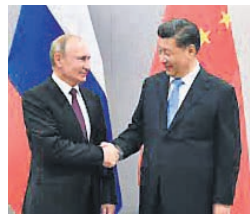




AMYRA UNPERTURBED

Actor Amyra Dastur says she has reached a point in her career where failure hardly matters

LEISURE P2



PUTIN-XI HAILS PACT

Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin hail the nuclear cooperation between Russia and China during a meeting

INTERNATIONAL P10



BENZEMA RECALLED

Karim Benzema finds his name in the French squad for the first time since 2015 for the upcoming Euro 2021

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Let's build a river front so majestic that nobody can see anything floating in the river!

SHORT TAKES

2 farmers die at Singhu border

Sonipat (Haryana): Two farmers from Punjab, who were part of the group protesting against the new farm laws, passed away with one of them found Covid-19 positive, officials said Wednesday. The two farmers - Baibir Singh (50) and Mahender Singh (70) are residents of Patiala and Ludhiana respectively. Both died Tuesday. They were part of the group protesting at the Singhu border.

Covid-19 patient gangraped, dies

Patna: A 45-year-old Covid-19 infected woman, who was allegedly gangraped by three employees of a private hospital, died here Wednesday. Her daughter alleged that her mother was sexually assaulted May 16, a day after her admission.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE	PERCENTAGE
SENSEX	49902.64	↓ 290.69	-0.58%
NIFTY	15030.20	↓ 77.90	-0.52%
DOLLAR	73.63	↑ ₹0.08	+0.11%
EURO	89.35	↑ ₹0.03	+0.03%
GOLD	₹48,703	↑ ₹396	+0.81%
SILVER	₹72,558	↓ ₹638	-0.88%

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	39.0°C	38.2°C
TEMP. MIN	28.5°C	27.0°C
Humidity	65%	66%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

'Yaas' threat looms large

PROSPECTIVE SUPER CYCLONE EXPECTED TO HIT COASTAL PARTS OF ODISHA, MAY 26

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, May 19: 'Cyclone Yaas' is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal around May 25, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday. Then it is likely to move north-westwards and reach West Bengal and adjoining Odisha coasts May 26 evening. There are enough indications that by the time 'Yaas' reaches Odisha it will take the shape of a severe cyclonic storm. The storm is likely to make landfall anytime May 26-27.

"A low pressure area is very likely to form over north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal around May 22. It is very likely to intensify gradually into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 72 hours. It is very likely to move north-westwards and reach West Bengal, Odisha coasts around May 26 evening," the 'Cyclone Warning Division' of the IMD said.

The IMD added that the southwest monsoon is very likely to advance over south Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal around May 21 in association with the likely strengthening and deepening of south-westerly winds over the region. Other atmospheric and oceanic conditions will help in formation of a low pressure area over north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-



central Bay of Bengal around May 22, the IMD stated.

Local experts in Bhubaneswar opined that there is a possibility of 'Yaas' making a landfall in Odisha even though the IMD is yet to predict its path.

Former director of Bhubaneswar Met Centre, Sarat Sahu said, "As per early indications of various weather models, the cyclone will take shape by May 25. It is likely to make landfall either May 26 evening or May 27 morning." However, the picture will be clear by May 23, once the low pressure takes shape, informed Sahu.

"The cyclonic storm would have low to medium intensity (with wind speeds between 100 to 125 kmph) and make landfall between north Odisha, West Bengal and Bangladesh," Sahu predicted. "It may hit the coastal districts of Bhadrak, Balasore, Kendrapara, Jajpur and Mayurbhanj," he added. Another weather expert Surendra Pasupalak said he is confident that the cyclone will move in north-west direction and is likely to make a landfall at the Sundarbans in West Bengal. He however, also did not rule out a landfall in Odisha.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC)

TAUKTAE TOLL CLIMBS TO 46

AHMEDABAD: A total of 46 people have been killed due to Cyclone Tauktae across 12 districts of Gujarat, officials said Wednesday. Saurashtra region's Amreli district had the highest toll with 15 deaths due to the severe cyclonic storm which completed landfall around 1.30am Tuesday. Eight people each were killed in Bhavnagar and Gir Somnath coastal districts while five were killed here. Meanwhile 26 of the 75 people gone missing from the barge on the Arabian Sea have been confirmed as dead. The barge 'Papa-305' had 261 people on board when it sank due to the storm. So far 186 persons have been rescued, officials said.

