, Kerala in 96 hrs



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 14: With a low pressure area developing rapidly over the Lakshadweep Isles and the Arabian Sea, a powerful cyclonic storm is expected to manifest by Sunday and is likely to hit the coasts of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Kerala in the next four days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Friday.

The IMD has already put Mumbai and Thane under a Yellow Alert, signifying isolated heavy rains accompanied by strong winds, while Orange and Red Alerts have been issued for several districts in Gujarat and Kerala.

The Cyclone Tauktae, currently developing over Lakshadweep Isles and the Arabian Sea, is likely to intensify into a full-fledged cyclonic storm on Sunday, causing heavy rains accompanied by gusty winds in southern and western coastal parts of the country. "It is very likely to intensify into a deep depression during the next 12 hours and into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 12 hours. It is very likely to intensify further. Initially, it will possibly move north-north-eastwards till today evening. It would then move north-north-westwards and reach near Gujarat coast by May 18 morning," the IMD said in its latest bulletin.

In Kerala, heavy to very heavy rains are likely Saturday and heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places Sunday and Monday, according to the IMD.

The cyclone would trigger heavy rains in Mumbai, southern Konkan region's Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts of Maharashtra, parts of Goa and Gujarat over the next three days till it reaches the Gujarat coast Tuesday.

NSUI files missing complaint against PM

The move by the student wing of the Congress came just two days after a similar complaint was filed against Amit Shah over the 'disappearance of the country's Home Minister at the time of the pandemic'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 14: The National Students Union of India (NSUI) has filed a 'missing person' report with the Delhi Police against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several of his Cabinet ministers, accusing them of running away amid the Covid-19 crisis.

The move by the student wing of the Congress came just two days after a similar complaint was filed against Union minister Amit Shah over the 'disappearance of the country's Home Minister at the time of the pandemic'.

The latest missing person report was filed by NSUI General Secretary Nagesh Kariyappa against Modi, Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, Smriti Irani, S. Jaishankar, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Dharmendra Pradhan, Narendra Singh Tomar, Prakash Javadekar, Harsh Vardhan and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at the Parliament Street police station here. In his complaint, Kariyappa alleged that all these BJP leaders were last seen during the Assembly elections in West Bengal. Kariyappa said that at a

time when the second wave of the pandemic is raging across the country, Modi and his Cabinet ministers have turned a blind eye to the sufferings of the people. The NSUI leader said that as politicians, they have to be accountable to the whole country, but even in the darkest time of the pandemic, the Prime Minister and his ministers are running away from the crisis situation.

Kariyappa also questioned the BJP about its achievement in the last seven years and said that it has been able to sustain only by crafting 'jumlas' and making fake promises.

Stating that lakhs of people are suffering across the country because of lack of medical resources, Kariyappa said, "People are even struggling to get a place to cremate the dead. Where are the so called leaders who had assured to make India a global leader, but have instead made people suffer like this?"

Meanwhile, NSUI chief Neeraj Kundan said that when the people are in dire need, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues are missing in action.



SHORT TAKES

Three prisoners killed in clash

Chitrakoot (UP): Three prisoners were shot dead in a clash at Raigauli district jail here Friday, police said. One of them died in an exchange of fire with jail officials after he shot dead the other two prisoners, jailor S P Tripathi said. The deceased inmates have been identified as Anshu Dixit, Merazuddin alias Meraj Ali and Mukem Kala, officials said in Lucknow.

96-year-old beats Covid

New Delhi: Pushpa Sharma is the new talk of the town in Delhi's Shahdara area where her neighbours are amazed by the grit of the woman, who has recovered from Covid-19 at the age of 96 years. Her family members, who too were down with the deadly virus, credit her "willpower" and the "positive atmosphere" at their home for her recovery at a time when the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit the country hard. Sharma, who lives with her son Arun Kumar (67) and daughter-in-law Meena (64) in Naveen Shahdara, tested positive for the infection April 18, but was under treatment at home, and doctors confirmed her recovery May 9 following tests, her grandson Kunal (35) said.

Car plunges into canal, four killed

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP): Four people, including a man and his three-year-old son, drowned after their car plunged into a canal here, police said Friday, adding two others managed to escape. The incident took place Thursday in the Sharda barrage in the Phoolbehar area, nearly 15 km away from Lakhimpur. The victims, Ajay (25), his son Priyanshu (3) and their relatives - Deepak (25) and Lalit Verma (30), were returning home to their village, Ramuapur Sikatiha, after attending a Tilak ceremony in the district's Dhaurahra area.

Naxal killed

Dantewada: A Naxal was killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district Friday, a police official said. The gunfight took place at around 7:30 am near Mustalna village under Geedam police station limits when a team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said.



Muslim devotees greet each other on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, near Jama Masjid in Nagpur

PTI PHOTO

KERALA EXTENDS LOCKDOWN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 14: The Kerala government Friday announced that the total lockdown being enforced in the state from May 8 to May 16 will be extended till May 23 to contain the massive spread of COVID-19.

The decision to extend the lockdown was taken in view of high test positivity rates in districts, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. The state is currently under a 9-day complete shutdown as part of its efforts to bring down the daily caseload of infected persons. Addressing a press conference here, Vijayan also announced 'triple lockdown' in four districts--Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Malappuram--from May 16 to bring down the rising number of cases. Such strong measures will help contain the massive spread of virus in these districts, he said. Vijayan said it will take some more days to know about the positive impact of the lockdown measures.

BSF RECOVERS ARMS DROPPED BY PAK DRONE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu/New Delhi, May 14: In another attempted aerial drop of arms in India from across the border, a drone was observed dropping its consignment in the Samba sector of the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir Friday morning, security officials said.

Border Security Force (BSF) personnel on patrolling duty recovered the arms, while the drone flew back into Pakistani territory before it could be targeted.

