



IN SOLIDARITY

Actor Shama Sikander has joined a virtual fundraising programme to help out Covid victims

LEISURE P2



MAMATA WANTS CHANGE OF GOV

Bengal CM writes to President and PM demanding a change of Governor in the interest of 'good governance' in the state

TWO STATES P7



G20 SNUBS COVID PATENTS

Leaders of the world's largest economies back 'voluntary licensing' of vaccine patents

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I tried in all 14 languages this updated app offers but couldn't get slot for vaccination!

SHORT TAKES

₹990 crore boost to irrigation

Bhubaneswar: In a major push to the irrigation potential of the state, the government has decided to spend around Rs 990 crore through two schemes. The state cabinet had approved the outlay for the two schemes at its last meeting. The first scheme aims at the exploitation of groundwater resources through deep borewells with solar pumping system in remote areas under the Biju Krushak Vikash Yojana (BKVY)-Deep Borewell Secha Karyakrama (DBSK) while the second one is Command Area Development and Water Management activities in irrigated commands. **Pg-3**

Mallya loses plea in UK High Court

London: A consortium of Indian banks led by the State Bank of India Tuesday moved a step closer in their attempt to recover debt from loans paid out to Vijay Mallya's now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines after the High Court in London upheld an application to amend their bankruptcy petition in favour of waiving their security over the businessman's assets in India. Chief Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Michael Briggs handed down his judgment in favour of the banks to declare there is no public policy that prevents a waiver of security rights. **Pg 10**

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	50203.73 ↑ 623.00
NIFTY	15108.10 ↑ 184.90
DOLLAR	73.56 ↓ ₹0.26
EURO	89.33 ↑ ₹0.0
GOLD	₹48,227 ↓ ₹247
SILVER	₹73,061 ↓ ₹263

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP		
MAX	39.4°C	38.0°C
MIN	28.0°C	27.0°C
Humidity	66%	67%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

Black fungus drug vanishes from state

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 18: After the nation-wide crunch of remdesivir, a new challenge has come up for the state government and private health setups in the form of a massive shortage of amphotericin and other important drugs that are found useful for treatment of black fungus.

According to chemists, important drugs to treat mucormycosis (black fungus) are not available in the state posing a grave threat to the treatment of the highly infectious disease. "No private chemist shops have amphotericin and other drugs that are commonly used for the treatment of black fungus. This is the situation across the state," said Prashanta Mohapatra, secretary, Utkal Chemist and Druggist Association.

The health department, however, is facing another dilemma. Amphotericin was earlier discouraged due to its toxicity and other adverse effects while at present, the drug is being sought for quicker procurement from manufacturers.

"The shortage of amphotericin is a nation-wide phenomenon. It is a highly toxic and expensive drug. The Centre had been recommending its use for treatment of Kalazar. We also used it, but not now," Bijay Mohapatra, director, health services, said.

He said the Odisha State Medical Corporation has floated a tender for procurement of the drug. All states had a meeting with the Centre Monday and the former raised their concern on the shortage of the drug. The tender is for procurement of 5000 vials of amphotericin.

As the drug is costly, its availability here is likely to be made in three to four weeks. Meanwhile, several panic calls on social media and other modes for the drug have been made in the state. A frantic call from a premier central government hospital Tuesday was made to get the drug from anywhere in India. The situation is likely to get grimmer in the days to come. According to doctors treating such cases, liposomal amphotericin is the best drug used in the treatment of black fungus. However, the drug is not available in the market.

In the absence of this, doctors ei-

WHAT IS MUCORMYCOSIS

- With a fatality rate of up to 50 per cent, mucormycosis is an invasive fungal infection
- Its cases have been rising among people who have recovered from Covid-19
- These patients get a full-blown spread mainly in sinuses during post-recovery
- A combination of diabetes, Covid-19 and unregulated steroid use has led to its surge



CM FOR 70K DAILY TESTS

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday claimed that the corona situation in the state is under control due to emphasis on vaccination and timely administrative measure of lockdown. In the fight against the deadly virus, the administration decided to ramp up testing to 70,000 a day and add 368 more ICU beds for the treatment of critical patients. Patnaik made the statement while reviewing the prevailing situation which had become grim during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed on the rapid vaccination of the people. "Vaccination should be the prime strategy to curb the COVID-19 situation," he said. Patnaik also announced that there will be no further plasma therapy in the state. While asking the authorities to ensure hassle-free vaccination, Patnaik asked the officials to ensure maintenance

of social distancing at vaccination centres. People should be given time slot for vaccination in order to avoid crowd in vaccination centres, he said. The state has registered more number of recoveries than the detection of new positive cases, he said, adding that the positivity rate has also declined after imposition of lockdown and weekend shutdown in the state. Expressing happiness over the fall in the test positivity rate in the state despite the rise in the number of the daily caseload, he said that the death rate in the state has come down to 0.37 per cent from 0.40 per cent due to the effect of the lockdown and the cooperation of the people. Stating that the number of ICU beds in the state has been increased for the treatment of critical patients, the CM said efforts are on to set up another 368 ICU beds very soon.

ther use water-based amphotericin or posaconazole, which is available in limited stocks at a few places. The state government also claimed that they had very little stocks of the drug. According to a few doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar, other drugs used in the treatment of the disease are also not available in open market or with the government.

When queried on how AIIMS is tackling such cases, Dr S Mohanty, medical superintendent, AIIMS, did not give any response.

Experts said while Odisha is grappling with the shortage of liposomal amphotericin, lipid-based amphotericin or water-based

amphotericin are available for treatment in a few other states, doctors at Rajasthan and some other southern states told this reporter.

A city-based doctor requesting anonymity said, "Most hospitals in Odisha are struggling for drugs used primarily to tackle the fungal infection. While amphotericin is mostly unavailable, alternative drugs used in this treatment are also not easily available." Just like remdesivir, now there is a demand and supply gap for this drug. It will take some time to get adequate stocks of the drugs. But first, the drugs are likely to be available in government setups before we can find them in open market, she added.

Super Cyclone 'Yash' may hit before May 25

AGENCIES

Kolkata, May 18: The Regional Meteorological Department has predicted that Super Cyclone 'Yash' is likely to make landfall in Sundarban areas between May 23 and May 25 and possibly move towards Bangladesh. The met department warned that the ferocity of the cyclonic storm named by Oman might equal that of 'Amphan' that devastated Kolkata and adjoining areas May 19 last year during the lockdown.

Though the meteorological department is not sure about the direction and the speed of the wind but they said that a low depression has been formed in the East Central Bay and its adjoining areas and as it is increasing in strength every day it might take the shape of a 'Super Cyclone' before making landfall by the end of the week.

However, the officials are of the opinion that the storm might move towards Bangladesh after entering land through the Sundarbans. The department has already issued a warning to the fishermen asking them not to venture to the sea May 23. Meanwhile, weather scientists have predicted formation of a cyclonic storm in Bay of Bengal around May 25. However, India Meteorological Department (IMD) is yet to assess the impact of the possible cyclone.



State govt extends lockdown till June 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: A day before the current spell of lockdown was to expire, the state government Tuesday extended the lockdown by another two weeks. Now, the restrictions will remain in force till the morning of June 1.

Briefing media persons, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said the restrictions have helped the state government in controlling the rate of growth of Covid-19 cases. In the past 15 days, cases have remained static, though the daily caseload hovers around 10,000, he said.

Covid cases have started coming down in many

western districts, especially in districts bordering Chhattisgarh, Mahapatra said. Therefore, the government has decided to extend the lockdown by two weeks. The existing weekend shutdown would continue. The shutdown will remain in force from 6 pm of Fridays till 5 am of Mondays.

The government has reduced the time period for opening of essential shops by two hours. People will be allowed to buy essential items only between 7 am and 11 am on weekdays. Strong action will be taken against those found roaming outside without any valid reasons, warned the chief secretary. **MORE P4**

ON CRUISE CONTROL



Rafts carrying representative idols of the presiding deities of Srimandir floating on Narendra pond during the observance of the Chandan Yatra in Puri, Tuesday

Petrol, diesel rates continue to spiral

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: Petrol price Tuesday crossed Rs 99 a litre mark in Mumbai after oil companies raised petrol and diesel rates on surge in international oil prices. Petrol price was increased by 27 paise per litre and diesel by 29 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike - tenth this month - pushed petrol and diesel prices to an all-time high across the country. In Delhi, petrol rates climbed to ₹92.85 a litre and diesel rose to ₹83.51.

Rates had already crossed the ₹100-



mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, the

price in Mumbai too was inching towards that level.

A litre of petrol in Mumbai now comes for ₹99.14 and diesel is priced at ₹90.71 per litre. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The hike comes as Brent crude oil price rose above USD 70 per barrel for the first time since March 15. This is the tenth increase in prices since May 4, when the state-owned

CITY FUEL PRICES	
PETROL	₹93.62 (+0.28)
DIESEL	₹91.04 (+0.32)

oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan had the costliest petrol and diesel in the country at ₹103.80 per litre and ₹96.30 a litre, respectively. In 10 increases, petrol price has risen by ₹2.46 per litre and diesel by ₹2.78.

Tauktae batters Guj coast; 7 people dead



Commuters try to wade through a flooded road after heavy rainfall due to cyclone Tauktae in Ahmedabad, Tuesday

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, May 18: At least seven people were killed in Gujarat as cyclone Tauktae battered parts of the state and left behind a trail of destruction along the coast, uprooting electric poles and trees, and damaging several houses and roads, officials said Tuesday.

Over 16,000 houses were damaged, and more than 40,000 trees and over 1,000 poles uprooted due to the cyclonic storm, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said.

The landfall process of the eye of the extremely severe cyclonic storm Tauktae, which hit the Gujarat coast in Saurashtra region between Diu and Una, ended around midnight, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. It crossed the

Gujarat coast as an "extremely severe cyclonic storm" and gradually weakened. On Tuesday morning, it lay over the Saurashtra region near Amreli as a "severe severe cyclonic storm," and was likely to weaken gradually into a cyclonic storm by the afternoon, the IMD said in its latest bulletin.

The wind intensity reduced to 105-115 kmph gusting to 125 kmph, as the cyclone lay 15 km east-northeast of Amreli, around 125 km south-southwest of Surendranagar, and 205 km southwest of Ahmedabad, as per the IMD bulletin at 10.30 am. Even as the cyclonic intensity weakened, at least seven people lost their lives - three in Bhavnagar, and one each in Rajkot, Patan, Amreli and Valsad, officials said.

Christians begin cremating bodies, burying ashes

WITH THE DEATH NUMBER RISING DURING 2ND WAVE, LAND IS FALLING SHORT FOR TRADITIONAL BURIALS IN THE GRAVEYARDS

AGENCIES

Lucknow/ Varanasi/ Prayagraj (UP), May 18: An increasing number of members from the Christian community are now adopting the Hindu tradition of cremating the bodies. They are then taking the ashes in urns to the graveyard for entombment.

"With the increasing number of deaths taking place in the second wave of the pandemic, land is falling short for traditional burials in the graveyards. More and more people



in the community are cremating the bodies and then burying the urns containing the ashes. This requires less space and also ensures that the Covid infection does not spread," said

Amardeep Solomon, whose brother died of Covid last week and the family first cremated the body and then buried the ashes. At the Christian graveyard at Chaukaghat in Varanasi, at least six bodies have been cremated and ashes were later taken for burial.

Father Vijay Shantiraj, secretary of Banaras Christian Cemetery Board, said, "The Christian population in Varanasi is over 3,000. Normally, one or two deaths are reported in the community per month, but more than 30 have died in the last 45 days when Covid cases started surging. When

someone dies in Christian community, prayers are held at home and later at church by keeping the body in a coffin before burial. However, nowadays, as precautionary measures we are ensuring that minimum persons come in contact with the body for safety and to prevent any likely spread of infection."

He further said, "Some people got infected and died of Covid, and their families consulted us since they were not in favour of burying the body. We suggested that the bodies be cremated and ashes can then be buried," he said. He said that when the annual spe-

cial prayers are offered at the cemeteries November 2, prayers will also be held at these graves.

Father Shantiraj said that this is the first time that Christians are cremating the bodies and then burying the urns with ashes. "I don't recall any instance before this in my life, when bodies were cremated and ashes buried," he added. Similar cases have been reported from Prayagraj that has a sizeable Christian population. Piku Andrews, a school teacher, said that members in his community had decided to cremate bodies.

leisure



GRANDE TIES KNOT IN 'TINY' CEREMONY

American pop star Ariana Grande got married to real estate agent Dalton Gomez in an intimate ceremony that took place at the couple's home in Montecito, California. "It was a tiny ceremony. The couple couldn't be happier," confirmed a representative of the singer.

NOEL DOESN'T CORRECT PEOPLE WHEN THEY THINK HE IS LIAM

British musician Noel Gallagher says he is often mistaken for his estranged brother Liam. However, he doesn't get annoyed anymore and, when asked for a selfie by fans who think he is Liam, he doesn't correct them.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You continue to be a kind and cooperative person. You give generously and it pays back manifold, and today is one of those days. You will treat colleagues and subordinates like an extended family, and successfully mix business with pleasure. A rare ability, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
There is a chance that your analytical ability will get noticed today by your boss, predicts Ganesha. Such an analytical skill will add to your awareness and wisdom in the afternoon. You might go on a shopping spree to buy cassettes, CDs and similar electronic gadgets, expects Ganesha.

GEMINI
You may be forced to share your personal belongings with someone else. This may make you a little angry, even jealous perhaps. Spirituality and a visit to a religious place may help you restore your peace of mind, suggests Ganesha.

CANCER
Ganesha warns you of minor ailments. Don't eat very cold items. You will help others in tackling their problems, Ganesha says that you must begin by yourself any auspicious task.

LEO
Your day will start off very ordinarily. The later half of the day too should prove to be uneventful. However, events occurring in the afternoon will win you the praise of your colleagues. You will try to improve your self today. You will be inspired to take on some challenging projects, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Your amazing ability to play with words will stand you in good stead today. So much so that with your silken talk you will be able to charm your way into the heart of a member of the opposite sex later today. Work that has been postponed too often will be finished.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will use your creative and artistic skills in decorating and renovating your home. You will experience a feeling of pride when all will appreciate your home décor. You will want to spend the evening all alone as you may feel uneasy in the company of your friends and not particularly in the mood to socialise.

SCORPIO
Sports-persons and athletes are in full form today as their energy levels soar. Engineers put in their best efforts to kick-start their new business ventures. Social recognition and prestige is on the cards today, foresees Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Passionate about work, you are brimming with innovative ideas for new projects. Shoot them in the meeting and you are sure to receive compliments. However, there are chances that you may have to compromise on your family life today. But, it's harmless. Go ahead and live your dreams, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
You have paid the price for your mistakes in the past, so you will take every step after considering all the pros and cons. Career issues will hover your mind through out the day and you may think about opting for a job change, also.

AQUARIUS
You will plan the day very meticulously to ensure minimum wastage of time and energy, feels Ganesha. Now, you will have more time in spare and you will utilise it for doing things that you like. Enjoy your free time rejuvenating yourself.

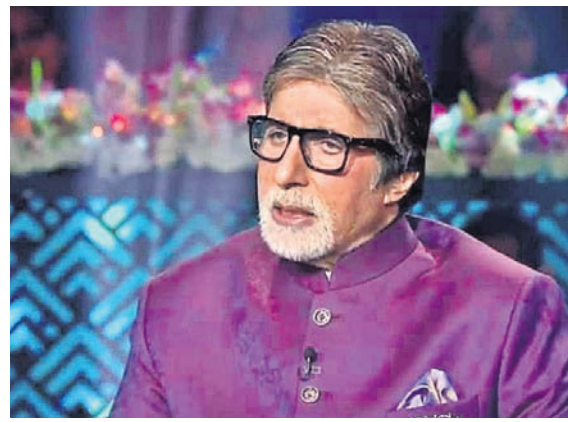
PISCES
It is possible that you have a very busy day and that you remain on your toes all day. In order to get your work done you will spend a greater part of your day in the office. On the other hand social responsibilities will contribute to some mental stress. Ganesha advises you to accept things in the right manner today.

Shama now joins virtual fund-raising drive

Mumbai: After singer Mohit Chauhan, actress Shama Sikander has now joined a virtual fundraiser initiative to raise money for Covid patients, and she says she is trying to reach as many people as she can to provide help.

"It's the most difficult time we have seen in our lives. We are trying to reach as many people as we can. I am taking part in this virtual fundraiser to raise money, which can directly go to the aid of victims. We have to follow all the SOPs asked of us. We are trying to save as many lives as possible. I pray and hope that we all get through this sooner than later," said Shama, who is on board with 'Mission Oxygen' to raise funds, and is also trying to get beds and oxygen for those in need. The actress revealed that she, too, has experienced loss due to the pandemic.

Earlier, singer Mohit Chauhan, through his NGO Nivesh and its initiative Project Bajrangi, started working to procure and supply life-saving equipment like oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders and oximeters to Covid-19 patients.



Big B donates for Covid facility

Mumbai: Amitabh Bachchan is donating resources to help set up a 25-bed oxygen facility in Juhu. The veteran actor has teamed up with producer Anand Pandit for the same.

Pandit, who had already set up a similar facility in Dadar, says: "A 25-bed oxygen facility has been set up at the Ritambhara Vishva Vidyapeeth in Juhu. After a trial run, the centre was up and running by 10 am on Tuesday, May 18. Mr Bachchan has donated the equipment and infrastructure for the facility and all necessary permissions have been granted by the BMC."

"When Amit ji heard that I was scouting for places in Juhu, he called me and said to help in every way possible. He has always supported my social initiatives wholeheartedly and also contributed his time and resources," added Pandit.

The producer had recently teamed up with actor-filmmaker Ajay Devgn, too, to establish a 20-bed Covid-19 ICU at Shivaji Park and is working and scouting locations to set up another one in Borivali.

Krystle turns philosophical

Mumbai: Actress Krystle D'souza took to Instagram Tuesday to share a stunning picture from the beach.

In the image she looks gorgeous in black net beachwear worn with a sarong. She completes the look with stylish shades and open hair. The sun can be seen setting behind her, against the backdrop of serene ocean waves.

"Sometimes in the winds of change we find our true direction," she captioned the image, on a philosophical note, with an orange heart emoji.

The actress recently featured in the recreated version of the song *Ek bewafaa* by Bharat Goel. She shares the screen with Siddharthh Gupta and Akshay Kharodia in the song. The original song is from Akshay Kumar-Kareena Kapoor Khan's film *Bewafaa*, which released in 2005.

Krystle is also part of the Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi-starrer *Chehre*. The thriller is helmed by Rummy Jafry. The film's release date has been pushed multiple times owing to the pandemic.



CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

National Gallery of Modern Art launches audio-visual guide

THE MUSEUM HAS A SEMINAL COLLECTION OF MORE THAN 2,000 ARTISTS OF THE STATURE OF RAJA RAVI VERMA, RABINDRANATH TAGORE, ABANINDRANATH TAGORE, NANDALAL BOSE AND AMRITA SHER-GIL



A sculpture at NGMA, Delhi

New Delhi-based National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) has launched its Audio-Visual Guide App. It will be possible for museum viewers to listen to anecdotes and stories related to the treasured Indian modern art exhibited at the Gallery, on smart phone, anywhere, anytime. The app is an audio-visual guide for exploring the modern art treasures on display across galleries of the Museum.

The launch comes on the occasion of the International Museum Day, Tuesday. The app is available on both the Google Playstore and the Apple Appstore. To listen to the narrations, users need to download the app and navigate the content using the numbers mentioned. The same numbers will be on display next to the art work at the Museum. A web

version of the app is also available for those not keen to download the app and can be accessed by just scanning the QR code at location. The NGMA app and tours are free for all users. The museum tours are a rich mix of images, videos and voice. They aim to enhance the viewing experience of the visitors at the museum and also enable one

to 'visit' the art works virtually. The text is written in an interesting storytelling format with details about the artist, the thought behind the art work and the techniques used in creating the piece.