PK Jena reviewed the situation with officials from IMD, NDRF, ODRAF and district administrations of coastal Odisha districts. "It is at a very pre-mature stage. No prediction has been made on the intensity, path, landfall and other status of the system. If at all the cyclone takes shape, it may reach Odisha and West Bengal coast around May 26 evening," Jena said.

The district collectors and SPs of coastal area have been asked to take all necessary advance precautions for the possible cyclone, Jena added.

BLACK-MARKETING OF O₂, ESSENTIAL DRUGS

OHRC seeks strict measures

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports highlighting black-marketing of oxygen and life-saving medicines during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) sought reports from the state Chief Secretary and Additional Chief Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare department in this regard.

The OHRC urged Wednesday the departments concerned to take appropriate measures to prevent black-marketing of oxygen and life-saving medicines. It also asked the DGP and IGP to ensure stringent actions

against those indulging in such unethical practices.

The commission urged the Chief Secretary to ensure opening of temporary medical centres (TMCs) in rural areas at the earliest as the population has mostly been affected by the second wave of Covid-19.

The rights body asked the Odisha government to follow the advisory of the NHRC regarding 'disposal' of bodies of those succumbing to Covid-19.

The OHRC has sought a compliance report by June 22, 2021. The state's apex rights body however, also lauded Odisha government's decision of fixing the fares for ambulances as there had been many complaints.

Govt stops drive-in jabs

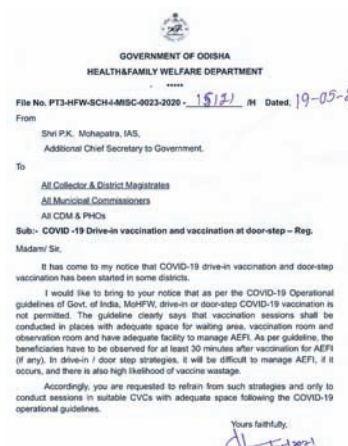
PROGRAMME NOT PERMITTED UNDER MOHFW OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: The Odisha government Wednesday directed concerned officials to stop conducting drive-in and door-step vaccination programmes. This was done as the activities are not permitted under operational guidelines. Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Health, PK Mohapatra wrote a letter to all collectors, municipal commissioners and chief district medical officers, in this regard.

"It has come to my notice that Covid-19 drive-in vaccination and door-step vaccination have started in some districts. I would like to bring to your notice that as per Covid-19 operational guidelines of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), drive-in or door-step Covid-19 vaccination is not permitted," Mohapatra said in his letter.

As per the guidelines, vaccination sessions should be conducted in places with space for waiting areas, vaccination and observation rooms. The centres also should have adequate facil-



ity to manage adverse events following immunisation (AEFI).

The ACS said it will be difficult to manage AEFI, if it occurs during the drive-in/door step vaccination. Moreover, there is also high likelihood of vaccine wastage. Therefore, Mohapatra urged the district and local administrations to refrain from such strategies.

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation

21 NEW FATALITIES

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha's Covid-19 tally surged Wednesday to 6,44,401 after 11,099 people tested positive, while 21 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 2,378, a Health department official said. The coastal state now has 1,05,375 active cases, and 5,36,595 patients have recovered from the disease, including 10,242 since Tuesday, he said. Of the fresh cases, 6,214 infections were detected in quarantine centres.

(BMC) first initiated the drive-in vaccination programme in a shopping mall parking complex here. Later, the number of such centres was increased to five in the city. Following BMC, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation also conducted such a programme. Few districts including Ganjam rolled out vaccination-on-wheels to provide the service at door-steps.

Questions on drive-in programme was criticised as the poor, who don't have a vehicle especially four-wheelers were deprived from the service.

RULES GO FOR A TOSS



Throwing caution to the winds and without proper social distancing, customers through a fish market at Nayapalli locality in the Capital City, Wednesday

Mixing of 2 Covid-19 vax highly effective: Study

AGENCIES

London, May 19: A Spanish study on mixing Covid-19 vaccines has found that giving a dose of Pfizer's drug to people who already received a first shot of AstraZeneca vaccine is highly safe and effective, preliminary results have shown. The 'Combivacs' study, has been run by Spain's state-backed 'Carlos III Health Institute'. It found that the presence of IgG antibodies in the bloodstream was between 30 and 40 times higher in people who got the follow-up Pfizer shot than in a control group who only received one AstraZeneca dose.