"Alert troops of Border Security Force Friday recovered the cache of arms and ammunition dropped by a Pakistani drone in Samba area early this morning. The consignment was wrapped in polyethylene packet," the BSF said.

An AK 47 rifle, a 9mm pistol, a pistol magazine, 15 rounds of pistol ammunition, and wooden frame used to support payload in drone



was seized by the BSF, which is deployed to guard the 3,323 km-long India-Pakistan border.

Using drones to drop arms, ammunition, drugs and money into India has been used by Pakistan-

based elements for quite some now. Security forces September 22 last year also recovered a cache of arms and ammunition dropped by a Pakistani drone across the LoC in the Akhnoor sector of Jammu division. The BSF then shot down the drone.

On September 19 last year, a Pakistani drone had dropped arms and ammunition in Jammu's Rajouri district for three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants.

The LeT militants had come from Pulwama in the Kashmir valley via the Mughal road and had picked up the consignment before security forces arrested them.

J&K Director General of Police, Dilbag Singh, has said though detecting weapons being dropped via drones in hilly areas was a challenging task, security forces were taking counter measures to thwart the nefarious designs of Pakistan-based subversive elements.

Shallow graves, bodies in river: Covid hits villages

AGENCIES

Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, May 14: Coronavirus is raging in India's hinterland, where in some places bodies are being buried in shallow graves or given up to rivers and the sick have little hope other than herbal remedies and amateur doctors.

Kidwai Ahmad, from Uttar Pradesh's Sadullahpur village said the situation is "disastrous" with people dying all around his neighbourhood. "There is so much poverty all around that people can't even afford decent cremations. They often tie big stones to the bodies and throw them in the river," he told AFP by phone. "Others don't even bother with that and just throw the bodies in

as they are. It has become common practice here," he added. "Some are just burying their dead in shallow graves and not even waiting to see if crows or dogs feed on them."

In the past month no medical team has visited the village. The sick are staying at home taking "herbal concoctions", Mr Ahmad said. Clinics, if people can travel to them, are low on beds, medicines and oxygen. "People have been left to die," he added. "This is the India which is hidden from everyone."

'Shambles' More than 100 corpses that have washed up on the banks of the river Ganges in recent days suggest the situation is equally dire elsewhere in the country. In Unnao district dozens of people have



been buried in shallow sandy graves by the river. Authorities announced Friday they would dis-

patch patrols to the riverside to stop people disposing of their dead. Locals say there is not

CORONAVIRUS IN LAKES

HYDERABAD: Apart from confirming that Hyderabad's iconic Hussain Sagar Lake is teeming with the dreadful coronavirus, researchers have found that the dynamic of viral load in the water serves as an early warning signal of impending pandemic waves. In addition to the Hussain Sagar, the group of researchers, has identified some more lakes in the city vicinity, the waters of which, contain the virus. These include the Nacharam lake and the Nizam Talab. Fortunately, so far, there are no documented studies to prove that Covid-19 can be spread through water unlike the polio virus. The researchers, comprising of scientists from the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) here, and the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) in Ghaziabad, conducted the study, with support of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The study, spread over seven months, roughly coincided with the first and second pandemic waves in the country.

enough wood for funeral pyres meaning they are forced to leave bodies in the river, but officials dispute there is a shortage. The Uttar

Pradesh government also insists it has a "relentless and aggressive campaign to trace, test and treat Covid patients".

# international



Give birth to the child and hand it over to us, the Church, and we will do everything we can to raise it and get it on its feet. We are a big country and we need to become more

**PATRIARCH KIRILL** | HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

## PICASSO'S PAINTING SELLS FOR \$103 MILLION IN NY

Pablo Picasso's "Woman Sitting Near a Window (Marie-Therese)" sold Thursday for \$103.4 million at Christie's in New York. Christie's had estimated the painting would sell for \$55 million



### of the day quote

Coercive diplomacy is a specialty of the United States, which has provided the world with classic textbooks and cases of coercive diplomacy through its policies and actions

**HUA CHUNYING** | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

Defense Logistics Agency is preparing 159 oxygen concentrators at Travis Air Force Base. They are scheduled to ship via commercial air for a Monday, that's the 17th of May, delivery to India

**JOHN KIRBY** | PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY, US

There is a significant ransomware attack on the HSE IT systems. We have taken the precaution of shutting down all our IT systems in order to protect them from this attack and to allow us to fully assess the situation with our own security partners

**PAUL REID** | HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE, IRELAND

### SHORT TAKES

#### Lawmakers nod to abortion ban

**Austin:** Texas would ban abortions after as early as six weeks — before many women even know they are pregnant — and allow private citizens to enforce the rule through civil lawsuits against doctors and others under a measure given final approval by state lawmakers. This would bring Texas in line with about a dozen other GOP-led states that have passed so-called "heartbeat bills" that federal courts have mostly blocked. The bill would ban abortions after the first detection of an embryonic "heartbeat."

#### Mosque blast during prayers

**Kabul:** At least 12 people were killed in an explosion inside a mosque in the Afghan capital Kabul during Friday prayers as worshippers gathered for the second day of the Eid al-Fitr holiday, officials said. Ferdous Faramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police, said the mosque's Imam was among the 12 dead and at least 15 other people were wounded. He did not identify the mosque where the blast took place. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

#### Minister resigns amid clashes

**Bogota:** Colombian Foreign Minister Claudia Blum has stepped down amid the ongoing violent anti-government protests in the country. Blum did not give a reason for her resignation in a Thursday video message, but media reports cited criticism of her crisis management. Deputy Minister Adriana Mejia will be her successor, according to the reports. Colombia has witnessed violent protests for the past two weeks, including some that turned into riots. At least 42 people have died and 168 others are missing.