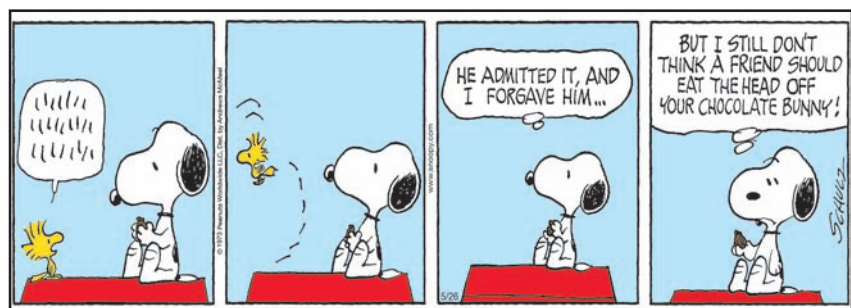
Founded in 1954, as the premier museum of modern art of a newly independent nation, the National Gallery Modern Art, New Delhi, houses and showcases masterpieces of the changing art forms of modern India spanning more than 150 years.

The museum has a seminal collection of more than 2,000 artists. The line-up includes artists of the stature of Raja Ravi Verma, Abanindranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil, Thomas Daniell, and a few leading international artists.

According to DG NGMA Adwaita Gadanayak, "the launch of NGMA's Audio-Visual Guide App is a major landmark. It will help people connect with art in an intimate way. I especially hope that our children and youth will use the app prolifically, experiencing art as a vital expression of the human spirit." AGENCIES



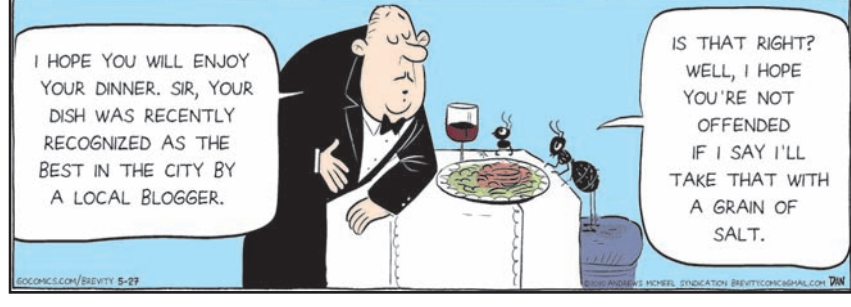
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

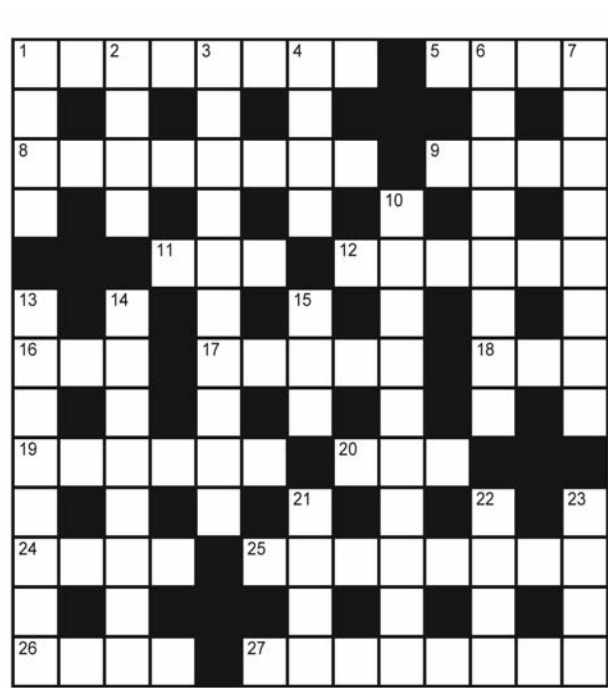


BREVITY



FUN post

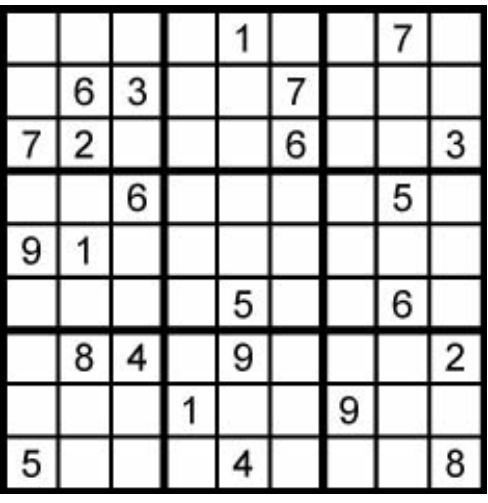
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Poured
 - 5 Kind of spirit
 - 8 Heat source
 - 9 Coffee choice
 - 11 Small number
 - 12 Trinidad's neighbor
 - 16 Promise to pay
 - 17 Recluse
 - 18 Predatory fish
 - 19 Swimsuit
 - 20 Volcano output
 - 24 Rich soil
 - 25 Jellyfish (3-2-3)
 - 26 Lockup
 - 27 Impasses (4,4)
 - Down**
 - 1 Goofy
 - 2 Hominy
 - 3 Wellington locale (3,7)
 - 4 Epic poem
 - 6 Substitute or trade in
 - 7 Average
 - 10 Exchange messages
 - 13 Evil
 - 14 Spam (4,4)
 - 15 Wildebeest
 - 21 Eatery
 - 22 Kind of song
 - 23 Pinball paths

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



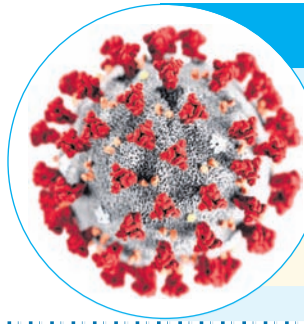
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



BIRD LOVER

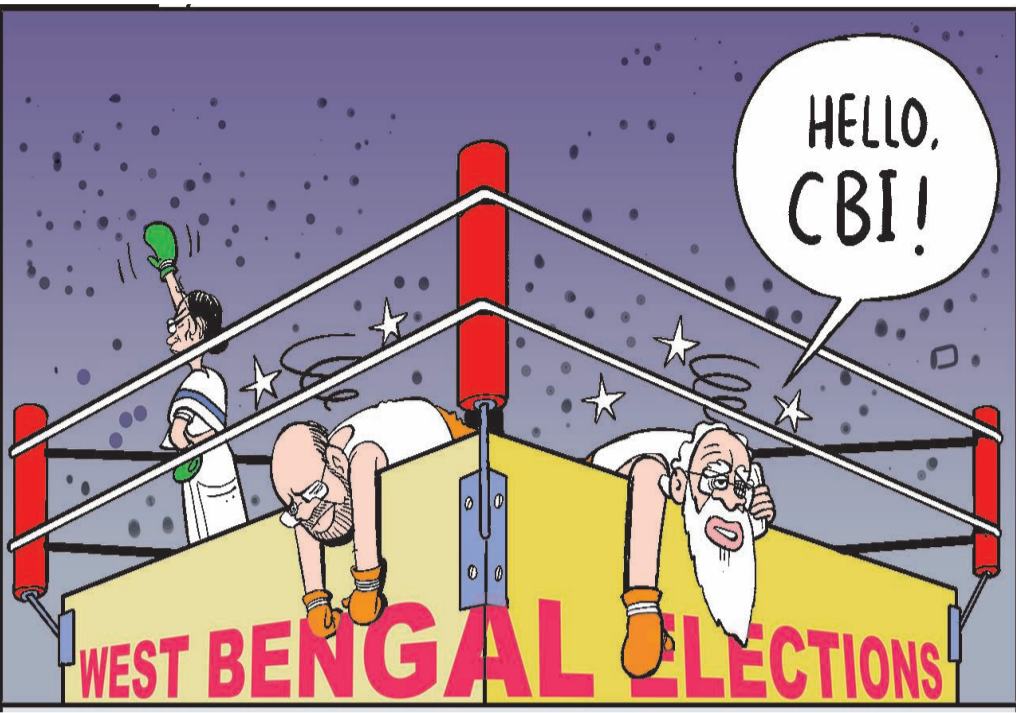
A man feeds pigeons near Ram Mandir in Bhubaneswar during the lockdown, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,46,13,389	14,35,15,422	34,10,959
India	2,52,28,996	2,15,96,512	2,78,719
Odisha	6,33,302	5,36,595	2,357

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Govt offices to run at 10% & pvt at 33% staff

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Extending the lockdown for another two weeks, the state government Tuesday said both central and state government offices will function with 10 per cent staff during the period. The private offices have been allowed to run preferably at 33 per cent staff.

Excluding the offices providing emergency services, all state government offices and its autonomous bodies will function with 10 per cent staff. Police, home guards, civil defence, fire and emergency services, disaster management, prisons, excise and municipal services will function without any restriction. "All other departments of state government to work with not more



Pic for representation

than 10 per cent staff or as directed by General Administration and Public Grievances department from time to time," read the order. The district administration and treasury offices will function with restricted staff. However, delivery of public services shall be ensured with minimal staff, it said. Forest offices staff will work to maintain zoo, nurseries, wildlife, fire-fighting in forests, watering

plantations, patrolling and their necessary transport movement.

There is no restriction imposed on functioning of defence, central armed police forces, health officials, disaster management and early warning agencies like IMD, NIC, FCI, NCC and Customs offices.

However, other ministries and departments and offices of Central government are to function with 25 per cent attendance of deputy secretary and above levels officers while 10 per cent of the remaining staff can attend the office. Offices in private/corporate and civil society sector will work with reduced manpower, preferably at 33 per cent of their staff strength. The private offices should encourage their staff to work from home.

State pumps in ₹990Cr to boost irrigation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: In a major push to the irrigation potential of the state, the government has decided to spend around ₹990 crore through two schemes, sources said Tuesday.

The state Cabinet had approved outlay for the two schemes during its last meeting.

The first scheme aims at the exploitation of groundwater resources through deep borewells with solar pumping system in remote areas of the state under Biju Krushak Vikash Yojana (BKVY)-Deep Borewell Secha Karyakrama (DBSK) while the second one is Command Area Development and Water Management (CAD&WM) activities in irrigated commands.

For execution of the first scheme, the state government has decided to spend ₹493 crore during a period of five years starting from the current financial year. The expenditure will be met from state's own resources, sources said.

Similarly, an amount of ₹497.10 crore will be spent under the CAD&WM scheme during three years (2021-22 to 2023-24). The expenditure will be met from state's own fund and MGNREGA component.

The deep borewell projects under



Pic for representation

BKVY-DBSK scheme was launched in 2010-11 fiscal. From the financial year 2010-11 to 2019-20, Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation (OLIC) has installed and energised 74,470 deep borewells by utilising funds to the tune of ₹2317.66 crore. Irrigation potential for 4,41,755 hectares in Kharif and 1,48,940 hectares in Rabi season has been created, official sources said.

Deep borewells with solar pumping system have been started under the BKVY-DBSK scheme in the year 2015-16. Since then, a total of 1,861 deep borewell proposals have been submitted to OREDA, out of which 1,184 have

been energised, sources added. Under the scheme, deep borewells with solar pumping system will be installed in hard rock and remote areas where conventional grid power supply is not available or remotely available (beyond 0.3 km).

The government has set a target to create irrigation potential for 25,000 hectares in Rabi and 62,500 hectares in Kharif by installing 12,500 (2,500 per year) deep borewells with solar pumping system in five years.

It will be implemented in 256 blocks of 26 districts in highly groundwater-rich areas prefer-

ably in western, southern Odisha and in suitable districts of coastal area those are not prone to cyclone.

Similarly, the CAD&WM programme will be taken up to strengthen the distribution network in irrigated areas so that water will be available for the agricultural field.

The Water Resources department has set a target to construct field level channels for 1,37,000 hectares and micro irrigation projects for 1,500 hectares. The field drain work will be taken up in convergence with MGNREGA.

FILLIP TO AGRI SECTOR

■ The state govt has decided to spend ₹493 crore on BKVY-DBSK during a period of five years starting from the current financial year

■ The BKVY-DBSK plan aims at exploitation of groundwater resources through deep borewells with solar pumping system in remote areas

■ Similarly, an amount of ₹497.10 crore will be spent under the CAD&WM scheme during three years from 2021-22 fiscal

■ The CAD&WM programme will be taken up to strengthen the distribution network in irrigated areas

Man arrested for selling fake ID cards

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Chandrasekharpur police Tuesday arrested a man for allegedly selling fake identity cards and misusing the names of several government and private organisations.

The arrested has been identified as Subash Behera, a resident of Arada village under Tirtol police limits in Jagatsinghpur district. He was running 'Jagannath Paper Store' at Damana Square in the Capital city.

During lockdown and weekend



Accused Subash Behera along with the fake identity cards



and vice versa. However, others do not enjoy such freedom and have to stay home from 12 noon to 6.00am the next day.

However, there were many who wanted to break the lockdown rules and were looking for means to do so. So, Behera provided them with fake identity cards of various companies, media houses and government organisations. He was selling the fake cards between ₹200 to ₹300 per piece.

Police said that the maximum number of fake identity cards was made in the name of media houses.

DEFT HANDS



Carpenters shaping hubs as part of chariot construction work at Rath Yard in Puri, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Govt conceals Covid deaths: Niranjan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik Tuesday slammed the state government for allegedly misleading the people on Covid-19 deaths.

Patnaik alleged that the state government had been following the faulty Gujarat model of concealing Covid death data. He cited recent media reports on the alleged attempts of the Odisha to shield the number of Covid deaths.

"The state's death toll has risen sharply. Accounts of crematoriums in the state have proved that the figures being released by the government every day are wrong and misleading," he said.

He added that the state government has been claiming around 20 deaths everyday but the funerals in crematoriums revealed a different picture.

Patnaik also cited a recent RTI reply from the BMC regarding the number of death certificates issued by the civic body and the mismatch of data with Covid deaths.

Cuttack vendors feel the pinch of virus

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 18: The livelihood of hundreds of street vendors and shopkeepers has taken a beating due to the statewide lockdown to contain the second wave of Covid-19.

The financial jolt from the second wave proved to be a double whammy for these vendors and shopkeepers as they had already incurred huge losses during the first wave of the deadly virus.

The Covid-induced restrictions have pushed the street vendors into financial miseries. Many are now facing difficulties to meet expenditures like house rent, tuition fees of their children and family medical expenses, sources said.

"As per the lockdown norms, we have been directed not to open our shops till further order. We have no other source of income. Now, we are facing severe financial crisis and find it tough to pay for bare necessities like house rents and tuition fees and buy medicines," said Sarat Sahu, a betel shop owner.



Dolamundai-Bajrakabati road in Cuttack looks empty during the lockdown, Tuesday

The financial jolt from the second wave proved to be a double whammy for the vendors and shopkeepers of Cuttack as they had already incurred huge losses during the first wave of the deadly virus

Many are now facing difficulties to meet expenditures like house rent, tuition fees of their children and family medical expenses

Echoing the sentiment, Satyajit Rout, a street food vendor, said, "We had suffered severe losses due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus and the subsequent nationwide lockdown. The second wave has pushed us into financial miseries. The state

government has allowed hotels and restaurants for takeaways but has not done anything to protect our livelihood."

Many shopkeepers and street vendors, meanwhile, urged the government to provide them some finan-

cial assistance at this moment of crisis.

"The Central government had announced ₹10,000 assistance each to the street vendors during the last year's lockdown. However, banks took a lot of time to disburse the amount. Many vendors are yet to receive the assistance. The Centre and the state government should consider our case this year too," said Chandan Kumar Datta, a tea shop owner.

Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) slum development officer Amrit Sarkar said at least 1,919 street vendors and small shopkeepers have been provided with the financial assistance announced by the Centre last year. "As per a survey in 2017, the Silver City has 3,463 street vendors and small shopkeepers. Among them, at least 1,919 have been provided with the financial assistance of ₹10,000 each during the last year's lockdown. The remaining 1,544 could not produce their bank details and other documents to avail the benefits," Sarkar added.

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
ANSARI NAGAR, NEW DELHI - 110 608
EXAMINATION SECTION
Advertisement No. 69/2021

No.F.AIIMS/Exam.Sec./Advt./4-11/(SR/SD-July-21)/2021 Date: 07.05.2021

Competitive Examination (Stage-I) for Recruitment to the post of Senior Residents / Senior Demonstrators for July 2021 session at AIIMS, New Delhi

Online applications are invited from Indian Citizens as per Govt. of India Residency Scheme, for the tenure posts of Senior Residents/Senior Demonstrators for a maximum period upto 3 years. These posts include existing vacant posts, backlog vacancies of SC, ST, OBC and the posts which are likely to fall vacant (Stage-I) between 01.07.2021 to 31.12.2021. Details of posts can be seen on website. The Examination will be conducted in online (CBT) mode only followed by Interview (Stage-II) of eligible candidate.

Online Registration for applications		
Opens on	Closes on	
11 th May, 2021 (Tuesday)	28 th May, 2021 at 5:00 pm (Friday)	
Date of Recruitment Examination		
Date of Exam	Duration of Exam.	Exam City
Date of Exam will be declared later	10:00 AM to 11:30 AM	4 Metro cities in India (Delhi/NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata & Chennai)

Admit cards of eligible candidates will only be uploaded on the website. If the status of Registration Form or Admit Card is not available on website, applicant should immediately write an email through **Registered email ID** to the Assistant Controller (Examinations), AIIMS, New Delhi-110608 on aiims.srsdexams@gmail.com along with candidate name, exam/test, subject applied, candidate ID and specific query/clarification.

Important : For Prospectus, number of post, eligibility criteria, detailed information etc. please visit the website www.aiimsexams.ac.in. All applicants are required to visit the website regularly since all subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum/Updates will be uploaded in the website only.

DAVP 17112/11/0003/2122 ASSISTANT CONTROLLER (EXAMS.)

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Rural Works Division-II, Nabarangpur, Umerkote
E-mail: eerwukt@gmail.com & eerwukt@yahoo.com
Letter No. 1390 Date: 12.05.2021

No.O-183:-
e-Procurement Notice

1. Name of the work : Road Work. 2. Total No. of works: 54 (Fifty four) Nos. 3. Approx. estimated cost: Varies from 1.06 lakhs to 43.53 lakhs. 4. Class of contractor: 'A', 'B', 'C' & 'D' Class of contractor. 5. Period of completion : As per TCN.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of opening of tender
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Nabarangpur, Umerkote	Online Tender / 02/ RWD- UKT /2021-22	24.05.2021 at 10.00 A.M.	07.06.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	05.06.2021 at 01.00 P.M.	08.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the Government website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-25103/11/0002/2122 Sd./ Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Nabarangpur, Umerkote

GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION NO.-I, KEONJHAR
E-mail: eerw_kj1@yahoo.com

No.O-191:-
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works Identification No Online NCB - 01/2021-22

1. Type of the work : Road Works. 2. Total number of work : 24 Nos. 3. Estimated cost : Rs. 2.65 lakhs to Rs.26.55 lakhs. 4. Class of contractor : 'B', 'C' & 'D' Class. 5. Period of completion : One month & two months calendar.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of opening of tender in O/o E.E.R.W. Divn. No.I, Keonjhar	Date & time of opening of lottery at O/o E.E.R.W. Divn. No.I, Keonjhar
		From	To			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Executive Engineer, R.W. Divn., Keonjhar	Road Works N.C.B. No. 01/2021-22	Dt.20.05.21 at 7.00 A.M.	Dt.27.05.2021 upto 1.00 P.M.	Dt.26.05.2021 upto 1.00 P.M.	Dt.28.05.2021 at 9.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the Website www.tenderorissa.gov.in
OIPR-25110/11/0001/2122 Sd./ Executive Engineer, R.W. Divn. No.-I, Keonjhar

Govt cuts shopping time by 2 hours

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: A day before the current spell of lockdown was to expire, the state government Tuesday extended the lockdown by another two weeks. Now, the restrictions will remain in force till the morning of June 1.