#### US pulls out of Kandahar base

**Kandahar:** The United States has completed its withdrawal from Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan, once the second largest military base in the country for US forces, officials said Friday. Kandahar province was the birthplace of the Taliban and has in recent months seen intense clashes between the insurgent terrorists and Afghan forces. US airstrikes were launched from the base just last week to help Afghan forces push back a major Taliban offensive.

## PANDEMIC MILESTONE

# US lifts mask for vaccinated people

ALMOST 60 PERCENT OF US ADULTS NOW HAVE ONE OR MORE DOSES, WHILE CASES ARE FALLING FAST, DOWN TO A SEVEN-DAY-AVERAGE OF 38,000 OR 11 PER 100,000

AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

**Washington, May 14:** The top US health agency Thursday said it was lifting mask-wearing guidance for people who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, a watershed moment in the long pandemic fight.

The announcement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) marked an abrupt turnaround after more than a year of urging people to cover their faces to stem the spread.

"Anyone who is fully vaccinated can participate in indoor and outdoor activities, large or small, without wearing a mask or physical distancing," CDC director Rochelle Walensky said during a briefing.

"If you are fully vaccinated, you can start doing the things that you had stopped doing because of the pandemic."

The move sparked joyful reactions in some, but others experienced whiplash and said they would continue to wear their masks out of caution.

Accumulating data shows the extremely high efficacy of au-



thorized vaccines, not just to prevent symptomatic Covid-19 but also asymptomatic infection and onward transmission.

Almost 60 percent of US adults now have one or more doses, while cases are falling fast, down to a seven-day-average of 38,000 or 11 per 100,000.

And Thursday, the campaign to vaccinate adolescents aged 12-to-15 began in earnest following the authorization of the Pfizer vaccine in this age group.

According to the CDC's website,

masks may still be required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States, and in US transportation hubs such as airports and stations.

Fully vaccinated international travelers arriving in the United States still need to be tested within three days of their flight, or show documentation of recovery from Covid-19 in the past three months.

Walensky said people who are immune compromised should talk to

### 'AMERICANS CAN SMILE AGAIN'

President Joe Biden told Americans Thursday that the lifting of the rule on indoor mask wearing was "a great day" in the fight against Covid-19 and that they could now "smile again." In often-emotional remarks, Biden declared a major victory in the more than year-long battle which has seen more than half a million Americans die. Biden implored those yet to be completely vaccinated to keep wearing masks for now. "Please protect yourself until we get to the finish line. Because as great as this announcement is, we don't want to let up. We all know how tough this virus is. The safest thing for the country, is for everyone to get vaccinated," he said.

their doctor before giving up their mask. Finally, she added, the guidance was subject to change if the situation worsens.

## Diplomats, donors concerned about sex abuse reports at WHO



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, May 14:** British, European and American diplomats and donors have voiced serious concerns about how the World Health Organisation handled sex abuse allegations involving its own staff during an outbreak of Ebola in Congo, as reported this week by The Associated Press.

Tuesday, the AP published an investigation documenting that senior WHO management was informed of multiple sex abuse allegations involving at least two of its doctors during the epidemic in 2018.

A notarized contract obtained by the AP showed that two WHO staffers signed off on an agreement between WHO's Dr Jean-Paul Ngandu and a young woman he allegedly impregnated in Congo.

In it, Ngandu promised to pay the young woman money, cover her pregnancy costs and buy her a plot of land.

The contract was made "to protect the integrity and reputation of the organization," Ngandu said.

"The UK has a zero tolerance approach when it comes to sexual exploitation and harassment — and that extends to all international organizations that we fund," said Simon Manley, the UK's ambassador to the UN in Geneva.

A notarized contract obtained by the AP showed that two WHO staffers signed off on an agreement between WHO's Dr Jean-Paul Ngandu and a young woman he allegedly impregnated in Congo

"We are speaking with WHO and other major donors as a matter of urgency to establish the facts."

WHO has declined to comment on the specific allegations reported by the AP and said it is waiting for the results of a panel created last October to investigate sexual abuse during the Congo outbreak involving WHO staffers.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the agency's third-largest funder, said it expects UN agencies to conduct thorough investigations into sexual abuse as quickly as possible.

"Our role as a funder is to hold organizations that receive grants from the foundation to the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and to insist that they take steps to prevent misconduct in the future," the foundation said.

Lawrence Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on Global Health Law at Georgetown University, said the ultimate responsibility for WHO's Ebola response lies with director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The AP found that one of the doctors accused of sexual harassment, Boubacar Diallo, bragged about his relationship to Tedros, who mentioned Diallo during a speech in January 2019.

### FAITH



Indonesian Muslims attend a mass prayer session at Gunung Labu field as Mount Kerinci Volcano is seen in the background during Eid al-Fitr

## ISRAEL-PALESTINE VIOLENCE

# Tanks pound Gaza ahead of possible incursion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gaza City, May 14:** Israeli artillery pounded northern Gaza early Friday in an attempt to destroy a vast network of militant tunnels inside the territory, the military said, bringing the front lines closer to dense civilian areas and paving the way for a potential ground invasion.

Israel has massed troops along the border and called up 9,000 reservists following days of fighting with the Islamic militant group Hamas, which controls Gaza. Palestinians militants have fired some 1,800 rockets and the military has launched more than 600 airstrikes, toppling at least three apartment blocks.



The stepped-up fighting came as communal violence in Israel erupted for a fourth night, with Jewish and Arab mobs clashing in the flashpoint town of Lod. The fighting took place despite a bolstered police presence ordered by the nation's leaders.

Masses of red flames illuminated the skies as the deafening blasts from the outskirts of Gaza City jolted people awake.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said tanks stationed near the border fired 50 rounds. It was part of a large op-

### COVID SCARE

## B1.617.2 variant spreads rapidly in parts of UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, May 14:** The case numbers related to the B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread "increasingly rapidly".