Briefing media persons, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said the restrictions have helped the state government in controlling the rate of growth of Covid-19 cases. In the past 15 days, cases have remained static, though the daily caseload hovers around 10,000, he said.

Covid cases have started coming down in many western districts, especially in districts bordering Chhattisgarh, Mahapatra said. Therefore, the government has decided to extend the lockdown by two weeks. The existing weekend shutdown would continue. The shutdown will remain in force from 6 pm of Fridays till 5 am of Mondays.

The government has reduced the time period for opening of essential shops by two hours. People will be allowed to buy essential items only between 7 am and 11 am on weekdays. Strong action will be taken against those found roaming outside without any valid reasons, warned the chief secretary.

Marriages will be permitted with approval from local author-

ities with maximum 25 persons including hosts, guests and priests. In case of funerals and last rites, maximum 20 persons can attend. Feasts have been barred for social functions such as cremation and thread ceremonies. The host could give food in packets in a takeaway manner. The state government has suspended the public transport by buses, both inter-state and intra-state, till June 1.

Testing, tracking and containment will be undertaken by local authorities. While working on the containment framework, concerned authorities will carefully determine the area which shall be brought under micro-containment. The local authorities will have to prepare a strategy for clinical management and vaccination in their area. The lockdown is primarily aimed at restricting movement of people. Therefore, movement of goods and goods carriers will not be affected by the lockdown, the guidelines said.

Vaccination programme will continue as it is. Registered beneficiaries can move to vaccination centres on their own vehicles, taxis, auto rickshaws. Persons going for testing for Covid-19 will be allowed to travel to designated testing centres.

The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department, District

CURBS MADE TOUGHER

- Shops to operate from 7 am to 11 am daily
- Weekend shutdowns will continue as usual
- Maximum 25 persons can attend marriages
- Feasts banned; hosts can serve packet foods
- Inter-state, intra-state bus services suspended

STATE COVID TOLL UP BY 22
The COVID-19 caseload surged to 6,33,302 Tuesday after 10,321 more people tested positive for the infection, while 22 fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 2,357, a health department official said.

Collectors and municipal commissioners have been asked to facilitate alternative ways through call centres, IT solutions to ensure that such persons smoothly travel to and from the CVCs. Intra-state movement of individuals by roads, except for government permitted reasons. All educational training, coaching institutions will continue to remain shut.

All kinds of exhibitions, trade fairs, melas and business to business meetings have been prohibited. However, such activities may be taken up in a virtual mode.

Cinema halls, malls, market complexes, jatra, opera, open air theatres, gymnasiums, sports complexes, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres, parks, bars and auditoriums, assembly halls, merry-

go-round (doll)/ meena bazaar and related activities and similar places will continue to remain prohibited during the extended period. Commercial establishments like salons/barber shops, spas and beauty parlours will remain shut. All social, political, sports and entertainment academic, cultural religious functions and other gatherings will not be allowed.

All religious places/ places of worship will remain closed for public. However, religious rituals will be allowed with bare minimum priests/servitors. The government has also permitted activities subject to adherence of standard operating procedure (SOP).

All health services including AYUSH, nursing homes, telemedicine facilities dispensaries, chemists, pharmacies, medical equipment shops and labs will remain functional. Movement of personnel engaged in such facilities has been allowed.

Financial institutions like Reserve Bank of India (RBI), payment system operators, clearing houses, bank branches, ATMs and cash arrangement agencies will continue to function. Public utility services including, oil, gas and telecommunication would also be allowed during the period.

Restaurants and dhabas will operate for takeaway and home de-

livery services only. Home delivery of e-commerce sites will also continue while hotels can operate for in-house guests only.

Hotels, home stays, lodges, electrical repairing shops, book shops, hardware shops dealing in construction materials, cold-storage, common service centres and private security service offices have been allowed to operate. Movement of electricians, carpenters, plumbers, IT service providers and other self-employed persons have been allowed by the government.

Media organization will continue to function. But, media persons may have to produce authorization from appropriate authorities for their areas of movement). Newspapers can be delivered between 5 am and 8 am.

Garages and vehicle-repairing shops have also been allowed to operate during the period. All kinds of agricultural and allied sector activities including sale of produce will continue. Besides, industrial and construction activities will also continue during the lockdown.

There will be no restrictions on all kinds of agricultural, horticultural, fisheries and animal husbandry activities. Besides, railways stations, railway workshops, airports, ports and all industrial houses will function as it was during the current spell of the lockdown.

SC reprieve for Koraput man nabbed in AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 18: The Supreme Court Tuesday allowed the bail application of a man from Odisha who was arrested by Andhra Pradesh police on charges of smuggling 135 kg ganja in Vizianagaram district in 2015.



A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai directed the trial court in Vizianagaram district to release the petitioner on bail on satisfaction of the trial court. Significantly, a special leave petition was filed by Hemant Kumar Patra of Koraput district in the Supreme Court through Advocate on Record Sudhansu Palo challenging the order of AP High Court that rejected his bail plea.

During the hearing, the AP government opposed Patra's plea citing the gravity of the offence. Referring to Section 37 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, the AP government counsel submitted that the petitioner shall not be granted bail as he was arrested with commercial quantity of contraband.

However, advocate Sudhansu Palo argued that Section 37 of the NDPS act is not a bar in the case and court can consider the bail application.

No jobs for Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The state Health department Tuesday said that there would be no vaccination programme in Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts Wednesday.

The government has planned only 564 sessions Wednesday owing to the shortage of doses. The state government was able to vaccinate a total of 1,15,997 Tuesday.

KHALLIKOTE, BERHAMPUR UNIVERSITY MERGER SOON

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: After upgrading Khallikote Autonomous College to the status of a unitary university, the state government Tuesday decided to merge the Khallikote University with Berhampur University with effect from October 1, 2021.

In a notification, Higher Education department Principal Secretary Saswat Mishra said that Khallikote University shall cease to exist after the amalgamation September 30, 2021.

All regular employees of Khallikote University shall be absorbed in Berhampur University as regular employees. "They will

draw regular salaries from Berhampur University with effect from October 1. All movable assets, including consumables of Khallikote University, shall be handed over to Berhampur University by September 30," said the notification.

The government land allotted in favour of Khallikote University in Konishi tehsil shall be surrendered to the District Revenue Authority. "Khallikote University shall complete all undergraduate and postgraduate scheduled examinations as well as backlog examinations and publish results by September 30 after which the students on its rolls shall be automatically transferred to the

rolls of Berhampur University," it added.

The notification further said that after September 30, the students of Khallikote University working for research shall get transferred to Berhampur University with pre-doctoral credits.

All issues related to degrees, certificate transcripts, grades/marks and credit transfer of the students of the Khallikote University will be dealt by the Berhampur University after the period.

Both the varsities have been barred from making any fresh admission after issuance of the notification, the notification pointed out.

NO LESSONS LEARNT



A stretch between Rajmahal and AG Square witnesses rush although the state government has clamped down restrictions on movement of vehicles during the lockdown, Tuesday

ECoR carries 2,013 tonne of oxygen during 2nd wave



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: East Coast Railway (ECoR) has so far carried at least 2,013.24 tonne liquid medical oxygen (LMO) from several steel plants in its jurisdiction to different states facing acute shortage of the life-saving gas in treating Covid-19 patients, an official said Tuesday.

The national transporter has carried 451.93 tonne LMO to Maharashtra, 750.61 tonne to Delhi and Haryana, 117.9 tonne to Kerala, 451.78 tonne to Telangana, 120 tonne to Tamil Nadu and 120.98 tonne to Karnataka since April 22, 2021, a senior ECoR official said.

"Steel plants like Tata Steel BSL Limited, Jindal Steel and Power Limited and Tata Steel Kalinganagar have contributed majorly in loading oxygen from ECoR jurisdiction. As many as 31 Oxygen Expresses with 124 tankers

The national transporter has carried 451.93 tonne LMO to Maharashtra, 750.61 tonne to Delhi and Haryana, 117.9 tonne to Kerala, 451.78 tonne to Telangana, 120 tonne to TN and 120.98 tonne to Karnataka since April 22, 2021

Oxygen Special trains from other steel plants beyond ECoR jurisdiction have also been given priority in the 'Green Corridor' for expeditious movement to respective destinations

have so far been used to supply LMO to various states for saving life of patients in this pandemic," the official pointed out.

ECoR has taken requisite precautions for ensuring safe functioning of Oxygen Expresses. This apart, Oxygen Special trains from other steel plants beyond ECoR jurisdiction have also been given priority in the 'Green Corridor' for safe running and expeditious movement to respective destinations, added the official.

1,099 prisoners in state fully inoculated

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Vaccination of above 60-year-old prisoners resumed at all the prisons across the state Tuesday. Similarly, many prisoners of 45 years and above were also inoculated in the state on the same day.

As per the information shared by the Prisons Directorate, as many as 1,099 prisoners have already received the second dose of Covid vaccine till now. This apart, 728 other prisoners have received their first dose of the jabs. All the prison officials on duty at various jails in the state have taken their jabs as frontline workers.

The medical officers deputed by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to examine the prisoners having Covid symptoms like fever Tuesday carried



out tests on 195 prisoners at the Jharpada Special Jail here. However, the jail authorities are yet to receive the test reports of the prisoners examined Tuesday.

The Prisons Directorate sources claimed that all the necessary precautions and pro-active steps are being taken to thwart the

spread of the virus among the inmates. Meanwhile, 51 inmates of Nayagarh sub jail have tested positive for Covid during the antigen test.

The swab samples of more than 20 inmates of the 51 found positive have been sent for RT-PCR test.

Woman, daughter found dead; murder alleged

Khurda: A woman and her seven-year-old daughter died under mysterious circumstances at Patapuri under Khurda police limits Tuesday. The deceased were identified as Rajashree, wife of Shiva Prasad Pati, and her daughter Sushree Shweta, police said. According to sources, family members spotted the duo hanging from the roof and rushed them to the DHH. However, the duo was declared brought dead. Informed, police reached the hospital and sent the bodies for autopsy. Rajashree's father Ashwini Panda, a resident of Puri district, meanwhile, alleged that Shiva Prasad strangled his daughter and granddaughter over marital dispute and hanged their bodies to give the incident a suicide angle.

5 more pairs of trains cancelled to break virus chain

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The Indian Railways has decided to cancel some of the local passenger/MEMU and intra-state special trains with a view to containing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

As per the decision, five pairs of local passenger/MEMU trains will remain cancelled till May 31, 2021 from both the directions.

These trains are: 08456/08455 Bhubaneswar-Kendujhargarh-Bhubaneswar Special, 08412/08411 Bhubaneswar-Bhadrak-Bhubaneswar Special, 08438/08437 Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, 08461/08462 Cuttack-Paradip-Cuttack Special and 08454/08453

Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special. This apart, three pairs of local passenger/MEMU trains will remain cancelled May 22, 23, 26, 29 and 30 from both the directions.

They are: 08428/08427 Puri-Angul-Puri Special, 08432/08431 Puri-Cuttack-Puri special and 08433/08434 Bhubaneswar-Palasa-Bhubaneswar Special. Apart from these, some local passenger/MEMU special trains and some express special trains will remain cancelled on nominated days.

These trains are: 08528/08527 Visakhapatnam-Raipur-Visakhapatnam Special from Visakhapatnam between May 24 and 31 and from Raipur between May 24 and June 1, 2021. 08301/08302

Varsities told to resolve land ownership issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Higher Education Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo Tuesday directed all the government and non-government aided universities of the state to resolve issues related to land ownership at the earliest.

Absence of land records with the universities and other higher educational institutions causes problems in getting grants from government and accreditation from the NAAC, Sahoo said during a virtual meeting.

Many universities of the state have land related issues that stand as roadblocks to development works in these institutions. Universities like Rama Devi Women's University

are still unable to start the second campus because of the issues related to their land, the minister added.

Sahoo asked the officials of the universities to send detailed reports on the land issue to the department. He also urged the Revenue dept to take final call on regularisation of record of rights of the institutions. The minister had earlier informed the Odisha Assembly that around 85 acres of 24 aided degree colleges in the state are under the clutches of encroachers.

Due to this encroachment issue, degree colleges in the state find it difficult to set up additional classrooms and other infrastructure as part of their expansion work, Sahoo had informed the Assembly.



Sambalpur-Rayagada-Sambalpur Special from both the directions will remain cancelled May 22, 23, 29 and 30, 2021, said ECoR sources. Likewise, 08445/08446 Bhubaneswar-Jagadalpur-

Bhubaneswar Special will remain cancelled from May 23 to 31 from Bhubaneswar and from May 24 to June 1 in return direction.

Moreover, 08515/08516 Visakhapatnam-Kirandul-Visakhapatnam Special will remain cancelled from Visakhapatnam between May 22 and 31 and from Kirandul between May 23 and June 1, 2021.

02892/02891 Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Special will remain cancelled from both the directions from May 29 to 30. 02892/02891 Bhubaneswar-Bangiriposi-Bhubaneswar Special from Bhubaneswar will remain cancelled May 29 and 30 and from Bangiriposi May 30 and 31.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IARC Village-Bapi Xerox-909090404, Gift Hut/(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124466664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square-Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Rising Covid cases among farmers cloud procurement

30 CO-OP SOCIETIES AND 10 SHGs IN SAMBALPUR HAVE STARTED LIFTING PADDY FROM MAY 10

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 18: Uncertainty looms large over the paddy procurement process in Sambalpur district following the alarming spread of coronavirus infections among farmers and the subsequent lockdown imposed to check the pandemic, a report said.



According to reports, the second wave of Covid-19 has triggered panic and fear among the farmers with many of them being infected by the virus. One farmer has succumbed to the infectious disease.

The paddy procurement process was launched in the district May 10 and is being done through 30 co-operative societies and 10 women's self-help groups (SHGs) under the Sadar block and Kuchinda sub-divisions.

As a result, family members of the coronavirus-infected farmers and the survivors of the deceased are concerned over the sale of their paddy stocks.

Moreover, the manner in which tokens have been issued for paddy procurement is also a cause of concern for the farmers. It is alleged that farmers who have harvested their paddy are yet to be issued tokens, while those preparing for harvest have already been issued with tokens.

This has pushed the farmers into trouble. The validity of tokens lapses if the farmers do not sell their paddy within 12-15 days from the date of their issue.

Farmers questioned as to how one can sell paddy within the time period if it has not been harvested.

A farmer from Sikarpali village under Jujumura block, Bisi Behera died of Covid-19, his family mem-

bers alleged. He had been issued a token bearing the registration number F-2804000112 to sell 130 quintals of paddy in the first phase at a co-operative society, May 10.

He, however, succumbed to the disease at VIMSAR Covid hospital in Burla, May 12. The death of Bisi has pushed his family into distress. They now ponder how to sell the harvested paddy within the time period of 12 to 15 days. As many farmers are dying due to Covid, sale of their harvested paddy stocks has become a problem for their family members. Moreover, with many coronavirus-infected

It is alleged that farmers who have harvested their paddy are yet to be issued tokens, while those preparing for harvest have already been issued with tokens

As many farmers are in quarantine, they are unable to sell their paddy stocks as the validity of their tokens will expire by the time they complete their quarantine period

farmers visiting the market yard to sell their harvested paddy, fears of community transmission have gripped other farmers.

The government rule stipulates that a farmer has to sell his harvested paddy within 12 to 15 days of receiving the token, while a person has to spend 14-days in quarantine if he/she tests Covid positive.

Another farmer, G Ravana of Chandamunda village said that tokens were issued to farmers for procurement of 1,000 quintals of harvested paddy as against applications submitted for sale of paddy

grown on 45 acres. However, tokens have been issued only for 130 quintals of paddy harvested by each farmer. The harvested paddy has been stacked for sale but thunderstorm and unseasonal rain have posed another threat to the safe keeping of the produce.

Paddy stocks will remain unsold after the validity of tokens expires. He demanded that the government should intervene and safeguard their interests failing which the paddy harvested by them will remain unsold and rot.

When contacted, Lingaraj Nayak, deputy registrar of cooperative societies (DRCS), said that coronavirus-infected farmers will not face any problems. Their paddy stocks can be sold within the validity period of tokens. They will get their IRIS scan done after recovery and receive their payments.

The survivors of the deceased farmers will have to apply again for permission to sell their paddy stocks. However, the payment will be credited into the deceased's account and the nominee will have to withdraw the money, he added.

Machines replace job card holders in MGNREGS works

DAILY WAGERS, MIGRANTS SIT IDLE IN LOISINGHA BLOCK OF BOLANGIR DISTRICT



POST NEWS NETWORK

Loisingha, May 18: Shutdowns and lockdowns have compounded the problems of the poor and daily wagers. Scores of daily wagers of Thakurpalli under Loisingha block in Bolangir district are reportedly sitting idle as work is not available to them.

On the other hand, MGNREGS projects meant for creating employment for manual labourers and generating income opportunities for them are allegedly being executed with machines, replacing job card holders, reports said.

People of Ragad panchayat pointed out several irregularities in the rural job scheme at a time when both the Central and the state governments are emphasising on effective implementation of the MGNREGS projects in rural areas so that migrant returnees and local manual labourers can get employment and earn a livelihood in the trying times.

Gaon Sathi Bindu Biswal also alleged that machines are being used by contractors implementing the work, while she is being kept in the dark about the state of affairs. Over 150 local people have registered themselves as job card holders in Thakurpalli village but they are yet to get employment.

The panchayat authorities have awarded land development works

under MGNREGS to some locals like Antar Biswal, Nila Biswal, Palu Biswal, Paban Biswal, Dingar Biswal, Abhimanyu Nayak and Kuso Nayak. But they have allegedly engaged excavators in the projects. Besides, renovation of the Sainkata pond sprawling over 7 acres has been done with machines violating the scheme's guidelines, it was alleged.

Contractors are mandated to set up information plaques near the MGNREGS projects, detailing about the timelines and cost estimates. But no information plaques are being set up, locals alleged. Various watershed projects have been taken up in the area, but their work is being undertaken with machines too, alleged some farmers like Labar Nayak, Palu Biswal, Gyana Bhoi and Panchu Biswal.

Scores of local people facing shortage of work are deprived of their rights under the MGNREGS. The villagers pointed out that use of machines has impacted the earning opportunities of the poorest.

When contacted, panchayat executive officer Samaru Dandasena said that machines are employed in some works, but they are not used in the land development works.

He, however, added that these works are not allocated by the block or panchayats. All such works are being undertaken under the Watershed Mission.

Seven held for murder bid on OLM coordinator



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, May 18: Police arrested seven persons on charge of a murder bid on the block coordinator of Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) at his residence here in Kendrapara district, Tuesday.

Sandhyarani Behura, sub-divisional police officer of Rajnagar, disclosed this at a press meet organised at Rajnagar police station here, Tuesday. Rajnagar IIC Tapan Kumar Nayak was also present at

the press meet. Two luxury cars, sharp-edged weapons and mobile phones were also seized in this connection. The accused were produced in the court after their arrest.

The SDPO said that the accused identified as Ramyaranjan Mahunta, 21, Rabindra Kumar Mahunta, 43, Devi Prasad Jena, 21, Biswa Bijay Singh, 19, Sanjiv Swain, 25, Prabhu Tripathy, 25, Debashis Mangaraj, 18 had barged into the residence of Rashmikiran Dash and tried to murder him.

They attacked him with sharp-edged weapons and tried to kidnap him. However, their attempt was frustrated after the neighbours woke up and came to his rescue. The miscreants fled the scene leaving Dash in a pool of blood.

AUTO-AMBULANCE



An auto-ambulance service was launched for emergency patients in Athamalik block of Angul district, Tuesday OP PHOTO

Sugarcane farming makes a comeback after 30 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Simulia, May 18: About 30 years ago, many farmers in Simulia block of Balasore district used to grow sugarcane in abundance. However, over the years, they abandoned farming this cash crop due to alleged non-cooperation of the Agriculture department.

Now, once again the focus is on sugarcane farming in the area.

According to reports, scores of farmers in Harisinghpur panchayat had resumed sugarcane farming after 30 years. However, the farming has been delayed by five months this year. They apprehend that delay in raising the cash crops may result in low yield.

The vast stretches of farmlands along Kansabansa river are fertile enough to sustain the cash crops, while the local climate is suitable



for growing sugarcane.

The other reason for farmers to resume sugarcane farming is that every year floods destroy paddy in hundreds of acres in Ankula, Kabirpur and Harisinghpur along Kansabansa river. Owing to massive losses inflicted by the floods to paddy farming, the farmers have left hundreds of acres of land uncultivated.

"Water from various areas under Simulia, Khairia, Soro and Bhadrak blocks drain into Kansabansa, leading to floods every year. Floods have shattered our economy. Raising sugarcane is an alternative livelihood for the paddy farmers. Alluvial soil is suitable for cultivating sugarcane," local farmers said.

Last year, six farmers expressed interest in taking up sugarcane

farming. They contacted the official of the Agriculture and Horticulture departments.

After the Agriculture department assured the farmers help, they cultivated sugarcane in 10 acres initially.

"Agriculture officials made field visits five months ago and assured us to provide seeds. But they failed to provide the seeds. Instead, the department provided us with Rs 24,000 to buy seeds from others," farmers informed.

Farmers took time in collecting seeds from various places of Bhadrak and Jajpur. They managed to collect only 21 quintals of seeds, which fell short of their requirement.

At least 1 to 1.5 quintals of sugarcane seeds are required for a 'gunth' of land. There is need for 420 quintals of seeds for 10 acres.

For shortage of seeds, sugarcane farming has been confined to a few acres this year.

Akshay Nayak, a local farmer, had wanted to grow sugarcane in his entire land, but he had to limit his farming to only two to three 'gunths' of land.

The farmers here pointed out that they lagged behind due to delay in arranging seeds, while farmers in Bhadrak and Jajpur had sown seeds five months back. "We are now worried over how much the sugarcanes will grow by the time they are harvested," Nayak said.

Agriculture officer Sitihapragyan Khari said that sugarcane farming has been started in the area for the first time. "After the block level agriculture committee approved the proposal, farmers were provided with financial assistance," he added.

Doctor performs Covid victim's last rites, wins accolades

POST NEWS NETWORK

Padampur, May 18: Dr Sudipta Sahoo, a doctor posted at Padampur sub-divisional hospital in Bargarh district, has been receiving accolades from different quarters for performing the last rites of a Covid victim Monday, while the villagers stayed away from the victim's family.

Bhagaban Marei, a resident of Lahangir village in Bukuramunda panchayat, had been in home iso-

lation after testing positive for Covid. He breathed his last at around 4:00 pm Monday.

Family members sought the help of villagers to carry the body to the cremation ground, but no one came forward fearing infection.

Dr Sahoo, along with his staff, reached the deceased's house wearing PPE kits.

They took the body out of the house, carried the bier to the village cremation ground and gave the deceased a proper funeral.

J'khand jumbos unleash mayhem

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, May 18: There is no let-up in elephant menace in the Karanjia and Betanoti ranges of Mayurbhanj district. People inhabiting the forested villages under the two ranges have been spending sleepless nights since a herd of 17 elephants from neighbouring Jharkhand strayed into the district.

During the last two days, the animals have wreaked havoc in various areas. They have damaged a mango orchard sprawling over 35 acres under Betanoti range.

The herd, after causing damage in Champua range in Keonjhar, was holed



up in Dudhiani reserve forest under Karanjia. People in these areas are panicked. "The animals stray into our villages after sunset in search of food and destroy fruit trees and vegetable crops. Earlier too, the elephants had caused mayhem in many villages," locals said.

The Forest department is keeping track of the marauding jumbos while

efforts are on to drive them back into Jharkhand, said Saroj Kumar Panda, the range officer. A herd of 19 elephants went on a rampage in Batanoti range and are still on a damaging spree.

As farmlands are now without crops, the animals enter human habitations routinely to feed on fruits like mango and jackfruits, but sometimes they also damage houses and vegetables.

Worried over the elephant menace, locals have demanded compensation for the losses and an immediate drive to push the animals out of the area. They also demanded that the department should take effective steps to contain the mayhem in their areas.

Youths provide food to Covid-hit families

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 18: At a time when many people are turning away from Covid patients and their families, some youths of Keonjhar town have joined hands to provide cooked food to coronavirus-hit families. These youths say it gives them immense pleasure and mental satisfaction.

They lamented that there are many such families in the town that have more than one Covid patient. They can neither cook food in their houses nor can go out to get it.

"Realising the plight of such families, we decided to do something for them," informed Bijay Behera, a member of the group and a teacher by profession.

The members are circulating their numbers on social media platforms like Facebook etc requesting families in distress to contact them for cooked food.

"We are less bothered about being infected, but more concerned about the families in distress. But, we make sure that we follow all the Covid guidelines while delivering food at the doorsteps of the affected families," explained Behera.

Monday, they received as many as seven calls and delivered meals for 27 persons at the given addresses, in addition to distributing food packets among poor people. The members are sure that they will get more calls in the coming days. Now there are ten volunteers.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-208
"e" Procurement Notice
e-mail ID: rw_sambalpur@yahoo.co.in, Phone No. 0663-2401850
Bid Identification No. TENDER ONLINE SBPR - 02 of 21-22
No. 2068 Dated: 17.5.21

- Name of the Work : Road works as per DTCN available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in
- Total No. of Work : 13 (Thirteen) Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Varies from Rs.6.19 lakhs to Rs.30.97 lakhs
- Period of Completion : 01 (One) to 02 (Two) Calendar Months
- Period and time of availability of bid document in the portal for bidding : 20.05.21 at 11.00 A.M. to 29.05.21 upto 5.00 P.M.
- Date and time of opening of tender : 31.05.21 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : E.E.R.W. Divn., Sambalpur

(1) Other details can be seen from detailed notice inviting tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
(2) Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division, Sambalpur
OIPR-25076/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, TITILAGARH
E-Mail ID: eerw_titilagarh@yahoo.co.in
"e" Procurement Notice
IFB IDENTIFICATION NO. EETIG-online-02/2021-22
No.O-186:-

- Name of work : Road works
- Total No. of works : 10 (Ten) Nos.
- Approximate estimated cost : Varies from Rs.5.00 to 22.00 lakhs
- Time for completion : 02 (Two) months
- Mode of submission of tender : Tender should be submitted online in www.tenders.ori.nic.in
- Other details are as follow : As per TCN No. EETIG-online-02/2021-22

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding	Last date and time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of opening of tender
Executive Engineer, R.W. Divn., Titilagarh	EETIG-online-02/2021-22	20.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M. upto 5.00 P.M.	29.05.2021 upto 1.00 P.M.	31.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tenders.ori.nic.in. Any corrigendum / addendum will be displayed in the above e tender website only.

Sd./-Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Titilagarh
OIPR-25078/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-129
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
MAIN DAM DIVISION , BURLA
Government of Orissa
"e" Procurement Notice No. MDD-e-02/2021-22 (Online)
Email:- ee_mddburla@rediffmail.com
Date: 17.05.2021

- No. of work : 12 Nos.
- Estimated cost : Rs.5.13 to 22.14 lakhs
- Period of completion : 3 months
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal : 24.05.2021 at 10 A.M.
- Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 02.06.2021 up to 05.00 P.M.
- Date of opening of bid : 03.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name & Address of the Officer inviting bid : Executive Engineer, Main Dam Division, Burla, At/PO- Burla, Dist- Sambalpur, Odisha
Email:- ee_mddburla@rediffmail.com

Further details, any corrigendum or addendum can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Sd./- Executive Engineer,
Main Dam Division, Burla
OIPR-32017/11/0002/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BALLIGUDA
Tender Call Notice
No. 835 Date 17.05.2021
E-mail: eonacballiguda@yahoo.in
Bid Identification No. EO_BLG.N.02_2021-22
No. C-264:- The Executive Officer, NAC, Balliguda, Dist- Kandhamal inviting percentage rate bid in online mode for the works as detailed in the table from eligible contractors for civil work as detailed in the table below.

No.	Name of Work	As per DTCN
1.	Name of work	34
2.	Tender Cost	Rs.3.06 Lakh to Rs.19.98 Lakh
3.	Class of Contractor	D & C or equivalent
4.	Period & time of completion	As per DTCN
5.	Available of Bid Document in the Website	From Dt.18.05.2021, 10.00 AM to Dt.26.05.2021 Up to 12.30 PM
6.	Date of opening of Bid	Dt.26.05.2021 at 1.00 PM
7.	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tenderodisha.gov.in . Any Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.	

OIPR-13097/11/0004/2122 Sd./- Executive Officer, NAC, Balliguda

FOCUS PANDEMIC RESPONSE

DEFENDING THE INDEFENSIBLE



It is equally distressing to note the delayed response of the state governments in not having anticipated the Central government's attitude when the latter's credibility was at an all time low, and now having to float global tenders and order vaccines from overseas paying five to eight times the price of the local vaccine at the cost of the tax payer's money

central government was bidding for time and the local manufacturers would not be able to supply the required doses to all states in required quantities defies logic. And now the state government has decided to float global tenders and do the bidding on the 28th May for a bulk order of 3.80 crore vaccine doses to be supplied within four months. Of course how many overseas companies will bid, at what price, with how much delay, cost and customs duties and clearance at the Indian end bogs imagination. By that time infections in the state would have risen multiple times along with the number of casualties with resultant demands on ICU beds and oxygen. Conversely half the districts would have compulsorily closed down their vaccination centres for lack of supply of vaccines from the Centre which should have been otherwise the latter's duty. Standing by the Modi government without playing the role of a responsible Opposition at this critical hour could be the biggest blunder which the people will ill afford to condone or forget.

To get vaccinated is a fundamental right of every citizen and tantamount to the right to life constitutionally guaranteed for the citizen's welfare and wellbeing. There is no reason why they should be fed imaginary stories of prolonging the period of wait between jabs or given false hopes of vaccines to be given soon. There is no reason why they should be hunkering down for the most basic ingredient of their lives, oxygen.

In the recent film 'Oxygen' streaming on Netflix the protagonist wakes up to find herself in a cryogenic unit akin to a coffin talking to her Medical Interface Liaison Operator on Artificial Intelligence begging for oxygen as the door closes on her past which she can no longer remember. Referred to as just unit number 0267, her evocation of living could eerily resemble all those in this country who are losing their lives in hospitals in a nauseating replay of events due to the cutting off of oxygen supply while taking their last breaths not in any cryo unit but on a rickety bed gasping for the next cylinder.

The writer is a retired diplomat and a resident of Odisha.

On the 12th May, 12 Opposition parties led by the Congress wrote a joint letter to the PM. Among their major demands were: free and universal vaccination against Covid-19; invoking compulsory licensing to ramp up domestic production of vaccines; utilisation of budgeted allocation of Rs 35000 crore for production and import of vaccines and all other medical materials needed; provision of food grains and Rs 6000 per month to the poor who are once again victims of an uncaring socio-economic system thriving on privatisation and patronage; repeal of the three farm laws for which over 200 farmers have sacrificed their lives with the farmers' agitation having lasted over 200 days, and immediate freezing of the Central Vista project and diversion of the earmarked funds for purchase of urgent medical equipment and other emergency requirements.

All these are extremely urgent and relevant demands on an incompetent and reckless government which has cared little for the safety of its citizens, to let them die in such inhuman manner for lack of oxygen, ICU beds and even basic medicines. With black marketing and price gouging rampant for every little requirement the average citizen has been running from hospital to hospital but to no avail.

If the estimates of the Seattle-based Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation are to be believed the current official statistics at 340,000 infections and 4,300 fatalities daily need to be assessed at 20 times the official figures, averaging between seven to nine million cases from mid-April. The Wall Street Journal has quoted overseas experts tracking the pandemic in India, Ashish Jha of Brown University, USA and Murad Banaji of Middlesex University, UK of estimating the actual figures anywhere between three to eight times the official figure.

India is passing through its severest ever health crisis and the Opposition for the first time has shown unity in alacrity and spoken in one voice for the people notwithstanding their diverse political affiliations and disparate ideologies. The pandemic has brought them all together on a common platform for the cause of democracy and to speak up

back to state governments to fend for themselves when there is no hope left to take self-arrogated credit as in the past.

It is equally distressing to note the delayed response of the state governments in not having anticipated the central government's attitude when the latter's credibility was at an all time low, and now having to float global tenders and order vaccines from overseas paying five to eight times the price of the local vaccine at the cost of the tax payer's money. Now that it seems the pandemic is moving intensely towards the south and east after having flattened in the high-infection states of western and northern India, the water has clearly gone over the head. The Odisha government for example has barely scratched the surface of its nearly 70 per cent rural population. No testing, no vaccination and now cases proliferating in the rural sector where a large majority is deprived of basics, let alone having digital literacy and connectivity to access vaccine-related information.

Why would the state government not have mobilised its main procurement agency, the Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited, earlier when it was clear that the



Malay Mishra

STANDING BY THE MODI GOVERNMENT WITHOUT PLAYING THE ROLE OF A RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION AT THIS CRITICAL HOUR COULD BE THE BIGGEST BLUNDER WHICH THE PEOPLE WILL ILL AFFORD TO CONDONE OR FORGET

All thoughts, desires, conventions, attachments which come from outside must be ruthlessly pushed away.

SRI AUROBINDO



Piss Potion

After the government's abysmal performance in vaccinating the country against COVID-19, here comes a new 'remedy' from the BJP's stable. This time it is Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, BJP's Lok Sabha MP from Bhopal, who has prescribed consumption of 'gau mutra' (cow urine) of a 'desi' (Indian) cow for effectively fighting the virus. Also, she wants planting of tulsi, peepal and banyan trees to prevent shortage of oxygen that has proved to be a potent cause of thousands of deaths and severe discomfort to millions during the raging second wave of the pandemic. Had the people nurtured and grown such plants in abundance, the country would not have to face the oxygen scarcity as it is doing now. This is the diagnosis of the Sadhvi that she made public on May 16 while addressing a gathering at Sant Nagar in MP where she had gone to donate 25 oxygen concentrators to a hospital.

The Sadhvi not only displays a serious lack of scientific temper in handling the deadly virus, but reflects the mindset of the Sangh Parivar. It was the Prime Minister who advocated banging thali, clapping and lighting lamp to ward off COVID-19. Nothing can be more scandalous than the Bhopal MP's assertion that "if we drink gau mutra of a desi cow, it cures us of the infections in our lungs." She even claims she doesn't have to think of any medicines for corona as she daily drinks cow urine after saying a prayer. She is the one facing allegations of being absent in Covid relief from her constituency recording the second highest case load in MP.

But, there are some exceptions in the BJP too who do not subscribe to such unscientific methods. Rakesh Rathore, the BJP MLA from Sitapur (Sadar) in UP has raised questions on the state government's handling of the pandemic and told the media he might have to face "sedition charge" if he speaks too much. Asked why a trauma centre project in his constituency was still not operational, he pleaded as an MLA he does not have much power.

Last year, he was in the news for questioning in audio clips of his phone the Prime Minister's call to bang thalis and light lamps during the first wave of the Covid.

Enough Is Enough

The resignation of senior virologist Shahid Jameel as head of the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government to detect variants of the coronavirus, is a great setback to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic at the height of the second wave. For obvious reasons, Jameel stopped short of spelling out the reasons for his resignation, but he had given ample indications of his frustration over the government's refusal to act on the basis of scientific inputs provided by experts in the field. In fact, the interviews he has given to the media, starting with the New York Times, four days before his resignation, leave no one in doubt about the criminal negligence of the government to adopt an evidence-based policy to save the people from the clutches of the virus. What has been in the realm of speculation about the government's complacency and cynical electoral and religious calculations seems now confirmed by the details that this virologist shared with the media.

Jameel wrote in the NYT that India would have to increase testing and start isolating infected people. The most sensational disclosure is his assertion that all the measures endorsed by the scientific community in India "faced stubborn resistance from the government." He divulged that on April 30, over 800 Indian scientists urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide access to the data that could help them further study, predict and curb the new virus. But, unfortunately decision-making based on data became, as he regretted, "yet another casualty, as the pandemic in India has spun out of control."

Members of INSACOG reportedly told the government that it would have to impose "major restrictions." However, the government went on to host large election rallies with tens of thousands of people ahead of the polls in West Bengal and Assam. The Centre also gave tacit approval to the decision of the BJP government of Uttarakhand to organise the Kumbh Mela festival where about 4 million people congregated with little or no safeguards against COVID-19. That too, a year ahead of schedule as the Kumbh is held every 12 years and was due next in 2022. The government also did not pay much heed to its advice on ramping up vaccination ever since the new strain was detected in January. The attitude of this government is being perceived, internationally, as one that does not bother for the well being of the citizens. This is a sure fire method of creating a new phase of history, a history replete with death and destruction of the nation.

WISDOM CORNER

- Aim for the moon. If you miss, you may hit a star. **W. CLEMENT STONE**
- Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines. **ROBERT H. SCHULLER**
- When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around. **WILLIE NELSON**

WORDSWORTH

Nanofood

Whenever the prefix nano- appears, referring to any manipulation of matter at near-molecular levels, controversy follows. Opponents of such techniques hold in particular that they shouldn't be used in foodstuffs until we know much more about their effects on human bodies. Nanofood refers to the employment of nanotechnological techniques in any part of the food chain - cultivation, production, processing or packaging - not just in food itself. Big companies are researching the possibilities, some of which sound like science-fiction - smart dust that's inserted into plants and animals so that farmers can monitor their health in real time; packaging that includes smart sensors that can sniff out gases given off by deteriorating food or alternatively tell you when it is ripe; a drink whose flavour can be changed just by microwaving it; and stabilise nutrients in food, such as omega-3 fats, iron or vitamins - which degrade quickly in storage - by enclosing them in separate tiny containers. The only foodstuffs currently available that have been modified through nanotechnology are a few nutritional supplements, but this is expected to change within a year or two. The word first came to public attention as the title of a report of in 2004 by a German firm, the Helmut Kaiser Consultancy. It is in the news because of another report, published by Friends of the Earth in March 2008, which takes an extremely sceptical view of the technology and the likelihood of it being accepted by consumers. Food packaging using nanotechnology is more advanced than nanofoods, with products on the market that incorporate nanomaterials that scavenge oxygen, fight bacteria, keep in moisture or sense the state of the food (Sydney Morning Herald, 27 Mar. 2008). But while the food industry is hooked on nanotech's promises, it is also very nervous. For if British consumers are sceptical about GM foods, then they are certainly not ready for nanofood (Daily Mail, 20 Jan. 2007).

LOL

THANK GOD

On a rural road a state trooper pulled this farmer over and said: "Sir, do you realise your wife fell out of the car several miles back?" To



which the farmer replied: "Thank God, I thought I had gone deaf!"

IN JEST THIS

So many incentives to get vaccinated

I am happy to say that I was recently vaccinated against COVID-19, but sad to say that I did not get any free beer.