Public Health England said that its latest analysis shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first detected in Maharashtra has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week. Most cases are in the northwest of England and additional measures are being put in place to "rapidly break chains of transmission."

The stepped-up fighting came as communal violence in Israel erupted for a fourth night, with Jewish and Arab mobs clashing in the flashpoint town of Lod

eration that also involved airstrikes and was aimed at destroying tunnels beneath Gaza City used by militants to evade surveillance and airstrikes, which the military refers to as "the Metro." "As always, the aim is to strike military targets and to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties," he said.

# 73 mn year old 'talkative' dinosaur species found in Mexico

THE ANIMAL IS CALLED 'TLATLOPHUS GALORUM'. IT'S TAIL WAS DISCOVERED FIRST, IN THE GENERAL CEPEDA AREA OF THE NORTHERN STATE OF COAHUILA IN 2013

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Mexico City, May 14:** Paleontologists identified a new species of dinosaur after a speci-



men from about 73 million years ago was found in northern Mexico, the country's National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH)

said Thursday. The scientists said the conditions in which the dino was found explain its preservation.

We know that they had ears with the capacity of hearing low-frequency sounds, so they must have been peaceful but talkative dinosaurs, the INAH said

"About 72 or 73 million years ago, a huge herbivore dinosaur died in what must have been a body of water full of sediment, so that its body was quickly covered by the earth and could be preserved through the ages," the institute said in a statement.

The animal is called Tlatlophus galorum. It's tail

was discovered first, in the General Cepeda area of the northern state of Coahuila in 2013.

As excavations continued, scientists eventually discovered 80 per cent of its skull, its 1.32-meter crest and bones such as its femur and shoulder, which allowed researchers to finally realize this year that they had a new species of dinosaur on their hands, the INAH said. "We know that they had ears with the capacity of hearing low-frequency sounds, so they must have been peaceful but talkative dinosaurs," the statement said.

Paleontologists also believe that the dinosaurs "emitted strong sounds to scare away predators or for reproductive purposes."

The discovery is still under investigation, but research about the

ancient reptile has already been published in the scientific journal Cretaceous Research, according to INAH.

"It is an exceptional case in Mexican paleontology," the INAH said. "Highly favorable events had to occur millions of years ago, when Coahuila was a tropical region, for it to be conserved in the conditions it was found in."

The name Tlatlophus is derived from the indigenous Nahuatl language word tlaholli - which means word or statement - and the Greek word lophus, meaning crest.

The animals crest's shape looks like what the INAH said is "a symbol used by Mesoamerican people in ancient manuscripts to represent the action of communication and knowledge itself."

# business



**The bank has set aside \$3.8 million for the care of its over 35,000 India employees, and an additional \$10 million is being earmarked in phases to support the needy in their pandemic recovery phase**  
FILIPPO GORI | CEO, JP MORGAN (ASIA PACIFIC)

## 'SUPPORT HOUSEHOLD SECTOR'

To mitigate the impact of much ferocious second wave, Centre should support the household sector directly, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a study which suggested that the Centre should provide direct income support to casual workers in the construction and MSME sectors



## of the day quote

Setting up the Covid treatment centre at our premises and supply of free oxygen are part of our commitment to core purpose, energising lives of the nation. Upgrading our oxygen production facility was a challenge but we could complete the entire activity within five days



**SANJAY KHANNA** | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (KOCHI REFINERY), BPCL

We have always considered our partners and their employees as our extended family and given the utmost importance to their health, well being, and safety, given the current conditions, we would like to extend support in whatever we can, to ensure we rise against Covid



**ANAND MAHINDRA** | CHAIRMAN, M&M

I am excited about the journey ahead. As an iconic brand, Bata has become an integral part of the Indian fabric



**GUNJAN SHAH** | BATA INDIA CEO-DESIGNATE

## SHORT TAKES

### PGIL raises ₹2,736 cr through InvIT OFS

**New Delhi:** State-run Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) Friday said it has received ₹2,736.02 crore through sale of 27.41 crore units in the PowerGrid Infrastructure Investment Trust (PGInvIT) offer for sale. Earlier in the day, the units issued by PGInvIT were listed on NSE and BSE. PGCIL has created the PGInvIT to monetise its assets. The initial portfolio of assets in the InvIT comprises five special purpose vehicles (SPVs).

### Alembic Pharma gets USFDA nod

**New Delhi:** Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals Friday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for Lurasidone Hydrochloride tablets, used to treat bipolar depression. The approved product is therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed drug product Lutada tablets of Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc. The company has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its abbreviated new drug application Lurasidone Hydrochloride tablets in the strengths of 20 mg, 40 mg, 60 mg, 80 mg, and 120 mg, Alembic Pharmaceuticals said.

### CavinKare to provide vax cover

**Chennai:** FMCG major CavinKare would provide Covid-19 vaccination cover to all its 1,700 employees and dependent family members, besides offering education support to children of employees in case of any unfortunate event, the company said Friday. CavinKare would cover 1,700 employees across India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka under the vaccination drive for all its employees.

### IEX clocks record trade volume

**New Delhi:** The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) recorded the highest power trade volume or sales of 22.42 billion units (BU) in the March quarter with y-o-y growth of 62.1%. The power trade volume was 13.83 BU in the January-March quarter last year, IEX said in a statement. According to the statement, the Q4FY'21 ended March 31, 2021, saw the highest-ever quarterly electricity volume at 22.4 BU and also highest-ever Y-o-Y growth of 62.1%.

## States urged to prioritise jobs for banks, insurance cos' employees



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 14:** The finance ministry Friday asked state governments to accord priority to employees of banks and insurance companies for Covid-19 vaccination, saying they are exposed to high risks during these difficult times.

Department of Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda, in a letter addressed to chief secretaries of states and union territories, said states should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems and other financial services providers on priority.

Tagging the letter, Panda in a tweet said, "Kudos to our Bankers, Insurers, Payment Service Providers, Bank Mitras for ensuring uninterrupted delivery of banking and financial services to people in need during these challenging times." He also mentioned that many of these employees have

succumbed to Covid-19.

"All state/UT governments are requested to instruct local authorities to provide them necessary help and support in ensuring delivery of banking and financial services. Vaccinating them on priority will mitigate their high exposure to risk in delivery of public service," he said.

Raising the issues of some instances of manhandling by state law enforcement authorities during local lockdowns, the letter also asked state administration to ensure easy movement of officials for discharge of duty.

"Likewise, offices of banks and branches have occasionally been ordered to shut down by state law enforcement authorities even during permitted banking hours, accompanied by threats. While bank employees are already braving risks to their health and need to be assured about their safety, these incidents end up demoralising them... And disruption in services," it said.

This becomes impediment to account holders access to funds in

**States should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems and other financial services providers on priority**

**DEBASISH PANDA** | SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

their hours of needs, disbursement of DBT payments, extension of credit to mitigate disruption to business, etc which should otherwise be uninterrupted and seamless, it said.

Panda also asked the chief secretaries to instruct district administration and local authorities to cooperate with bank and financial services employees, provide adequate security to them and not impede their functioning or movement. Welcoming the move, All India Bank Employees Association general secretary CH Vekatachlam said priority Vaccination is very important.

Vekatachlam demanded that the Department of Financial Services can also give some minimum uniform guidelines on working of banks.

It is to be noted that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs on Management of Covid-19 pandemic and related issues, in its 229th report, appreciated the efforts and pain taken by the banking sector for providing uninterrupted service during the Covid-19 outbreak and consequent lockdown.

## Nalco extends support in fight against Covid



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco) is supporting the 70-bedded Covid Centre at Saheed Laxman Naik Medical College at Koraput to make it fully operational.

Similarly, Nalco is supporting a 66-bedded Covid healthcare facility at ESI Hospital, Banarpal, Angul, by bearing the cost of the total operation and maintenance of the facility.

The company has developed a full-fledged infrastructure in the 200-bedded Covid Hospital in Nabarangpur, apart from running two exclusive Covid Centres at Nalco's hospitals in Angul & Damanjodi.

Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra said, "Nalco collectively has always stood with the people of Odisha in difficult times and now we are reaffirming our commitment in mitigating the disaster caused by the pandemic in whatever way it is possible."

In order to strengthen the vaccination drive in the state, Nalco has provided a refrigerated truck having a capacity of 25, 70,000 vaccines (doses) to state immunisation cell for safe transportation of vaccines across Odisha.

## Krishan Kumar joins as new Idco CMD



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** A senior official of the Indian Administrative Service Krishan Kumar Friday took over as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO). He reviewed various programmes and activities of Idco after joining as CMD.

Kumar first focused on the state government's '5T' action plan. Kumar asked departmental officials to take immediate steps to set up 10 MSME parks and IDCO towers in different districts of the state. He also discussed the establishment of an MSME park near the Biju Expressway Corridor in western Odisha.

Idco CMD also directed the authorities to implement the existing

land allotment and post-allotment services process in IDCO through IT and to address the various problems of the industrialists at the earliest.

He is also keen to improve various industrial parks set up by IDCO like Sea Food Park in Deras, Plastic Park in Paradip, Aluminium Park in Angul, Textile Park in Bhadrak, Info-valley Food Park and many more.

Similarly, he also directed that a building plan (check list) issued by IDCO to various industrial establishments, be approved and expedited within 3 to 4 days in order to strengthen the approval process.

In addition, Kumar introduced the One-Day Governance system and provided immediate approval and resolution of various issues, problems and all development programmes at IDCO.

## Akshaya Tritiya begins on somber note; jewellers expect 10-15% sales

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, May 14:** Akshaya Tritiya, a highly auspicious day to purchase gold, has started on a somber note and jewellers are expecting only 10-15% sales as the onset of the Covid-19 second wave, local restrictions and partial lockdowns have affected consumer sentiment.

"As most of the states are under lockdown to curb the infections there is almost no business activity. The day of Akshaya Tritiya has begun on a slow note and whatever booking or enquiries are happening it is only through tele or digital medium," All-India Gems & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) chairman Ashish Petha said.

He said, jewellers are expecting only 10-15% sales this Akshaya Tritiya in places where the lockdown is not imposed or there are partial shutdowns.

The second wave of the pandemic is turning out to be much worse than last year with huge loss of life across the country causing an overall negative consumer sentiment, Petha said.

India's Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 2,40,46,809, while the death toll rose to 2,62,317 with 4,000 fresh fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Friday.

During the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 infections, many states have imposed lockdowns or



lockdown-like restrictions as a desperate measure to restrict the spread of the virus.

PNG Jewellers Chairman and MD Saurabh Gadgil said the day has begun with enquiries and bookings, however, as delivery is not possible due to lockdowns the sales during this Akshaya Tritiya is likely to be tamed and muted.

Usually, 30-40 tonne gold is sold on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya. However, this time sales are not likely to reach even 1 tonne.

"We are urging customers to place orders for later delivery. As last year the base was very low,

## ADB commits record \$3.92bn loan to India

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 14:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Friday said it has committed a record \$3.92 billion in sovereign loans for 13 projects to India in 2020, including \$1.8 billion in Covid-19 related projects to support the government's pandemic response.

As part of the pandemic support to India, the Manila-headquartered multilateral agency said it has provided emergency assistance to contain the disease and establish social protection measures for relief to the poor and other vulnerable groups.