"Where's my free beer?" I wanted to ask, but I knew that my town isn't offering such incentives. And I really didn't need any incentive to get vaccinated and protect myself, as well as others around me.

But many people do need incentives. Just preventing Covid isn't enough, especially since they believe that their chances of getting the virus are even lower than their chances of getting a date with Deepika Padukone. That's why governments and other entities have come up with all kinds of rewards and schemes to get people immunised. Among the rewards: gold nose rings, beer, pizza, doughnuts, and a chance to win one million dollars.

According to news reports, people who recently got vaccinated at a special camp in Rajkot, Gujarat, received gifts from the local gold-

smith community. Women received a gold nose pin and men were offered hand blenders.

Just picture the smile on a woman's face as she receives her gold nose pin.

Woman: "Can I come back tomorrow for another injection?"

Nurse: "No, but you can bring some of your family members."

Woman: "Does my dog count as a family member?"

The people in Rajkot are not the only lucky ones to receive rewards in India. Retail stores in other parts of the country have offered free snacks, sweets, biryani and chicken dishes.

A restaurant in Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh, offered free biryani to the first 100 people to participate in a recent vaccination drive. I don't know about you, but I would hate to be the 101st person standing in line. My goal, of course, would be to get one of the people ahead of me to drop out.

Me: "I heard that these injec-

tions are really painful, and there are lots of side-effects. That's why Vladimir Putin is getting all his critics vaccinated."

Man in 100th place: "Don't listen to him. I saw him counting everyone. He's trying to get free biryani."

Me: "Pffft! The biryani isn't very good. That's why I came late today. But on the next street, there is a vaccination site where they are giving free bus tickets to Rajkot, Gujarat. You should go there."

Man: "Why would I want to go to Rajkot?"

Me: "If you go to Rajkot and get vaccinated again, you can get a free hand blender. You look like a man who loves to blend things."

Man: "You want me to get vaccinated more than once?"

Me: "Yes, you can get your first dose on the next street, your second dose in Rajkot, your third dose in Israel, your fourth dose in Russia, and your fifth dose in America. All these countries are giving away free stuff if you get vaccinated. In

Israel, they are even giving free beer!"

Yes, Israel is giving free beer, as well as pizza, pastries and other items. In Russia, you can get free ice cream, and in America you can get all kinds of goodies, depending on where you live. In Ohio, vaccinated people are being entered in a weekly lottery to win a grand prize of \$1 million. Covid has brought misfortune to many fortune to a few.

Just like in Israel, you can also get free beer in America. Several beer companies are offering beer to anyone who has been vaccinated. This seems a little backwards, of course. Wouldn't it be easier to get people drunk first and then vaccinate them?

If health officials go to any bar that's full of drunk or tipsy people, they could easily get everyone vaccinated. They wouldn't need to offer any incentives. All they'd have to do is say, "Who wants a free shot?"

Goodwill gone

Sir, seven years down the line, the Modi magic seems to have dissipated like never before, made worse by the mishandling of the second phase of the Covid carnage. Even if one ignores flagrant aberrations like the ill-conceived demonetisation fiasco, mishandling of the economy, trident but vacuous nationalism with divisive machinations to destroy our pluralistic social order, emasculation of a fair section of the national media, alienation of the custodians of our farm sector, calculated demolition of our democratic institutions and lopsided policies on national priorities, it's certain that the mishandling of the Covid situation in general and its misdirected vaccination policy in particular are bound to dent whatever goodwill still remained of the BJP government. The present dispensation shall have to reinvent itself if it wants to stay afloat and play a decisive role in national governance in the days ahead, especially post 2024. Ruthless measures to contain the growing disenchantment will be counterproductive in the long run.

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

Sinister possibilities

Sir, This is in reference to the article 'Did SARS-CoV-2 origin in a Chinese lab?', **Orissa POST**, May 18. Over 33 lakh people have succumbed to the coronavirus pandemic, but the world is still awaiting conclusive answers: Is Covid-19 a man-made bio-weapon? Or, Was it just a case of transmission from animals to humans? Media reports referring to Chinese documents allegedly obtained by the US State Department have turned the spotlight on sinister possibilities. The papers written by Chinese military scientists and public health officers in 2015 describe SARS coronaviruses, as presenting a 'new era of genetic weapons'. According to international media reports, the People's Liberation Army documents seem to fantasise that a bio-weapon attack could cause the 'enemy's medical system to collapse'. All these reports ignite the clamour for getting to the bottom of the matter. A probe conducted by a team of experts from the WHO in Wuhan in January-February had dismissed as 'unlikely' the theory that the virus leaked from a lab. The WHO, on its part, has to ensure that a thorough investigation is conducted, making it incumbent upon the Chinese government to keep the proceedings transparent. Reeling under the second wave of the pandemic, India should push harder for ascertaining the truth and fixing responsibility. With the Union Health Minister heading the WHO's Executive Board, India needs to use this platform effectively so that Covid-like catastrophes don't recur.

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

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

Mamata wants Guv to go; writes to PM, Prez

GOVERNOR JAGDEEP DHANKHAR HAS BEEN ON AN UNUSUAL OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE MAMATA GOVERNMENT AFTER THE RULING TMC WON A LANDSLIDE IN THIS SUMMER'S ASSEMBLY POLLS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, May 18: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written to the President and the Prime Minister demanding a change of the Governor in the interest of 'good governance' in the state.

The letter comes immediately after the CBI arrested four Trinamool leaders, including two ministers, a former minister and a former Mayor in the Narada scam, Monday.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has been on an unusual offensive against the Mamata government after the ruling Trinamool Congress won a landslide in this summer's assembly polls.

Banerjee's letters despatched Tuesday alleges that Governor



Dhankhar has been raking up an 'exaggerated version' of violence in West Bengal since the elections.

It said the whole exercise is to project a 'highly inflated version' of the law and order situation in

West Bengal, overlooking the fact that the incidents happened when the control of administration was 'not in our hands.'

The situation is now under full control and the administration is busy fighting Covid, it said. The letter also pointed out that Dhankhar was 'crossing all limits' by raising the law and order issue during the swearing-in ceremony and tweeting about it in public domain.

It said the Governor is trying to 'destabilise the functioning of the government' at the time when the need of the hour was focussed efforts to control the Covid pandemic.

Trinamool Congress sources said the party was considering a resolution passed by the legislative assembly demanding the removal of the Governor.

The Governor has been at daggers drawn with the Trinamool government ever since he took charge.

"He is trying to build up a narrative of a severe breakdown of law and order with malafide motive of destabilising an elected government," alleged Trinamool MP Saugata Roy.

But Raj Bhavan sources rubbished the Trinamool charges. One said the Governor was a lawyer by training and was 'totally conscious of his powers and responsibilities.'

"He had raised valid concerns over breakdown of law and order. He had cleared the CBI to prosecute the politicians involved in the Narada scam," the Raj Bhavan source said.

Vijayan drops acclaimed Health Minister Shailaja, picks son-in-law in Cabinet

IT HAS COME AS A SHOCK TO MANY IN THE PARTY AND OUTSIDE AS SHAILAJA HAD LED KERALA'S FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 18: True to his style of being the last word in the CPI-M and also in the government, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan delivered a beamer Tuesday when he, much to the surprise and dismay of many, dropped the acclaimed Health Minister KK Shailaja from his new cabinet, while he gave a ministerial post to his son-in-law PA Mohammed Riyaz.

The 21-member cabinet includes 12 from the CPI-M, four from the CPI, one each from the Kerala Congress (M), NCP and Janata Dal(S) and one each from two allies which will be shared between the four allies, each having one legislator.

It was Loktantrik Janata Dal, the only ally which did not get a cabinet post. It has come as a shock to many in the party and outside and all what Shailaja said was, she is a disciplined party worker and will abide by the party's decision.

All the other names were on expected lines and there was only one norm and that was unflinching loyalty to Vijayan and it includes, former Rajya Sabha members P Rajiv and KN Balagopal, the women include R Bindu, a college professor and more importantly the wife of the present CPI-M secretary A Vijayaraghavan besides journalist turned two time legislator Veena George.

The others include Vijayan's closest aide and in all likelihood will be the number two - M Govindan who hails from Kannur; besides, Saji Cherian, former State Minister and also former Speaker K Radhakrishnan who was elected from a scheduled caste constituency in Thrissur district.

V Sivankutty was also a certainty as he was the one who defeated strong BJP candidate Kumanan Rajasekheran at the Nemoon seat in



the state capital, which he lost to BJP veteran O Rajagopal in the 2016 assembly polls.

Then there is V. Abdurahiman who has come from the Muslim dominated Malappuram district, however belongs to the National Secular Conference a party which has the blessings of the CPI-M but not an ally.

VN Vasavan is another leader from the CPI-M, a known loyalist of Vijayan who has been given a ministerial post.

Two-time Lok Sabha member MB Rajesh, who lost the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Palakkad has been selected for the Speaker's post.

Meanwhile, reports have surfaced that the national leadership of the CPI-M has expressed its displeasure over the exclusion of Shailaja and the social media is also abuzz after the development and the way she was given a raw deal.

However, outgoing State Power Minister and CPI-M veteran MM Mani said it's the party which decides who should be what and all should know that there are so many leaders in their party and the party's decision is final, he said, when asked why he was not given a second term.

CBI clarifies why Suvendu wasn't held in Narada case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 18: The CBI is waiting for the Lok Sabha Speaker's nod to prosecute four political leaders in the Narada sting case, including BJP's Suvendu Adhikari - who was a TMC MP when the tapes surfaced - one of its senior officials said here Tuesday, scotching allegations of biasness levelled against the agency by several quarters.

The probe agency had Monday arrested two state ministers - Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee - MLA Madan Mitra and former party leader Sovan Chatterjee in connection with its probe into the sting operation, which purportedly caught politicians accepting bribes on camera. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had recently granted sanction to prosecute the four leaders, following which the agency finalised its charge sheet and moved to arrest them.

The CBI has "sought permission from the Lok Sabha Speaker to prosecute Suvendu Adhikari, Saugata Roy, Prasun Banerjee and Kakali Ghosh Dastidar," who were all TMC MPs when the operation was allegedly conducted, the official explained.

"We are yet to get a sanction in the matter," he said, further clarifying that another political heavyweight Mukul Roy, who had also quit the TMC and joined the BJP in 2017, does not feature in the list.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, following Monday's arrest, had claimed that Adhikari and Roy were spared by the CBI as they have joined the BJP.

"It's clear that Suvendu and Mukul were kept out of this... As they now happen to be BJP members, we

It's clear that Suvendu and Mukul were kept out of this... As they now happen to be BJP members. We, however, have faith in the judiciary and the truth will come out soon

KUNAL GHOSH | TMC SPOKESPERSON

however, have faith in the judiciary and the truth will come out soon," Ghosh had asserted.

Echoing him, another TMC MLA, Tapas Roy, said the BJP government at the Centre was trying to 'exact revenge' after having lost the just-concluded assembly elections.

Narada News portal editor Mathew Samuel, who claimed to have conducted the sting operation in 2014, had also sought to know why no action was taken against Adhikari.

"I believe the investigation should be fair: This is the tip of the iceberg. We have to move against corruption. We have to face and challenge it," Samuel said. Left Front chairman Biman Bose among others raised similar questions.

State Congress president Adhir Chowdhury, on his part, stated that the CBI action at this juncture, when Bengal is battling the COVID-19 surge, is 'extremely unfortunate'.

The Calcutta High Court had ordered a CBI probe into the Narada sting operation in March, 2017.

The agency subsequently registered cases against 12 TMC leaders, including the four arrested, and an IPS officer.

One of the accused, former Lok Sabha MP Sultan Ahmed, died in September 2017.



GUARD AGAINST SEA



People place sand bags to create a temporary embankment along a beach during rough sea after damage to coastal areas by Cyclone Tauktae in Thiruvananthapuram, Tuesday.

WB schools to double up as 'safe homes'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 18: The West Bengal government will set up 'safe homes' for COVID-19 patients in schools in several districts which have been witnessing a spurt in coronavirus cases, an education department official said Tuesday.

The department has asked administrations of many districts to turn the government-aided schools into 'safe homes' with an adequate number of beds, requisite supply of oxygen and other paraphernalia in line with COVID-19 protocols, he said.

The state government came up with the concept of 'safe homes' to isolate mostly asymptomatic coronavirus-positive patients to free up hospital beds.

"Letters have already been sent to DMs of several districts for creating as many safe homes in school buildings as possible," the official told PTI.

Such isolation facilities will be set up in school buildings that have the infrastructure to accommodate basic medical facilities for COVID patients, he said.



The state government came up with the concept of 'safe homes' to isolate mostly asymptomatic patients to free up hospital beds

Apart from Kolkata, a few districts such as North and South 24 Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah

will get these facilities in schools on a priority basis as the spurt in coronavirus cases has been noticed in these areas, he said.

Paschim Bardhaman, Nadia, Purbo Medinipur and Birbhum are also among the districts where 'safe homes' will be set up in the government-aided schools.

School buildings will have to be sanitised thoroughly before converting them into such isolation facilities as premises of many educational institutes were used as

polling booths in the recently-concluded elections in the state, he said. Several schools were also used as camps for central forces during the eight-phased polls.

"The DMs concerned will identify school buildings to set up safe homes," the official said.

Amid a raging second wave of COVID-19, schools have been remained closed in the state.

West Bengal Monday registered 147 COVID-19 fatalities pushing the death toll to 13,431, a health department bulletin said.

The state reported 19,003 fresh coronavirus infections, which took the tally to 11,52,433, it added.

Meanwhile, Para Teachers' Unity Manch urged the government to engage its members to run the upcoming 'safe homes' in schools.

"We welcome the decision to have safe homes in school buildings. We also request the government to provide training and engage us to run these facilities in educational institutes," said Bhagirath Ghosh, joint convener of the organisation. Para teachers are contractual staffers in government-aided primary and upper primary schools in the state.

Lockdown effect: Positivity rate in Kerala dropping



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 18: The state-wide lockdown in Kerala appears to have had an impact as the test positivity rate continues to fall and Tuesday, came down to 23.29 per cent from close to 30 per cent in the last week.

The lockdown in the state with four districts under 'triple lockdown' is presently fixed till Sunday and there is every likelihood that it might be extended till the end of the month.

A statement issued by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that 31,337 people turned positive from 1,34,553 samples tested in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, former Union Minister and senior Kerala Congress leader PC Thomas has lodged a police complaint against Vijayan and leaders of the LDF for allegedly violating COVID-19 protocol and triple lockdown norms.

In a complaint filed at the Cantonment Station here, Thomas accused Vijayan and 22 others of gathering at the AKG Centre here Monday "illegally", when the district is under triple lockdown, and cut a cake marking the celebration of the assembly poll victory without maintaining the social distancing norms.

Their act was a punishable offence under various sections of the Kerala Epidemic Diseases Act and the Indian Penal Code besides the violation of the guidelines of the Centre and the Constitutional norms, Thomas claimed.

Besides Vijayan, the MLAs and Ministers, who took part in the celebration, violated the oath of office under the Third Schedule of the Constitution and so became disqualified to hold such positions now, he alleged.

Kerala NCC officer, a one man army, declares war on Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 18: It's been a month since 53-year-old associate NCC officer Lt Regi Joseph, a one man army, has declared war on Covid and has become the most contacted person in the village of Irattayar near Kattapana in the hilly Idukki district of Kerala.

By this time he has become a succour to numerous families who have been affected by Covid and has taken part in burying of Covid positive patients, taking Covid positive patients to and from hospitals, to schools to write examinations and above all delivering medicines, food kits to the needy.

A Hindi school teacher by profession at the St Thomas Higher Secondary School in Idukki told IANS he owes everything to his 83-year-old father who taught him how to engage in selfless service and has been doing that.

"It was last month, I stepped in full time to help people. It began when I got a call asking if I can give a helping hand to a 91-year-old grandmother whom I knew was unwell. Immediately I went there and saw the weak and frail body of the granny. I along with her relative got her cleaned up and put her on a chair and drove her to the hospital and soon came the news she was Covid positive. For a moment I felt shaky and soon got over it. I called my wife and asked her to keep a few dresses outside. After I reached home I isolated myself from others as we had a room on the first floor. Since then I have declared war on Covid," said Joseph.

He said in the next few days, the granny's husband and their 49-year-old son turned positive and I took them to a few hospitals for more expert treatment.

"The granny passed away April 23, then a few days later her son



also passed away and then came the death of the father. I was there for the conduct of the last rites," said Joseph.

Later Joseph realised that the deaths took place because the hospitals did not have high quality ventilators and soon the family members of the three deceased decided to pool money and Joseph

Lt Regi Joseph has become a succour to numerous families who have been affected by Covid and has taken part in burying of victims, taking patients to and from hospitals and delivering food kits and medicines to the needy

also chipped in and donated two high quality ventilators to the local government hospital at Kattapana.

Following the death of three members of the same family and the help he rendered, he has become the most sought after person in his village.

"Every day I get a few calls. If I can take some to the hospital, some others want medicines to be delivered, others want food to be delivered. I by now have taken two doses of vaccine and am right now at a hospital after I was asked to take a pregnant lady to the hospital for check up," said Joseph.

Apart from the physical help he renders, he and his wife, also a Hindi teacher, have decided to set aside their April month's salary for helping others. "By now we have spent ₹one lakh from our pocket and have bought medicines and food kits to the needy. We as part of the NCC decided we will not take contributions from any for social service," added Joseph who said one reason why he decided to dedicate himself for this is God gave them twins (a boy and a girl) 13 years after their marriage and then he decided he will dedicate himself for selfless service.



India's future needs for the present Modi 'system' to be shaken out of sleep RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

BADRINATH OPENS AFTER WINTER CLOSURE

The famous temple of Badrinath in the upper Himalayan region of Uttarakhand opened after the winter break early Tuesday amid traditional rituals. The chief priest of the temple, Ishwar Prasad Namboodiri, opened the portals of the temple at 4.15 am chanting Vedic hymns and praying for the well-being of all



of the day quote

The second wave of infections appears to be ebbing but the state must be prepared with health infrastructure as experts have predicted a third wave

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

After Tuesday evening, the city will have only three days of Covishield stock left for the 18-44 age group. We appeal to the central government to make more vaccines available for this category immediately

ATISHI MARLENA | AAP MLA

Around 1,00,700 vials are available across 213 vaccination centres in the state. Hundred people will be vaccinated every day in each centre. So far, we have vaccinated 31% of the population. We are among the few states that have ensured 0% vaccine wastage

JAI RAM THAKUR | CHIEF MINISTER OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Massive rescue ops underway

CYCLONE TAUUKTAE



Indian Navy shifts people rescued from Barge P305

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Navy vessels, tug boats and rescue ships were pressed into service Tuesday to evacuate over 500 people stuck on an oil rig and barges in the high sea off the Mumbai coast after a cyclone ripped through it.

The cyclone sank a barge that had living quarters for employees working offshore, while two other construction barges lost anchors and drifted away. The three barges, which were deployed by Afcons for a contract the company had got from ONGC, had 599 workers on board when the cyclone hit, official sources said.

cued, they said. Attempts are being made to trace and rescue the remaining, they said. All the 137 persons onboard barge 'Gal Constructor', which runs aground about 48 nautical miles north of Mumbai's Colaba Point, are safe and in the process of being evacuated.

Barge 'Support Station-3' had 201 persons and is drifting North-West but is clear of all operational installations of Mumbai High - India's biggest oilfield. Operations to bring these persons to safety are on. Rescue vessels including 'TCGS Shoor' of Coast Guard have reached ONGC's drillship 'Sagar Bhushan', which lost its anchors and started drifting north, sources said.