ADB also approved financing to help the government improve equitable access to comprehensive primary health care in urban areas.

This is ADB's highest-ever annual lending commitment to India since the start of its lending operations in 1986, it said, adding it has also committed \$356.1 million through its non-sovereign operations to India, including three Covid-19 support projects.

"Going forward, ADB stands ready to provide additional resources to address India's many Covid related challenges, including funds to expedite the country's ongoing vaccination programme and build the health system's resilience against future shocks, with supplementary support to protect small businesses, and underpin education and social protection," said Takeo Konishi, Country Director for ADB in India.

It further said throughout 2020, ADB continued its regular assistance to energy, trans-



**ADB stands ready to provide additional resources to address India's Covid-19 related challenges, including funds to expedite the ongoing vaccination programme and build the health system's resilience against future shocks, with supplementary support to protect small businesses**

**TAKEO KONISHI** | COUNTRY DIRECTOR, ADB (INDIA)

port, urban development, and public sector management in India.

As per the ADB's release, among the new projects committed in 2020 include \$500 million to build a high-speed 82-kilometre Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit system corridor; energy sector loans to strengthen distribution network in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Meghalaya and to build a 120-megawatt hydroelectric power plant in Assam.

In the urban sector, ADB approved loans for sustainable urban development in secondary and smaller towns in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. ADB also granted funds to support the West Bengal government's fiscal consolidation programme.

## Country's April exports rise to over \$30bn

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 14:** The low base effect powered India's merchandise exports to grow by over 195% on y-o-y basis last month. In April 2021, exports grew to \$30.63 billion, higher by 195.72% over the \$10.36 billion reported in April 2020.

"As compared to April 2019, exports in April 2021 exhibited a positive growth of 17.62% in dollar terms and 26.17% in rupee terms," an official statement on foreign trade said.

"Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in April 2021 were \$23.62 billion, as compared to \$9.08 billion in April 2020, registering a positive growth of 160.24%." As compared to April 2019, the non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in April 2021 registered a positive growth of 20.47%.

Similarly, India's merchandise imports grew in April 2021, rising to \$45.72 billion, with an increase of 167.05% over \$17.12 billion in April 2020. "Imports in April 2021 registered a positive growth of 7.87% in dollar terms and 15.71% in rupee terms in comparison to April 2019."

"Oil imports in April 2021 were \$10.87 billion which was 133.24% higher in dollar terms compared to \$4.66 billion in April 2020. As compared to April 2019, oil imports in April 2021 were 5.98% lower in dollar terms and 0.85% higher in rupee terms."

## COVID CRISIS IN INDIA PUSHES UP THE 'COST OF LIVING'

REUTERS

**Mumbai, May 14:** Ashok Khondare, a 39-year-old vegetable seller in the western Indian city of Pune, had already borrowed money to pay for his sister's treatment when she died in a private hospital two weeks after contracting Covid-19. While trying to overcome the tragedy, he also had to deal with money problems that increased with his sister's death.

The only available hearse driver charged ₹5,000 (\$68) for a 6-km journey to the nearest crematorium - five times the going rate. When Khondare reached there, there was a long queue of dead bodies and waits of more than a day. He agreed to pay another ₹7,000 to jump the queue.

"I had been experiencing a terrible situation for a fortnight," he

said. "I couldn't sleep or eat properly. I wanted to end this as early as possible and didn't mind paying an irrational amount."

India's second wave of the coronavirus has not only created shortages of oxygen, medicines and hospital beds, but also of wood for funeral pyres, hearses and crematorium slots, forcing people like Khondare to pay exorbitant amounts to perform the last rites of loved ones. India is reporting by far the highest number of new daily cases globally, and over 4,000 deaths per day - figures that are almost certainly under-reported, according to experts.

India's Hindu majority cremates its dead, and the huge numbers of deaths are creating backlogs at cremation grounds and shortages of manpower and raw materials. "There is huge demand for fire-



wood used for funeral pyres at crematoria, but supplies are not sufficient," said Rohit Pardeshi, a firewood merchant in Satara, a city in the western Indian state of Maharashtra.

Due to a local lockdown designed to curb the pandemic, there is a

shortage of people to cut trees and those workers who are available are asking for higher wages.

"This has created a shortage of firewood and lifted prices," Pardeshi said. Retail prices for firewood are up by at least 30 percent, and have more than doubled in some areas,

**The second wave has not only created shortages of oxygen, medicines and hospital beds, but also of wood for funeral pyres and crematorium slots, forcing people to pay exorbitant amounts to perform the last rites of loved ones**

said a second firewood seller in the same city.

In the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, 24-year-old Mukul Chaudhary faced similar problems after his mother died in the state capital Lucknow. The ambulance driver who dropped his

mother off at the hospital for ₹5,000 charged even more to take her body to the crematorium.

"We had to beg him not to overcharge us further," Chaudhary said. Firewood for the cremation cost double the normal rate, while the priest who performed the last rites charged the family ₹5,000 - two to five times the usual amount.

Rohit Jangam, a Hindu priest in Satara, said many priests there were refusing to enter crematoriums out of fear, and those who were willing were charging higher prices.

"It is too risky to perform the last rites of those died because of coronavirus," he said.

"If someone asks, I do, but I charge more since I am taking the risk." He declined to disclose how much more he was charging.

# Reds leave Red Devils red-faced



**KEEPING HEAD HIGH:** Roberto Firmino heads in Liverpool's second and his first goal in the night against Manchester United at Old Trafford, Thursday

AGENCIES

**Manchester, May 14:** The hunt is on and Liverpool have the smell of blood in their nostrils. After their winter hibernation, the Reds have suddenly sprung into life. Champions League football is in their sights, the door is open and Jurgen Klopp's men look ready to barge their way through it. Klopp won at Old Trafford for the first time as Liverpool breathed new life into their top four push with a 4-2 win in the rearranged fixture against Manchester United.