SHORT TAKES

Rajanarayanan passes away

Chennai: Noted Tamil writer and Sahitya Akademi award winner Ki Rajanarayanan, popularly known as Ki Ra passed away in Pondicherry. Rajanarayanan was 98 and is survived by two sons. Pondicherry Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan paid her homage to Rajanarayanan's body at Lawspet Government quarters. Condoling Rajanarayanan's death, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said the school where Rajanarayanan studied in Tamil Nadu will be renovated without altering its design and a hall will be built housing the writer's works, his photographs so that students and people can know about him.

Cop killed in IED blast

Raipur: A head constable was killed and another policeman injured when Naxals detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Tuesday, police said. The incident took place around 9.30 am under Kutru police station area, located around 450 km from Raipur, when a team of security personnel was out on an area domination operation to ensure security to road construction work underway there, a police official said.

Man beaten to death in UP

Bareilly (UP): A man was beaten to death in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly interfering in a husband-wife dispute. The incident took place in the Prem Nagar locality in Bareilly Monday when Naveen was reportedly beating his wife Deepmala with a stick.

T'gana extends lockdown till May 30

Hyderabad: The Telangana government Tuesday extended the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19 till May 30, an official release said. The ongoing lockdown which began May 12 was supposed to end by May 22, according to an earlier official communication. "Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has decided to extend the lockdown in the State up to May 30. The CM spoke with the Ministers over the phone and elicited their opinion. After receiving the opinion of the Cabinet Ministers, the CM has decided to extend the lockdown till May 30," it said.

Daily recoveries more than 4L for first time

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: In a big achievement, India has recorded daily recoveries of more than four lakh Covid patients in a single day for the first time.

Giving credit to the dedicated and tireless efforts of all the healthcare and frontline workers, the Union Health Ministry Tuesday said 4,22,436 recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours.

An average daily recovery of more than 3,55,944 cases has been recorded in the last 14 days. With the fresh recoveries, India's cumulative recoveries reached 2,15,96,512 Tuesday and the National Recovery Rate has grown further to touch 85.60 per cent.

Ten states/UTs account for 75.77 per cent of the new recoveries with Kerala (99,651) on top followed by Maharashtra (48,211), Karnataka (34,635), Rajasthan (29,459), Uttar Pradesh (23,045), Tamil Nadu (20,486), West Bengal (19,101), Andhra Pradesh (17,334), Haryana (14,279) and Chandigarh (13,865).



With the fresh recoveries, India's cumulative recoveries reached 2,15,96,512 Tuesday and the National Recovery Rate has grown further to touch 85.60 per cent

The figure was reported at a time when India registered a

total of 2,63,533 new cases in the last 24 hours. The daily new Covid cases being registered in India are now less than 3 lakhs consecutively for the second day.

India's total active caseload decreased to 33,53,765 Tuesday. It now comprises 13.29 per cent of the country's total positive cases. There was a net decline of 1,63,232 cases in the active caseload in the last 24 hours.

270 doctors die of Covid

Doctors are risking their lives during the coronavirus infection with as many as 270 doctors having died during the second wave of the pandemic. KK Aggarwal, a Padma Shri awardee and former National President of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), died of Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here. According to the IMA, a total of 270 doctors have lost their lives during the second wave of the Covid-19 infection. Among these doctors, the majority were aged between 30 and 55 years. According to IMA data, Bihar recorded the maximum number of doctors who died of the infection. A total of 78 doctors have died in Bihar till now. As many as 37 doctors in Uttar Pradesh, 28 in Delhi, 22 in Andhra Pradesh, 19 in Telangana, 14 each in Maharashtra and West Bengal have lost their lives battling the infection.

SPREADING AWARENESS



Artists of Red Cross society paint a message about pandemic during curfew in Jammu

PTI PHOTO

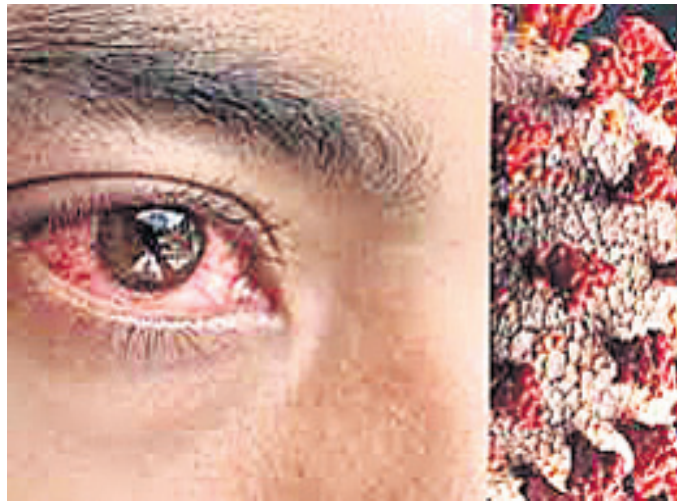
Black fungus cases rising in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Hospitals in Delhi have reported a rise in the number of black fungus cases or mucormycosis among people recovering from Covid-19 during the second wave and it could be ascribed to "irrational" use of steroids at home without consulting a doctor, medical experts said Tuesday.

The fungal infection, which affects the brain, lungs, and sinuses, can be lethal to those suffering from diabetes and having compromised immune systems. According to Dr Suresh Singh Naruka, Senior Consultant, ENT, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, mucormycosis is more prevalent among people with low immunity due to diabetes, kidney disease, liver disorder, old age, cardiac issues, or those on medication for auto-immune disease like rheumatoid arthritis.

"If such patients are administered steroids, their immunity reduces further, allowing the fungus to thrive," he said. Dr Naruka said he has been dealing with three to four patients with severe mucormycosis every day as



compared to one or two cases a month before Covid-19 began. Covid-19 kills one or two per cent of the people infected, while black fungus has a mortality rate of 75 per cent, he said. Drugs used in the treatment of mucormycosis have severe side-effects, and can lead to kidney issues, neurological dysfunction and stroke, the doctor said. Dr Ajay Swaroop, Chairman,

Farmers stunned by hike in fertiliser price

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai/New Delhi, May 18: Day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi released Rs 2,000 each to 9.50 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sanman Nidhi Scheme May 14, the peasantry was hit by an unexpected bolt from the blue.

Barely 24 hours after the PM's nationally-televised event, and the ensuing interactions and laudatory messages from the BJP leaders, all major companies in the country effected a steep hike in prices of different categories of fertilisers - a key farming ingredient - May 15.

As the impact of the price hikes - ranging from 20-60 per cent for certain varieties or brands - sunk in, farmer leaders said that it could put a huge strain on the already overburdened peasantry and compound the agro-crisis across the country.

The first to red flag the issue, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has written to Union Minister

for Chemicals & Fertilisers, DV Sadananda Gowda, flaying the price hike as an "unfortunate decision" and demanding its immediate rollback.

NCP President and former Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said Tuesday that it (price hike) would hamper the pre-sowing farming activities and rub salt on the wounds of the farmers.

Backing Pawar, Shiv Sena's farmer face and Vasant Naik Sheti Swavalamban Mission (VNSSM) President Kishore Tiwari - who has been accorded MoS status - said the price hikes by the fertiliser companies "appears to be pre-planned and done hand-in-glove with government support".

"What was the need to do it just one day after the PM's highly-publicised but meager handout to the farmers? Why is the PM and the minister (Gowda) silent on this, knowing the current grave crisis afflicting the country on all fronts," Tiwari asked.

'Live-in relationships morally, socially unacceptable'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh/New Delhi, May 18: The Punjab and Haryana High Court has said live-in-relationships are morally and socially unacceptable, an observation which runs contrary to the Supreme Court stand recognising them.

The High Court made the observation while dismissing a petition filed by a runaway couple seeking protection.

In their petition, Gulza Kumari (19) and Gurwinder Singh (22) said they were living together and intended to get married shortly. They apprehended danger to their lives from Kumari's parents.

In his May 11 order, Justice H S Madaan said, "As a matter of fact, the petitioners in the garb of filing the present petition are seeking seal of approval on their live-in-relationship, which is morally and so-

cially not acceptable and no protection order in the petition can be passed." "The petition stands dismissed accordingly," his order said.

According to petitioners' counsel JS Thakur, Singh and Kumari were living together in Tarn Taran district. The woman's parents in Ludhiana did not approve of their relationship. The couple could not get married as Kumari's documents, which have details of her age, were in the possession of her family, Thakur added.

The Supreme Court has taken a different view on the issue in the past. A three-judge bench of the apex court held in May 2018 that an adult couple had the right to live together even without marriage.

It had made this clear while asserting that a 20-year-old Kerala woman, whose marriage had been annulled, could choose whom she wanted to live with. The top court



had held that live-in-relationships were now even recognized by the legislature and they had found a place under the provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

In another landmark case filed by actor S Khushboo, the Supreme Court had said live-in-relationships are permissible and the act of two

adults living together cannot be considered illegal or unlawful. "While it is true that the mainstream view in our society is that sexual contact should take place only between marital partners, there is no statutory offence that takes place when adults willingly engage in sexual relations outside the marital setting, with the

exception of 'adultery' as defined under Section 497 IPC," it said. The apex court had also referred to its decision in Lata Singh vs State of UP.

That judgment had said a live-in relationship between two consenting adults did not amount to any offence, with the obvious exception of adultery, even though it may be perceived as immoral. A major girl is free to marry anyone she likes or "live with anyone she likes". "Notions of social morality are inherently subjective and the criminal law cannot be used as a means to unduly interfere with the domain of personal autonomy. Morality and criminality are not co-extensive," the court said. In 2013, the top court in Indra Sarma vs V K V Sarma said, "Live-in or marriage-like relationship is neither a crime nor a sin though socially unacceptable in this country."

TOOLKIT CASE

The court made some strong remarks after it was told the Centre has not filed a response to Ravi's plea so far.

Justice Rekha Palli told Centre's counsel: "For Union of India, is there no last and final opportunity? This is very bad." The court emphasised if the reply were not filed on time, then what is the meaning of the court saying it is the last opportunity. "I cannot understand that. What is the sanctity of last and final opportunity," added Justice Palli. On March 17, the court had granted a final opportunity to the Centre to file its reply on the petition.

Central government standing counsel Ajay Dignpal informed the court that due to Covid-19, not many officials were coming to the office, due to which the response in the matter could not be filed.

After Dignpal's submissions, the court said it will not impose any cost on the Centre and gave six more weeks to file its response.

national

of the day quote

Is the UP government preparing to make way for the third wave and then fight it? Neither there is testing, nor treatment, nor medical kits, but the government says that everything is fit

PRİYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

Disgusting to say the least. Rahul Gandhi wants to use this opportunity of pandemic to destroy the image of Prime Minister Modi. Congress workers instructed to call the mutant strain as Modi strain

SAMBIT PATRA | BJP SPOKESPERSON

I can understand the opposition would want to attack the government. But to singularly commercialise it as a political opportunity and deal in death; I never imagined Congress was capable of such a low

SMRITI IRANI | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Fire at Mettur Thermal plant

Coimbatore: A major fire broke out at the Mettur thermal power plant in Salem early Tuesday, disrupting power production. The blaze was noticed in the conveyor belt area of the plant following which officials began dousing operations, official sources said. On receipt of information, the Fire and Rescue services personnel rushed to the spot and managed to douse the fire in two hours, they said. However, there was no damage to the power plant. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, they added.

Police nab two for fake tweet

Chandigarh: The Haryana Police Tuesday arrested two people for allegedly circulating a fake tweet which used a screenshot of Home and Health Minister Anil Vij's handle to wrongly claim that lockdown has been extended in the state till May 20. The arrested accused were identified as Prahlad, a resident of Tundla Mandi, Ambala; and Rohit Nagpal of Sundernagar, Yamunanagar, police said. The arrested accused were produced before a court in Panchkula which sent them to one-day police remand, police said, adding further investigation is on.

Cong MLA resigns from Raj assembly

Jaipur: Congress MLA Hemaram Chaudhary resigned from the Rajasthan Assembly Tuesday, his office said. The MLA from Gudamalani (Barmer) was not immediately available for comments. "Chaudhary has resigned as a member of the legislative assembly. The resignation letter has been sent to the assembly speaker today according to the office of the MLA. In the 200-member assembly, the Congress has 106 MLAs, including Chaudhary.

Banker robbed on gunpoint, 5 held

Muzaffarnagar: The police here Tuesday arrested five men, who were allegedly involved in robbing a bank employee of ₹1 lakh on gunpoint, officials said. Two bikes, one scooter, ₹1 lakh and a pistol were recovered from their possession, they said, adding the accused were identified as - Babu, Himashu, Akash, Prashant and Rahul. In the incident that took place May 11 in the New Mandi area, armed men came on bikes and intercepted a woman, who worked in the collection department of Bandhan Bank, Station House Officer (SHO) Anil Kapervan said, adding they took away the cash and her scooter.



The new form of coronavirus in Singapore is said to be very dangerous for children. I could reach Delhi in the form of a third wave. I appeal to the Central government to cancel all air services with Singapore with immediate effect and work on vaccine alternatives for children on a priority basis

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

NINE 'SHILAS' INSTALLED AT RAM TEMPLE FOUNDATION

Nine consecrated shilas - named Nanda, Ajita, Aparajita, Bhadra, Rikta, Jaya, Shukla, Poorna and Saubhagyani have been placed at the foundation of the temple's 'garbh griha' (sanctum sanctorum)



'98% of population still susceptible to Covid'

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 18: Although the country has been witnessing a downward trend in daily positive cases with less than 3 lakh fresh cases reported for the second consecutive day, Union Health ministry cautioned that 98 per cent of the population is still vulnerable to the infection.

Addressing the media here, Joint Secretary for Health, Lav Aggarwal said that only 1.8 per cent of the total population of the country has been tested positive for Covid-19 so far. "Despite high number of cases reported so far, we have been able to contain the spread of Covid-19 to under 2 per cent. This should also make us wary of protecting the still vulnerable/susceptible 98 per-



cent population," Lav Aggarwal said. The ministry asked everyone to maintain Covid appropriate behaviour.

The Union Health ministry informed that there is a positive trend in Covid-19 recoveries and continued decline in the active cases

Despite high number of cases reported so far, we have been able to contain the spread of Covid-19 to under 2 per cent. This should also make us wary of protecting the still vulnerable 98 percent population

LAV AGGARWAL | JOINT SECY FOR HEALTH

The joint secretary said recovery rate has increased to 85.6 per cent, as compared to 81.7 per cent May 3. "There has been a decrease of 27 per cent from the highest peak of single-day cases India noted May 7 (4,14,000). The country has witnessed continued decline in active Covid-19 cases in the last 15 days,

from 17.13 per cent May 3 to 13.3 per cent," Aggarwal said. He also informed that 22 states have over 15 per cent case positivity and eight states have over 1 lakh active cases.

Significantly, the Health Ministry informed that Odisha's case positivity reduced to 23.3 per cent from 24 per cent in last week. It said that there is need to be more focused on containment measures to control spread of the COVID-19 in the state. Odisha stands at 12th position in terms of Covid positivity rate. It is to be mentioned here that the country reported over 2.6 lakh new cases in last 24 hours and also saw another record of 4,329 patients dying in the last 24 hours due to Covid-19.

Modi's rating falls as India reels from 2nd wave of Covid

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approval ratings have fallen to a new low, a survey showed Tuesday, as the country struggles to contain a devastating second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Modi, who swept to power in 2014 and was re-elected in 2019 with the biggest majority of any Indian leader in three decades, has long fostered the image of a powerful nationalist leader.

But India's COVID-19 caseload surged past 25 million this week, exposing a lack of preparation and eroding Modi's support base, according to US data intelligence company Morning Consult's tracker of a dozen global leaders.

Modi's overall ratings this week stand at 63%, his lowest since the US firm began tracking his popularity in August 2019. The big decline happened in April when his net approval dropped 22 points.

That sharp fall came as the pandemic appeared to be overwhelming large urban centres such as Delhi, where hospitals ran out of beds and life-saving oxygen and people died in parking lots, gasping for breath.

Bodies piled up in morgues and crematoriums and anger grew on social media over the suffering and perceived lack

of government support. The situation has since eased in Delhi and Mumbai as cases have fallen but the virus has penetrated deep into India's vast hinterland where public health facilities are weaker.

"The people of India or at least the vast majority have come to the conclusion that they have to rely only on themselves, and their families and friends, to protect their lives," said P Chidambaram, an opposition leader.

"In the battle against Covid-19, the state, especially the central government, has withered away," he said. Modi's government has said it is doing its best to tackle the coronavirus storm, calling it a once-in-a-century crisis.

A survey among urban Indians by polling agency YouGov this month showed public confidence in the government's handling of the crisis has plummeted since February when the second wave began. Only 59% of respondents at the end of April believed the government was handling the crisis 'very' or 'somewhat' well, down from 89% a year earlier during the first wave, it showed.

Modi does not face a national election until 2024 and despite the criticism he faces, the opposition is yet to mount a credible challenge to his authority, political analysts say.



AFTERMATH



Restoration works underway at the Gateway of India in the aftermath of Cyclone Tauktae, in Mumbai, Tuesday

Class X tabulation deadline extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Tuesday extended the deadline up to June 30 for schools to tabulate class 10 marks and submit it to the board, according to officials.

The board had earlier announced that the entire exercise of tabulation of marks will be completed by June 11 and the result will be declared by June 20.

The decision has been taken in view of the lockdown in several states due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation and to ensure safety of teachers and staff members.

CBSE accords highest priority to safety and health of teachers. Keeping in view the situation of pandemic, lockdown in states and safety of teachers and other staff members of affiliated schools, the board has decided to extend the dates, said Sanyam Bhardwaj, Controller of Examinations, CBSE.

The marks will have to be submitted to the board by June 30. For rest of the activities, the result committees can make their own schedule based on the scheme provided by CBSE, he added.

The CBSE had earlier this month announced a policy for tabulation of marks for class 10 board exams.

O₂ CONCENTRATOR CASE Let the law take its own course: HC tells Kalra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 18: The Delhi High Court Tuesday declined to direct expeditious decision on the bail plea of businessman Navneet Kalra, who has been arrested for allegedly black marketing oxygen concentrators amid a brutal second wave of the Covid pandemic.

A single bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad said, "Let the law take its own course." The High Court also refrained from making any interference with the observations of a session's court, which dismissed Kalra's anticipatory bail plea.

Kalra was represented by senior advocate Vikas Pahwa.

Refusing to grant relief to Kalra, the court said he had moved an anticipatory bail plea which has become infructuous after his arrest and therefore, nothing remains in the matter.

Kalra's counsel urged the high court to direct the trial court to decide his bail expeditiously. He also urged the court to expunge



the observations made on his client by the sessions court, as after his arrest he cannot challenge the order denying him anticipatory bail. A Delhi court Monday sent Kalra, who was arrested late Sunday night, to three days' police custody in connection with oxygen concentrator hoarding case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Archana Beniwal at the Saket district court passed the order after hearing the arguments of Delhi Police and Kalra's lawyers. The Delhi Police had sought a five-day custody of Kalra for interrogation in connection with the alleged black-marketing and hoarding of oxygen concentrators.

Delhi Police arrested Kalra, who was absconding since May 7, from

WRESTLER MURDER CASE

Court declines anticipatory bail to Sushil Kumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: A Delhi Court Tuesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to absconding Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in the murder case of a wrestler, saying that he is prima facie the main conspirator and allegations against him are serious in nature.

Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil Kumar against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been registered.

Wrestler Sagar Rana died, while two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar got injured, after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers May 4 night, at the stadium premises in the national capital.

While dismissing Sushil Kumar's pre-arrest bail, the judge noted that "the allegations against the accused are serious in nature. From the perusal of record of investigation so far, it reveals that prima facie the accused is the main conspirator".

Further, the judge said "The investigation is still going on and some of the accused persons have not been arrested so far. The NBWS [non-bailable warrant] has already been issued against the accused."