After anti-ownership protesters got into the ground and onto the pitch 11 days ago, further demonstrations could not stop Thursday's Premier League fixture going ahead. They've certainly run into form - results-wise, at least - at just the right time. They have the longest unbeaten run in the Premier League at the moment, and they extended it to seven games on Thursday night courtesy of their first win away at Manchester United in more than seven years. It was tense, it was nervy, it was chaotic at times but it was vital.

Having trailed early to Bruno Fernandes' heavily-deflected strike, Liverpool hit back strongly through Diogo Jota's impudent flick and two goals in three minutes either side of the break from Roberto Firmino. They later survived a rocky spell after Marcus Rashford pulled one back for the home side. And then, in the final minute, Mohamed Salah not only calmed the nerves and start the celebrations. Not always pretty, but oh so important. A big result and a big performance in a big game, from the

recently-deposed champions. Suddenly, from nowhere, it is the Reds who occupy the box seat in the race for the top four. They were dead and buried a couple of weeks ago, when tossing away points at Leeds and at home to Newcastle, but back-to-back wins and the struggles of both Leicester and Chelsea have let them back in. They simply cannot afford to pass up this opportunity. After a season of intense struggle, downright misery for large parts, to sneak into the Champions League would be a huge boost heading into the

summer. Never mind the finances, think of the mood lift.

Three more wins should do it - West Brom Sunday, Burnley Wednesday, Crystal Palace after that. Nine points from nine should do the business, with Chelsea and Leicester due to meet at Stamford Bridge next Tuesday. If Liverpool get their flawless finish, they'll have earned their spot at Europe's top table.

This, it should be said, was as well as they have played in weeks, months maybe. Determined and deadly, dangerous and dogged, they found their teeth when it mattered. Their big players stepped up to the plate. None more so than Firmino. The Brazilian has had a tough season, but all will be forgiven if he can fire his team in this most crucial of periods.

He headed Liverpool ahead right on half-time, helping himself to a trademark delivery from the brilliant Trent Alexander-Arnold, and then repeated the trick after the interval, the Brazilian was on the spot after Alexander-Arnold's shot had been fumbled by Dean Henderson.

Liverpool were flying at that point. They had recovered from their nightmare start, levelled when Jota brilliantly diverted Nat Phillips' scuffed shot past Henderson, and they had taken full control. They played the opponent and not the occasion, and they were the better side.

But they gave their fans palpitations, missing chances to move further ahead through Jota and Alexander-Arnold, and then wobbling when Rashford ran through to make it 3-2. Had Phillips, Fabinho and young Rhys Williams not been alert in their own six-yard box, United would have been level.

Salah would have the last word though, racing clear as the clock ticked to 90 and slotting past a flat-footed Henderson. The Egyptian's 200th Liverpool appearance marked in style, with goal number 124.



**STILL DETERMINED:** Karim Benzema (2nd from L) is all smiles after scoring against Granada as he talks to Real Madrid manager Zinedine Zidane on the sidelines, Thursday

## La Liga: Real keep pace with Atletico

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, May 14:** Real Madrid didn't let Atletico Madrid pull away in the Spanish league, winning 4-1 at Granada to stay within range of the leader entering the final two rounds.

Luka Modric and Rodrigo scored in the first half Thursday and Alvaro Odriozola and Karim Benzema added goals in the second to leave the defending champions two points behind Atletico, which won 2-1 at Real Sociedad Wednesday to close in on their first league title since 2014.

Third-place Barcelona was still in contention despite falling four points off the lead after being held 3-3 at Levante Tuesday after squandering 2-0 and 3-2 leads.

Modric opened the scoring for Madrid in the 17th minute with a shot that went through the goalkeeper's leg after a nice lob pass by youngster Miguel Gutierrez, and Rodrigo added to the lead with a low shot from inside the area in first-half injury time.

The hosts pulled one closer

through Jorge Molina off the rebound of a Thibaut Courtois save in the 71st, but Madrid quickly added to the lead to seal the victory with goals by Odriozola in the 75th and Benzema in the 76th, the latter a long-range strike into the open net after Granada goalkeeper Rui Silva was caught away from his area.

Real got the win despite playing without several regular starting defenders. Coach Zinedine Zidane had to start the match with a few 'B' team players, including Gutierrez and Marvin. Toni Kroos stayed on the bench, while Marco Asensio and Eden Hazard came on during the second half.

### OTHER RESULTS

Villarreal kept alive its hopes of securing a Europa League spot by winning 2-0 at Valladolid with second-half goals by Gerard Moreno and Etienne Capoue.

The result left Valladolid inside the relegation zone. Villarreal were in the seventh place. Sixth-place Real Betis later drew 1-1 with at last-place Eibar.

# Rafa rallies past Shapovalov Dortmund claim German Cup title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Rome, May 14:** When it comes to long, grueling clay-court battles, nobody is better than Rafa Nadal. Nearing his 35th birthday, the Spanish great showed he's still got the stamina to withstand much younger challengers in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(7-3) comeback win over 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov Thursday that secured him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals.

Nadal roared back from 0-3 down in the second set and then saved two match points on his serve at 6-5 in the third. It seems - and it's been this way since Nadal started dominating back in 2005 - that the Spaniard gets tougher and tougher to beat the longer matches wear on.

Nadal, who will be aiming for a record-extending 14th French Open title next month, was also pushed at times in a straight-set win over 19-year-old Jannik Sinner that ended late Wednesday.

Then there was his long three-set victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas - another 22-year-old - in the Barcelona Open final last month. Nadal struggled to hold serve at the start, while Shapovalov was blasting aces and winners with his one-handed backhand. Nadal dug in, though, and started to win the longer rallies.