The Additional Sessions Judge also relied upon the statements of the eye-witnesses while dismissing the plea and said "So at this stage, the Court is not inclined to grant anticipatory bail to the accused".

Fearing arrest, the international wrestler moved the Rohini court in Delhi May 17 seeking anticipatory bail, asserting that the investigation against him is biased and that no injuries are attributable to him.

Children, parents dial govt helpline to tackle Covid woes

NCPDR is providing tele-counselling to children through 'SAMVEDNA' (Sensitising Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance) - a toll-free helpline launched to provide psycho-social mental support for affected children

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: From facing loneliness in COVID-19 isolation ward to exhibiting aggressive behaviour after parents contracted the virus, over 1,000 children and parents have reached out to government helpline seeking help.

With an objective of providing psychological first-aid and emotional support to children affected during the pandemic, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) is providing tele-counselling to children through SAMVEDNA (Sensitising Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance) - a toll-free helpline launched to provide psycho-social mental support for affected children.

According to Women and Child Development Ministry officials, redressal of 1,009 complaints have been done between September, 2020 to May 7, 2021.

In a case from a COVID-19 isolation centre in Aurangabad, a 15-year-old child expressed frustration over not getting enough love from parents due to more number of siblings and called up to talk about her parents' pressure of getting her married early.

The counsellor spoke to the child and her parents and suggested to encourage her to focus on academics.

In another case, parent of a six-year-old child in Kanpur called to discuss the aggressive behaviour of their child who was lodged in an isolation centre after contracting the virus.



The counsellor suggested that the child engage in different activities like narrating stories or

playing with toys. It was found that as the parents were keeping to themselves after the fam-

ily tested positive, the child was feeling lonely and exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

A 17-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli isolation centre called up and talked about being scared of loneliness. The counsellor advised him to spend time engaging in activities he is interested in and making a regular routine to get away from boredom.

This tele-counselling service is available on a toll-free number 1800-121-2830 from Monday to Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 3pm to 8pm and is exclusively for children who are willing

to talk and are in need of counselling. When a child caretaker/parent dials SAMVEDNA, they get to speak to a professional counsellor in a safe environment. Tele-counselling is provided to children under three categories children who are in quarantine/isolation/COVID care centres, children who have COVID positive parents or family members, and children who have lost their parents due to the pandemic.

This service caters to children from all over India in various regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, the Women and Child Development Ministry said.

This service was launched in September, 2020 and aims to support children in the difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic.

international



We will continue to provide a range of assistance. We will remain in touch about what the direct needs are on the ground, and hope that we can play a constructive role in reducing the numbers and bringing some relief to the people of India
JEN PSAKI | WH PRESS SECRETARY, US

NEW EXTINCT CROCODILE SPECIES FOUND IN OZ

A new extinct crocodile species dating back to millions of years ago has been discovered in the Australian Outback. The new species belongs to the Baru genus and is yet to be named



of the day quote

Pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction, coupled with the effects of the climate crisis, all threaten the rich marine biodiversity that the blue economy depends on

FRANS TIMMERMANS | VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

I am glad the private vaccination drive has commenced. I hope everyone will be protected from Covid-19 and the plants in these industrial and business zones can be more productive

JOKO WIDODO | PRESIDENT, INDONESIA

Everything that in one way or another affects strategic stability. Nuclear and non-nuclear arms, offensive and defensive weapons should be on the negotiating table

SERGEY LAVROV | FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

G20 snubs patent waiver, waters down pledge on WHO's funding

The summit's conclusions stress that G20 leaders commit to promoting 'voluntary licensing, technology and knowledge transfer, and patent-pooling'

AGENCIES

Brussels, May 18: Leaders of the world's largest economies back "voluntary licensing" of Covid-19 vaccine patents, the draft conclusions of a summit show, watering down a US push for waivers and earlier commitments to supply more funds to the World Health Organization.

The draft document, lists commitments of G20 nations and other countries and is to be adopted Friday at a Global Health Summit in Rome, one of this year's major events to coordinate global actions against the pandemic. The draft, which is still subject to changes, is the result of a compromise among experts from G20 nations which remain divided over the waiving of intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines.

The European Union and other vaccine-making countries have raised doubts, saying that the removal of US export restrictions on vaccine raw materials, the transfer of know-how and



voluntary cooperation among vaccine makers would ensure a much quicker ramping up of global production. G20 leaders are to commit instead to "patent-pooling" which is a less radical measure to encourage the sharing of patents. It is still an "unfriendly" move for pharmaceutical companies, an industry expert said, but far less extreme than a patent waiver.

Under a patent pool, drugmakers decide voluntarily to share licenses for the manufacturing of their products in poorer nations. Pools have for instance been used to ease access to HIV drugs in Africa. **BLOW TO 'WHO'**

The conclusions may also deal a blow to the WHO and its scheme to accelerate the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, drugs and tests across the world. Global leaders

reaffirm their support for the scheme, known as ACT Accelerator, but refrain from clearly committing to fully funding it.

They "underline the necessity to close its funding gap with fair burden sharing" and they call for the scheme's "strategic review".

The WHO scheme was launched in April 2020 and is still vastly underfunded. Of the over \$34 billion it has been seeking to develop, procure and distribute anti-Covid vaccines and drugs across the world, it is still \$19 billion short.

The current funding system of the WHO has been seen as a drag on the UN agency, which relies on regular top-ups from the very countries that it monitors on health preparedness. A large part of its funding is also coming from private and public actors who decide how the money they give should be spent, reducing WHO's independence.

Bangladesh journalist arrested for stealing govt documents

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dhaka, May 18: Rozina Islam, a Bangladeshi journalist who was arrested on accusations of trying to "steal" 22 government documents, was sent to prison Tuesday.

Following the order, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jashim set the next date of hearing Thursday.

Islam, who was arrested Monday, is also being accused of taking photos of the documents on her mobile phone.

The case against her was filed by Deputy Secretary of Health Services Shibbir Ahmed under the Official Secrets Act.

Arifur Rahman Inspector of Sardar Shahbagh Police had petitioned the court for a five-day remand to question the journalist while in police custody. But it was denied.

Before she was arrested, Islam was detained at the Secretariat office of Md Saiful Islam Bhuiyan, an aide to Health Services Secretary Lokman Hossain Miah, for five hours Monday.

Condemning Islam's arrest, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Bangladesh authorities to immediately release her, withdraw the investigation, and to stop further detentions under the Official Secrets Act.

"We are deeply alarmed that Bangladesh officials detained a journalist and filed a complaint under a Draconian colonial-era law that carries ridiculously harsh penalties," said Aliya Iftikhar, CPJ's senior Asia researcher.

Mallya loses bankruptcy petition amendment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 18: A consortium of Indian banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) Tuesday moved a step closer in their attempt to recover debt from loans paid out to Vijay Mallya's now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines after the High Court in London upheld an application to amend their bankruptcy petition, in favour of waiving their security over the businessman's assets in India.

Chief Insolvency and Companies Court (ICC) Judge Michael Briggs handed down his judgment in favour of the banks to declare there is no public policy that prevents a waiver of security rights, as argued by Mallya's lawyers.

At a virtual hearing, July 26 was set as the date for final arguments for and against granting a bankruptcy order against Mallya after the banks accused him of trying to "kick matters into the long grass" and called on the "bankruptcy petition to be brought to its inevitable end". "I order that permission be given to amend the petition to read as follows: 'The Petitioners (banks) having the right to enforce any security held are willing, in the event of a bankruptcy order being made, to give up any such security for the benefit of all the bankrupt's creditors,'" Justice Briggs' judgment reads.

"There is nothing in the statutory provisions that prevent the Petitioners from giving up security," he notes.

Mallya's barrister, Philip Marshall, had referenced witness statements of retired Indian judges



Judge Michael Briggs handed down his judgment in favour of the banks to declare there is no public policy that prevents a waiver of security rights, as argued by Mallya's lawyers

in previous hearings to reiterate that there is "public interest under Indian law" by virtue of the banks being nationalised.

However, Justice Briggs found no impediment to the creditors relinquishing their security under Indian law because of the engagement of a "principle concerning public interest" and favoured the submissions made by retired Indian Supreme Court judge Gopala Gowda at a hearing in December 2020 in this regard.

SHORT TAKES

Task force set to resolve disputes

Kathmandu: Nepal's ruling CPN-UML headed by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has formed a 10-member joint task force from the two rival factions to iron out intra-party differences that threatens the stability of the minority government, according to media reports. Oli, who is the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist, on Sunday last held a one-on-one meeting with Madhav Kumar Nepal, who heads the rival faction of the party, and decided to form a taskforce with five members from each group to resolve their differences, the Himalayan Times newspaper reported Monday.

US to share extra 20mn Covid vax

Washington: President Joe Biden said Monday that the United States is surging exports of Covid vaccines to other countries to reclaim "American leadership" in the global fight against the pandemic, dismissing rival efforts by China and Russia. The boost follows pressure on the Biden administration from other governments to use its large vaccine surplus to help struggling countries, now that significant progress has been made in rolling out vaccinations at home.

SC terms Chinese bill inconsistent

Colombo: Sri Lanka's Supreme Court has declared that certain provisions of the Chinese port city bill, which is opposed by the Opposition, are inconsistent with the Constitution, the country's Parliament here was told Tuesday. The Supreme Court in April had heard some 18 petitions filed against the bill by the Opposition parties and civil society groups who had sought a national referendum and the passage of it in Parliament by two-thirds majority.

Labour crunch

Singapore: Singapore is witnessing manpower shortages due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions in the country and it has not been able to "adequately replace" migrant workers who have left the island nation over the last year, the government said Tuesday. Singapore depends on migrant workers from India, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and the Philippines. According to the Ministry of Manpower website, as of December 2020, there were 1.23 million migrant workers in Singapore, down from 1.43 million a year before.

Biden admin approves \$735mn arms sale to Israel



Congress was officially notified of the proposed sale May 5, nearly a week before the conflict escalated between the Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, May 18: US President Joe Biden's administration has approved a \$735 million sale of precision-guided weapons to Israel, according to media reports.

Citing sources familiar with the matter, The Washington Post said Tuesday that Congress was officially notified of the proposed sale May 5, nearly a week before the conflict escalated between the Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza, reports Xinhua news agency.

The proposed sale includes the joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) and GBU-39 small diameter bombs, according to The Washington Post.

In a separate report, The Hill news website said that the window for Congress to block the sale is all but closed.

Turkish President condemns decision

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned his US counterpart Joe Biden for approval of arms sales to Israel. The US President was "writing history with bloody hands in this incident where Gaza was attacked disproportionately," Erdogan said at a press conference elaborating on recent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. "You have forced us to say this. We can't stay silent on this anymore," he added. "Palestinian lands are being washed with blood and cruelty. You are also supporting this," Erdogan noted.

Some Democrats raised concerns about the sales as shelling and airstrikes continued in Gaza, causing more than 200 civilian casualties on both sides.

"While I have supported security assistance to Israel, including by funding the Iron Dome defense system, I have serious concerns about the timing of this weapons sale," House Democrat Joaquin Castro said in a statement.

"The message it will send to Israel and the world about the urgency of a ceasefire, and the open questions about the legality of Israel's military strikes that have killed civilians in Gaza," he added.

The call came as the Biden's administration faced mounting pressure from a group of Democratic senators urging an immediate ceasefire to prevent loss of civilian life.

PRIDE PROTEST



Members of the LGBTQ+ community embrace as they participate in a protest to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia in San Salvador, El Salvador

WHO reminds SII of its COVAX commitments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, May 18: WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that once the devastating Covid-19 outbreak in India recedes, the Serum Institute of India will need to "get back on track and catch up" on its delivery commitments to COVAX, the global initiative to supply coronavirus vaccines to nations around the world.

During a daily virtual press briefing Monday, the World Health Organisation Director-General said that the surge in Covid-19 cases around the world has compromised the global vaccine supply and there is already a shortfall of 190 million doses to COVAX by the end of June.

COVAX, "the global Covid vaccine



severe reduction in vaccines available to COVAX."

As per the pact which included funding to support manufacturing increase, the SII is contracted to provide COVAX with the SII-licensed and manufactured AstraZeneca (AZ)-Oxford vaccine to 64 lower-income economies participating in the Gavi COVAX AMC (including India), alongside its commitments to the Government of India, the WHO had said.

Last year, it was announced that the collaboration among SII, Gavi and the Gates Foundation would accelerate manufacturing and delivery of up to an additional 100 million doses of future vaccines for low and middle-income countries in 2021.

'Ocean Dialogues 2021' to focus on climate, food, nature

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Geneva, May 18: A resilient and abundant ocean is essential to tackle climate change and key to providing sustainable food and jobs that could boost recovery around the world.

Half of the world's GDP is dependent on nature, according to the World Economic Forum, and more than three billion people rely on the ocean for their livelihoods.

As countries recover from the economic and social impacts of Covid-19, the ocean can be a major part of the solution.

To fast-track the innovations necessary for a healthy ocean,



Friends of Ocean Action and the World Economic Forum are convening the second Virtual Ocean Dialogues event. A healthy ocean is increasingly being seen as a solution to the many development

challenges the society is facing. "It has never been more critical to fast-track solutions for a resilient and thriving ocean. A range of

major global summits and forums in the coming months offer a moment to acknowledge the ocean's transformative role in tackling climate change, supporting global food systems and rebuilding the health of the natural world," said Kristian Teleki, Director of Friends of Ocean Action at the World Economic Forum. "I invite anyone with an interest in our shared future on this blue planet to tune into the live streamed sessions and join the conversation," Teleki added.

A new UpLink Ocean Challenge will be launched to seek new ideas to boost sustainable food from aquatic sources. "Following the outstanding success of last year's

event, the virtual Ocean Dialogues have become a key waymarker in global efforts to secure the ocean's health," said Ambassador Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, and Co-Chair of Friends of Ocean Action.

Friends of Ocean Action is a coalition of 65 ocean leaders who are fast-tracking solutions to the most pressing challenges facing the ocean.

Its members come from diverse backgrounds like business, civil society, international organisations, science and technology. The World Economic Forum in collaboration with the World Resources Institute hosts it.

business

of the day quote

The strategic partnership with LTI will help us strengthen Hoist's positioning as a leader in this segment with digital-first strategies

KLAUS-ANDERS NYSTEN | CEO, HOIST FINANCE

The government should move quickly to ramp up the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine in the country by enhancing domestic production as well as increasing procurement from abroad

SANGITA REDDY | APOLLO HOSPITALS JOINT MD

Indian equities are likely to outperform their emerging market (EM) peers in 2021

RIDHAM DESAI | HEAD, INDIA RESEARCH, MORGAN STANLEY

SHORT TAKES

Credit Suisse to hire over 1,000 IT staff

Zürich: Credit Suisse Group said it planned to hire over 1,000 IT employees in India this year to show its commitment to the country and its intention to establish it as a global technology innovation center for the bank. The hires will comprise of developers and engineers with capabilities in emerging technologies such as cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud, API development, machine learning and artificial intelligence to support the bank's digital aspirations, the Swiss bank said in a statement Tuesday.

M&M joins 'The Valuable 500'

Mumbai: Domestic conglomerate Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has joined 'The Valuable 500' - a B2B initiative catalysing the influence of large private sector corporations - to collectively tackle disability inclusion in business, a release said Tuesday. Mahindra group's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Anish Shah is among 13 global CEOs who will be spearheading the programmes and services to be offered under Phase 2 of the campaign, it said.

PayU India merges with Zoho Books

New Delhi: Leading online payment solutions provider PayU Tuesday announced integration with Zoho Books, the GST-compliant accounting solution from tech company Zoho. The move will help deliver a seamless payment experience to merchants and increase business efficiencies, PayU said, adding that its technology and solutions will allow merchants to reconcile payments within Zoho Books and access a full-scale payment infrastructure.

IBM to acquire Salesforce's Waeg

New York: IBM said Tuesday it would buy Waeg, a consulting partner for Salesforce, in a deal that will extend its range of services and support its hybrid cloud and artificial intelligence strategy. The deal to acquire Waeg, which is based in Brussels and serves clients across Europe, complements IBM's acquisition in January of 7Summits, a US consultancy that specialises in Salesforce's customer management software. "Waeg's strength in Salesforce consulting services will be key to creating intelligent workflows that allow our clients to keep pace with changing customer and employee needs and expectations," Mark Foster, senior vice president of IBM Services and Global Business Services, said.



India's economy will do well once vaccination reaches a critical mass as pent up demand, global recovery and easy financial conditions will boost activities

ASHIMA GOYAL | RBI'S MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBER

HK DISNEYLAND POSTS \$348MN NET LOSS

The Hong Kong Disneyland Resort has reported a net loss of HK\$2.7 billion (\$348 million) in the fiscal year 2020 as its theme park was closed for nearly 60 per cent of the year due to the Covid-19 pandemic



JOBLESSNESS RATE NEAR 1-YEAR HIGH

UNEMPLOYMENT UP IN RURAL AREAS; VIRUS THREAT HITS DEMAND FOR MGNREGS WORK

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: According to data released by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), rural joblessness doubled to 14.34% in the week ended May 16 from 7.29% in the previous week. Urban unemployment rate went up to 14.71% in the latest week under review from 11.72% in the week earlier.

CMIE's MD and CEO Mahesh Vyas said that the rapid rise in unemployment rate in villages indeed reflected the spread of Covid-19 in rural areas.

The lockdown has had an immediate, telling effect on the employment scenario in the country. India's unemployment rate, that has remained elevated for a few weeks, soared to a near one-year-high of 14.45% in the week ended May 16. While an already-high urban joblessness has turned more acute, a near 100% week-on-week rise in rural unemployment pushed the overall joblessness rate to a level not witnessed since the week



ended June 7 last year, when it stood at 17.51%.

According to data released by CMIE, rural joblessness doubled to 14.34% in the week ended May 16 from 7.29% in the previous week. Urban unemployment rate went up to 14.71% in the latest week under review from 11.72% in the week earlier. According to the RBI bulletin, corporate performance, meanwhile, is positioning itself for a turn in the business cycle. CMIE's MD and CEO Mahesh

Vyas told FE that the rapid rise in unemployment rate in villages indeed reflected the spread of Covid-19 in rural areas.

While the increase in the overall unemployment rate shows the economy's increasing inability to generate jobs, the data of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) indicate a sizeable section of people opting not to take up the jobs offered in the wake of the Covid-19 threat.

According to the MGNREGA

India's unemployment rate, that has remained elevated for a few weeks, soared to a near one-year-high of 14.45% in the week ended May 16

According to data released by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, rural joblessness doubled to 14.34% in the week ended May 16 from 7.29% in the previous week

The net number of jobs lost after the pandemic stood at about 5.5 million in March 2021, compared with the number in 2019-20, while the number of salaried jobs lost was a staggering 10 million

not turning up at the work sits despite being given work or they are not aware of the fact that muster rolls have been issued to them," said Debmalaya Nandy, member, NREGS Sangarsh Morcha.

XLRI professor and labour market expert KR Shyam Sundar said the Covid penetration into rural areas has caused an increased fear of the risk of infection. The supply-side constraint is primarily due to inadequate and unpredictable replenishment of funds from the central level to the local level, he said.

According to the CMIE data, India's unemployment rate reached its zenith at 27.11% for the week ended May 3, 2020, in the midst of countrywide lockdown last year. However, it started coming down to stand at 4.66% for the week ended January 17, 2021, but has since been picking up gradually.

While the net number of jobs lost after the pandemic stood at about 5.5 million in March 2021, compared with the number in 2019-20, the number of salaried jobs lost was a staggering 10 million.

Data centre sector needs \$3.7bn investment over 3 years: JLL

THE INDIAN DATA CENTRE INDUSTRY IS EXPECTED TO ADD 560 MW CAPACITY DURING THE 2021-23 PERIOD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: An investment of \$3.7 billion (about ₹27,000 crore) will be required over the next three years to develop six million sq ft space for the data centre sector, according to a report by JLL India.

The Indian data centre industry is expected to add 560 MW capacity during the 2021-23 period, the property consultant said.

"India's data centre sector will require an investment of USD 3.7 billion over the next three years in order to fulfil the 6 million sq ft greenfield development opportunity for the industry," JLL India said in a statement.

The data centre industry is expected to grow exponentially to reach 1,007 MW by 2023 from its existing capacity of 447 MW.

"India's colocation data centre industry witnessed the unprecedented absorption of 102 MW during 2020, notching higher absorption than most key markets of Europe and America," said Rachit



Mohan, Head, Data Center Advisory (India), JLL. Mohan expects increased demand for colocation space, driven by rising cloud adoption, increasing digitalisation and progressive legislation.

"Rising demand led data centre operators and developers to pursue ambitious expansion plans, while some adopted the acquisition route to enter Indian markets, which we expect to continue," he said.

Colocation capacity grew by

around 28 per cent to reach 447 MW in 2020 from 350 MW in 2019.

The consultant said the demand is likely to ramp up further due to the imminent 5G rollout, IoT-linked devices, data localisation and cloud adoption.

Mumbai and Chennai are expected to drive 73 per cent of the sector's total capacity addition during 2021-23, while other cities like Hyderabad and Delhi NCR emerging as new hotspots, JLL said.

Two EV charging stations installed in Twin City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Tata Motors and Tata Power inaugurated two high-speed CCS2 EV charging stations, one each at TML Dion Automotives, Samantarapur in the City and TML Gugnani Autocars, Pratap Nagari in Cuttack.

With this the company has become the largest operator of charging network of four chargers in Odisha located on major routes.

The high-speed EV charger is equipped to charge the Nexon EV from 0-80% in just an hour. Accessible via the Tata Power EZ Charge, an app designed to offer seamless user interface, Nexon EV users can now easily find, pay for and use the charging station when

away from home. This application will also allow the user to monitor their charge status and get notified when they are ready to go.

Head (Electric Vehicle Business Unit) of Tata Motors Ramesh Dorairajan, said, "The availability of the charging station will not only enhance the convenience factor for those who are away from home, but will also actively contribute in addressing barriers to the EV adoption."

Head (EV, HA & ESCO Business) of Tata Power Sandeep Bangia said, "Currently, over 4,000 Tata Nexon EV owners can access over 456 charging points installed in 92 cities across India. In Odisha, we have installed 4 charging points. The CCS2 charging station is installed in Bhubaneswar and in Cuttack."



TOP GAINERS	TOP LOSERS
M&M 5.91	Bharti Airtel-2.41
Bajaj Auto 5.17	ITC -1.18
Titan 4.89	Dr Reddys -0.80
Bajaj Fin 4.84	SBI -0.27
HDFC Bank 2.57	HUL -0.09



TOP GAINERS	TOP LOSERS
M&M 5.77	Bharti Airtel-2.23
Bajaj Auto 5.19	ITC -1.13
Titan 4.95	Coal India -0.91
Bajaj Fin 4.53	Dr Reddys -0.62
Adani Ports 3.42	Divis Lab -0.33

Fuel sales plummet in Odisha during lockdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Fuel sales in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack have been significantly affected due to the Covid-induced lockdown from May 5.

Officials of the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) said, "Since the lockdown and shutdown were imposed, we saw fuel sale drop in the twin cities. During the period between May 5 and May 18, 2021, sale of petrol plummeted by 40%, while diesel sales decreased by 30%."

According to the OMCs, on an average they now sell about 250 kiloliters of petrol and 380 kilolitres of

diesel per day in the twin cities. In April, the oil industry witnessed 45% and 30% decline in sales of petrol and diesel respectively.

On the other hand, Utkal Petroleum Dealers' Association said that the consumption of petrol and diesel was low in April too in the state. General secretary Sanjay Lath said, "In April, petrol consumption was 4,77,358 kiloliters and 10,65,097 kiloliters of diesel were consumed in Odisha. According to us, fuel sales may have dropped 40 per cent in May."

Earlier, the association had claimed that they faced huge losses in April 2020 due to continuous



lockdown. Previous reports stated that the petrol sales dropped by 85 per cent and diesel sales went down by 80 per cent in April 2020. Drop in petrol sales caused the industry to lose ₹15.51 crore per day, the loss

due to drop in diesel sales was ₹1162.2 crore in April 2020. Overall, the dealers faced losses to the tune of ₹1,627.5 crore in April 2020 due to low consumption of petrol and diesel.

AT&T, Discovery deal highlights media's thirst to be like Netflix

SINCE AT&T BOUGHT TIME WARNER IN 2018 TO COMPETE WITH NETFLIX AND DISNEY, THE WORLD OF STREAMING VIDEO HAS ONLY GOTTEN MORE CUTTHROAT

REUTERS

New York, May 18: Since AT&T bought Time Warner in 2018 to compete with Netflix and Disney, the world of streaming video has only gotten more cutthroat.

The telecom giant's deal with Discovery Inc, announced Monday, marks the latest shift in the re-making of the media industry and the potential beginning of another round of consolidation. An earlier wave three years ago resulted in media mogul Rupert Murdoch leaving Hollywood and Viacom and CBS recombining.

The deal combining Discovery with AT&T Inc's WarnerMedia underscores the value of scale in today's media landscape, where industry leaders Netflix Inc and Walt Disney Co are looking out-

side the United States for growth. Discovery brings a global footprint with its pan-European television sports network Eurosport, as well as a portfolio of broadcast channels across Europe.

"The opportunities in direct-to-consumer streaming are rapidly evolving, and to keep pace and retain a leadership position several things are required: global scale, access to capital, a broad array of high-quality content and industry-best talent," said AT&T Chief Executive John Stankey during a press call Monday morning.

The new company, with a name announced by next week, will have over 200,000 hours of programming and include 100 brands - from HBO to Animal Planet to CNN and the Food Network. It will include streaming services



The AT&T logo is seen on a monitor on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange

such as HBO Max and Discovery+, which are growing, but still significantly smaller than Netflix and Disney+.

HBO and HBO Max have 63.9

million global subscribers. Discovery has 15 million global streaming subscribers, most of them for Discovery+.

That compares to 103.6 million for Disney+

and 207.6 million for Netflix. ViacomCBS Inc and Comcast Corp could be feeling pressure to consider bulking up, analysts said Monday, as the landscape is set to change once again.

Rich Greenfield, a partner and analyst at LightShed Partners, said in a note on Monday that ViacomCBS was the only obvious potential partner for Comcast, but its CBS network and local news stations "are clear regulatory problems."

DEAL FRENZY

Discovery's global footprint will help WarnerMedia's international expansion once the deal closes in mid-2022. HBO Max is scheduled to launch in June in 30 territories across Latin America and the Caribbean, and to roll out in another 21 markets across Europe in the second half of the year.

WarnerMedia has a number of US TV distribution rights, including deals with Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, the National Hockey League and the NCAA through Turner Sports. Discovery has broadcast rights in Europe for the Olympic Games through 2024, among others.

At EDHEC, our ambition is to give the keys to success, in the business world, to future generations of managers and entrepreneurs. And you, what will be your impact?

The other opportunity is in news, Zaslav said, where Discovery has recently invested in GB News, a conservative-leaning channel in the United Kingdom. Zaslav said the company intends to be long-term owners of CNN and teased further global expansion, mentioning Discovery's news business in Poland.

GHOST OF BALL-TAMPING: BANCROFT BACKTRACKS, OTHER AUSSIE BOWLERS CALL FOR END TO INNUENDO

Sandpapergate backlash still on



Cameron Bancroft speaks to on-field umpires during the Test against South Africa in 2018 as then skipper Steve Smith looks on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, May 18: Cameron Bancroft backtracked after dropping hints of other bowlers' involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal while the men in question, including top pacer Pat Cummins, claimed innocence and pleaded for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo" surrounding the incident that tarred Australia's cricketing reputation.

Bancroft kicked up a storm recently when he stated that it was "pretty self explanatory" when asked whether other bowlers in the team knew of the plan to use sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa in 2018.

A Sydney Morning Herald report, quoting sources familiar with the situation, stated Tuesday that Bancroft had no fresh information to give to Cricket Australia's integrity unit, which contacted him. CA had offered a reinvestigation after Bancroft's interview.

The men who were caught in

the storm triggered by his statement were Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the series. They issued a joint statement to deny any knowledge of the illegal plot.

"Bancroft, who is playing county cricket in the UK, had responded overnight Monday in a conciliatory manner and indicated that he did not have significant new information to share with CA," the 'Sydney Morning Herald' report stated. "Bancroft is said to have told CA he is supportive of the investigation and satisfied with the outcome," it added.

The Australian bowling attack in the Cape Town Test also comprised all-rounder Mitchell Marsh. According to the report, Bancroft also reached out to the affected bowlers in order to explain his recent comments.

"Bancroft had claimed he was left flustered by the unexpected line of questioning and that there was no malice behind his remarks." The joint statement issued by

Cummins, Starc, Hazlewood and Lyon sought closure. "We pride ourselves on our honesty. So it's been disappointing to see that our integrity has been questioned by some journalists and past players in recent days in regard to the Cape Town Test of 2018," the statement read.

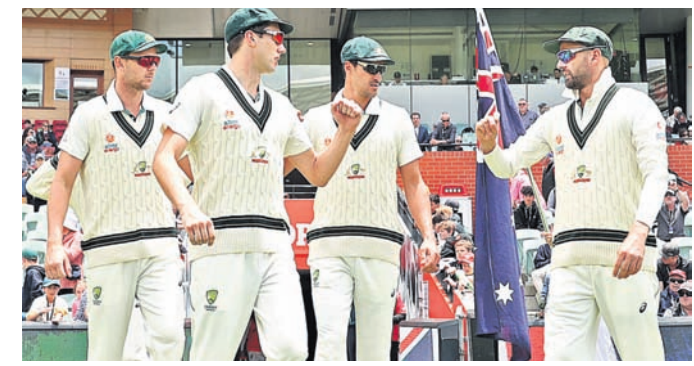
"We feel compelled to put the key facts on the record again: We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands."

The four bowlers said they learned valuable lessons and it is time to move on from the issue. "None of these excuses what happened on the field that day at Newlands. It was wrong and it should never have happened.

"We've all learned valuable lessons and we'd like to think the public can see a change for the better in terms of the way we play, the way we behave and respect the game. We respectfully request an end to the rumour-mongering and innuendo. It has gone on too long and it is time to move on."

The 28-year-old Bancroft was caught on camera using sandpaper on the ball in the third Test against South Africa in 2018.

Bancroft, then skipper Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were eventually banned for their roles in the scandal which led to a review of Australia's win-at-all-cost team culture. While Bancroft was handed a nine-month ban, Smith and Warner were suspended for a year each. Head coach Darren Lehmann also resigned in the aftermath of the scandal.



Australian bowlers (from L) Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon denied any wrongdoing from their parts

BCCI paying for Aussie players' quarantine: CA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, May 18: The BCCI is footing the bill for the 14-day quarantine of Australian IPL players, who have arrived here from Maldives, Cricket Australia interim CEO Nick Hockley said Tuesday.

Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including top players such as Pat Cummins and Steve Smith, officials and commentators, landed at the Sydney airport on Monday after a forced stop-over at Maldives.

The players had to spend 10 days in Maldives due to a ban imposed by the Australian government on travellers from COVID-ravaged

India till May 15.

Hockley said the BCCI has kept its promise and funded the whole operation. "Yes," Hockley told 'Sydney Morning Herald' when asked if BCCI was paying for the mandatory quarantine.

"BCCI at the outset committed to ensuring that they got home safely and as quickly as possible. We've been working closely with them. They've been fantastic. They've delivered on that promise."

The IPL was indefinitely suspended May 4 after four players and two coaches from four different teams tested positive for COVID-19 inside its bio-bubble.



NICK HOCKLEY

The Australian players, however, couldn't head home immediately as their country had imposed a travel ban from India, which is battling a deadly second wave of the coronavirus.

The BCCI had then assured the

players that it will do everything possible to ensure their safe return home. "Obviously our thoughts are with all of our friends in India. Then we've been working with the government, within the existing frameworks to make sure that they get home as quickly as possible," Hockley said.

"I know the players, having texted a few of them, are extremely appreciative of the BCCI and we're really pleased that they're home safely."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had earlier said that the players who competed in the IPL will have to make their "own arrangements".

Faf walks down memory lane

FORMER PROTEAS SKIPPER 'RECEIVED DEATH THREATS AFTER THEIR 2011 WORLD CUP EXIT'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Former South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis has revealed that he and his wife received death threats after a mix-up with AB de Villiers led to the latter's run out during their 2011 World Cup semifinal defeat to New Zealand.

Played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Dhaka, South Africa lost the match by 49 runs to be knocked out of the tournament, which was won by co-hosts India.

"I received death threats after that (match). My wife received death threats. We turned on social media and we were blown away. It became very personal. There were some very offensive things said that I won't repeat." Du Plessis was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo'.

"It makes you introverted towards people and you put a shield up. All players go through this and it forces us to keep our circles very small. It's why I've worked so hard on creating a safe space within our camp," he added.

Led by Daniel Vettori, New Zealand had batted first and posted 221 for eight in 50 overs. In reply, the Proteas were bowled out for 172 with Du Plessis, playing in only



Umpire tries to control the situation as Faf du Plessis (L) involves in a verbal duel with New Zealand players after the incident involving Kyle Mills (not in pic) during their 2011 World Cup quarterfinal

his 10th ODI, making 36.

Also, Du Plessis was slapped with a fine of 50 per cent of his match fee for pushing Kyle Mills, who was New Zealand's 12th man in the game.

The right-handed batsman has since played 143 ODIs, 69 Tests and 50 T20Is. Du Plessis recently

returned home after representing Chennai Super Kings in the now-suspended Indian Premier League 2021.

He was in great form with the bat as he scored 320 runs from seven games before the tournament was indefinitely suspended owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SAHA TO BE AVAILABLE FOR ENGLAND TOUR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha has recovered from COVID-19 and will be available for India's tour of England next month.

Saha has reached his home in Kolkata after completing over a fortnight-long quarantine at a Delhi hotel. He was picked for the England-bound squad subject to fitness.

The 36-year-old was among the players who contracted the dreaded virus in the currently-suspended Indian Premier league while playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"Wriddhiman is back home yesterday after two and half weeks of hotel quarantine in Delhi," a source close to the player told this agency.

Saha will have to return another negative RT-PCR test before joining the pre-departure bio-bubble in Mumbai, where the squad will undergo hard quarantine before boarding the flight to England.

India are scheduled to take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final from June 18 in Southampton. The five-Test series against England is to be held in August. Just four days back, Saha had received conflicting results in two tests, which prolonged his isolation.

Int'l cricket door closed for De Villiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Johannesburg, May 18: Cricket South Africa (CSA) Tuesday announced that AB de Villiers won't be coming out of international retirement ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup in India, saying that he has decided "once and for all" to not change his mind.

Putting to rest speculations around his comeback, CSA said that "discussions with AB de Villiers have concluded with the batsman deciding once and for all, that his retirement will remain final."

The statement was reportedly made after CSA announced the team for upcoming tour of the West Indies, though it focussed largely on the squads for the two Test matches and five T20Is in the Caribbean islands rather than De Villiers' retirement.

In May 2018, De Villiers had announced his retirement from international cricket. He played 114

Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is before announcing the surprise decision.

However, last month the 37-year-old versatile cricketer said it would be "fantastic" to make an international comeback ahead of the T20 World Cup.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October-November. "If I can slot in, it will be fantastic," de Villiers had said after he playing match-winning innings for his franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore in the now-suspended IPL in April.

Speaking to the reporters in Chennai, De Villiers had then said he will have a chat with South Africa head coach Mark Boucher at the end of IPL 2021 while assessing his form and fitness after RCB's campaign in the 14th season of the T20 tournament. One of South Africa's greatest cricketers, De Villiers looked in great form in the Indian Premier League until it was indefinitely suspended due



to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Talk of a comeback has constantly surrounded De Villiers since his sudden retirement three years ago, including coming close to a last-minute inclusion in South Africa's squad for the 2019 World Cup before the selectors and the team management thought otherwise.

West Indies will be South Africa's first bilateral tour to the Caribbean since 2010, followed by a tri-series in 2016 that also featured Australia.

This tour, which had to be rescheduled from 2020, will include two Tests and five T20I from June 10 to July 3. In St. Lucia and Grenada respectively.

Williamson excited to play vs India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 18: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is excited to face India in the World Test Championships (WTC) final next month as he considers showdowns against Virat Kohli's men to be a "fantastic challenge".

India and New Zealand square-off in the final of the inaugural World Test Championships in Southampton from June 18. "When we play against India, it has always been a fantastic challenge and so it is really exciting to be playing against them," Williamson said in a video posted by the ICC on its Twitter handle.

"It's really exciting to be involved in the final, obviously to win it would be that much better," said the 30-year-old considered one of the best current batsmen in the world.

Talking about championship and how it progressed, Williamson said, "We saw the contests in the WTC has brought real excitement. The games were really tight such as in the India-Australia series and our series against Pakistan as well where you had to really fight hard



to get the results, which is really great."

New Zealand pacer Neil Wagner admitted India possess fast bowlers who can exploit the English conditions but said the wickets can change anytime and become flat also.

"India has a lot of quality fast bowlers who have done well in different conditions, they can swing (the ball) under overcast conditions but when the sun comes out it (wicket) is flat and nothing happens.

"(English) conditions can change throughout and so I am not getting carried away too much, trying to control the controllables."

India batsman Hanuma Vihari, who is in England for a county



stint with Warwickshire, said it would be a great feeling to play for his country in the WTC final.

"I am excited but I would want to be in that moment and not to get too much carried away by the importance of the situation," he said.

"But as a sportsman, to play for India in the final of inaugural World Test Championships is al-

ways a great feeling," said the 27-year-old batsman who is currently playing county cricket in England.

The majority of the Kiwi players have reached the UK as they play a two-match series against England starting June 2 before the WTC final. The Indians are expected to reach here in the first week of June after a hard quarantine in Mumbai.

'Good coordination is one of key factors for India's success'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 18: Defender Gurinder Singh has attributed the Indian men's hockey team's success on recent tours to good coordination among the players.

India remained unbeaten during their tour of Europe in March where they played the likes of Germany and Belgium and then registered only one loss in Argentina in April.

Gurinder said coordination among players is one aspect that the team has always worked, and it paid dividends in the matches against the top sides.

"One of the things that we have always focused on is good coordination on the field. Skill is important, but if there is no coordination between players then the skill of players will not be utilized properly," Gurinder was quoted as saying in a Hockey India release.

"We coordinated very well during our tours of Europe and Argentina. We didn't hesitate while passing the ball as the players were moving well on the pitch. This is



GURINDER SINGH

a very good sign for us and the coordination we had definitely helped us achieve good results in our matches this year," he added.

The 26-year-old, who has played 58 matches for the national side, feels the team needs to build on its good performance, adding that the side is now focussed on fine-tuning a few techniques ahead of the all-important Tokyo Olympics.

"Doing well against Germany, Great Britain and Argentina has given us a lot of confidence, but we have to build on our performances and become fully prepared

for the challenge at the Olympics later this year."

"All of us are confident about our games ahead of the Olympics. However, there is always room for improvement and therefore we are fine-tuning a few aspects of our games at the moment."

Gurinder feels the team has a good balance of youth and experience. "We have a fantastic balance between youth and experience in our side. I feel very fortunate to have senior players such as Harmanpreet Singh and Surender Kumar in our team."