Shapovalov missed a backhand to conclude a long rally on his first match point then shanked a forehand on his second. A costly double-fault handed Nadal a 3-1 lead in



the tiebreaker and the Spaniard quickly closed it out after 3 hours, 27 minutes.

Nadal, a nine-time champion in Rome, will next face Alexander Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion and the winner of last week's Madrid Open. Zverev also won in a comeback, beating Kei Nishikori 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Earlier, top-ranked Novak Djokovic cruised past Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2, 6-1. Djokovic will next face Tsitsipas, who eliminated Matteo Berrettini 7-6(7-3), 6-2 in a matchup of top 10 players.

After spectators were banned from the opening rounds because of the coronavirus pandemic, capacity was at 25 per cent as part of the Italian government's re-

opening plan. Also reaching the quarterfinals was 6-foot-11 (2.11-meter) American Reilly Opelka, who eliminated Karatsev, an Australian Open semifinalist, 7-6(8-6), 6-4. Opelka next faces Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis, who beat Felix Auger-Aliassime 7-6(7-3), 6-1.

Another quarterfinal will feature Andrey Rublev against local hope Lorenzo Sonego. Rublev dispatched Roberto Bautista Agut 6-4, 6-4 and Sonego overcame Dominic Thiem 6-4, 6-7(5-7), 7-6(7-5).

In the women's tournament, top-ranked Ash Barty beat Veronika Kudermetova 6-3, 6-3 and will next face American teenager Coco Gauff, who defeated Madrid champion Aryna Sabalenka 7-5, 6-3.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Berlin, May 14:** Erling Haaland and Jadon Sancho both scored twice as Borussia Dortmund withstood a second-half fightback in teaming rain to beat Leipzig 4-1 in the German Cup final.

Captain Marco Reus was involved in all four goals on Thursday as Dortmund won the cup for the fifth time and denied bitter rival Leipzig a first title. Haaland was back after almost three weeks out with a muscle injury, but it was Sancho who fired Dortmund into a fifth-minute lead with a strike inside the far post after Reus won the ball from Kevin Kampl in midfield.

Haaland barreled past Dayot Upamecano for Dortmund's second goal in the 28th, and Reus and Sancho combined to make it 3-0 before the break.

Leipzig emerged with intent for the second half, striking the crossbar and twice testing Roman Burki in the Dortmund goal.

Leipzig hit the post before Dani Olmo rewarded his side's pressure with a fine strike from outside the penalty area in the 71st. Sancho missed a good chance in a one-on-one with Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi, before Haaland finally sealed Dortmund's win in the 87th.

Dortmund previously won the title in 1965, 1989, 2012 and 2017. Leipzig, which was formed in 2009, was going for its first, but was un-



**ON CLOUD NINE:** Borussia Dortmund players celebrate on the podium with the winners' trophy, Thursday

able to deal with Dortmund's committed first-half performance. Leipzig coach Julian Nagelsmann had been hoping to sign off with a trophy before he leaves for Bayern Munich next season.

Last year's cup final was Germany's first to be played without fans present, and they were excluded again Thursday due to ongoing precautions against the coronavirus. Anyone working at the stadium had to produce a negative test result for COVID-19 from a pop-up testing center nearby.

Germany coach Joachim Low was among the few attending. He

is due to name his squad for the European Championship next Wednesday.

A small number of Dortmund fans gathered outside to drink beer and sing songs under the watchful eye of police before kickoff. The fans were scattered, evidently still mindful of social distancing measures.

The atmosphere wasn't helped by a persistent grey drizzle that had taken over from an earlier thunder storm. Usually the streets around the stadium would be teeming with enthusiastic fans before kickoff, their excitement fueled by beer and sausages.

The cup final has traditionally been the most important date in the German football season, a showpiece between two of the country's best teams, but this year's was switched from its usual Saturday night prime time slot to the less glamorous late Thursday kickoff.

Despite the lack of fans, Dortmund players celebrated with the trophy in front of where their supporters would have been. They hoisted defender Lukasz Piszczek into the air as he covered his tears. The 35-year-old is retiring at the end of the season.

# Prima donna culture needs to end: Raman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 14:** Ousted Indian women's cricket team coach WV Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a 'prima donna culture' in the national team and it needs to change.

In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy (NCA) head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

In a surprising move, the former India Test player was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job. Raman's major achievements included a runners-up finish for the side at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"As far as I know, Raman has

said that he has always 'believed in team being placed above everybody else, and insisted that no individual can really be a prima donna,'" a source privy to Raman's mail told this agency.

The stylish former left-hander's crisp letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallouts with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good.

While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out. It is learnt that Raman has written about certain individuals



who need to place the team above self. "Raman has asked Dada (Ganguly) that if a past accomplished performer feels constrained

by this culture, then he (Ganguly) as a former India captain, should take a call on this matter, whether the coach is asking for too much,"

# Odisha FC rope in Sahil, Sebastian on 2-yr deals



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 14:** Odisha FC announced Friday the signing of defenders Sahil Panwar and Sebastian Thangmansang ahead of the upcoming eighth edition of the Indian Super League (ISL).

Coming on board from Hyderabad FC for an undisclosed

transfer fee, 21-year-old Sahil has signed a two-year deal with an option to extend for a third year. The move shall officially be completed once the Indian transfer window opens this summer.

After making his professional debut for FC Pune City in the fourth edition of the ISL, the Dehradun-born left-back played for Pune City and Hyderabad FC in 37 matches. He has represented the country in various age-group tournaments and also captained Team India in the 2017 SAFF (South Asian Football Federation) U-18 Championship.

The 22-year-old right-back from Manipur, Sebastian, who recently won the I-League title with Gokulam Kerala FC, has also signed a two-year contract with the club. He had also represented NEROCA and Chennai City FC in the I-League after his youth career at Pune.