Meanwhile, the presence of neutralising antibodies rose sevenfold after a Pfizer dose, significantly more than the doubling effect observed after a second AstraZeneca shot.

Around 670 volunteers between the ages of 18-59 who had already received a first dose of AstraZeneca's vaccine participated in the study, with some 450 given a Pfizer dose. Just 1.7% of the participants reported severe side effects, which were limited to headaches, muscle pain and general



malaise, said Dr Magdalena Campins, one of the study's leaders. "These are not symptoms that can be considered serious," she said.

In a UK 'mix-and-match' study, first findings recently showed that people vaccinated with a shot of Pfizer's vaccine followed by a dose of

AstraZeneca's, or vice-versa, were more likely to report mild or moderate symptoms such as headaches or chills than if they received two of the same type. Data on immune responses are expected in the coming months.

Spain embarked on the study to determine how best to proceed after limiting AstraZeneca's shot to people aged over 60 years due to concerns about blood clotting in younger people. That restriction caused widespread uncertainty and meant some younger people who had already received a first dose have been excluded from getting a second.

"The results support the possibility of vaccinating patients who have received the first dose from AstraZeneca, but the decision is not up to the investigators of this study," said Jesus Antonio Frias, clinical director at 'Carlos III'. However, he also said that the mixing of the vaccines can certainly increase the efficacy rate. "We have been observing this tendency among those who have had a mixed dose of the vaccine," informed Frias. He however, refused to comment on the risk aspect in-

NEW INJECTION RULES

NEW DELHI: Vaccination for Covid-19 can be taken three months after recovery instead of the usual 45 days, the Centre said Wednesday. The second dose of the vaccine should also be delayed by three months for anyone contracting Covid after the first dose. The fresh rules are part of the recommendations by NEGVAC (the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19), which have been accepted by the Union Health Ministry.

involved while mixing the two different vaccine jabs.

The concept of mixing vaccines is nothing new, the researchers said. They also informed that in April another 1,050 participants were added to the study in the United Kingdom.

"If we can show that these vaccines can be used interchangeably in the same schedule, we will greatly increase the flexibility of vaccine delivery and also finds methods to contain the various strains," they said.

Docs allay fears over black fungus disease

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Allaying fears regarding the dreaded mucormycosis (black fungus), a top doctor said Wednesday that the government has adequate quantity of the 'Amphotericin B' injections for treating such patients. Dr Jayant Panda from the Department of Medicine at SCB Medical College and Hospital made the revelations at a government-sponsored health bulletin on COVID 19. He urged suspected patients to come early to hospitals for treatment of black fungus and talked about its symptoms.

"We have enough 'Amphotericin B' injections with us to treat patients infected with the disease. We are also giving 'Posaconazole' after discharge. It takes four to six weeks to treat it. In

some cases we may need surgery. If the treatment is started early, patients have nothing to worry about," said Dr Panda. The doctor also said that the disease is not a new one and had been seen in patients suffering from illness like diabetes.

Dr Paresh Nath Mohanty, a microbiologist who was also attending the event said that a certain category of people were more prone to the black fungus infection.

"Black fungus attacks humans who are on steroids during Covid-19 treatment. It exists in the environment. People who have strong immunity are unlikely to get affected by the disease. People who are on steroids, on cancer drugs or who are undertaking organ transplant or taking medicines for diabetes are susceptible to attack by the black fungus," informed Dr Mohanty.



BRITNEY SPEARS LIKES TO PLAY WITH HER HAIR

Singer Britney Spears loves to experiment with her hair, says her hairstylist Dimitris Giannetos. "I've been working with Britney for almost five years now, she likes to play with her hair colour and her hair length. I'm very honoured she trusts me for all her hair changes," adds Giannetos.

'BLACK PANTHER SEQUEL WILL CARRY ON BOSEMAN LEGACY'

Actress Angela Bassett feels *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* will do justice in honouring the memory of late actor Chadwick Boseman. Bassett, however, adds it will be a challenge matching the first *Black Panther* film of 2018 that starred Boseman as the titular superhero.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
You are enthusiastic about mixing with people today, and you will feel like combining business and leisure. You will be encouraged to take part in group activities as you have the ability to work and have fun at the same time. Ganesh says that as a matter of fact you may emerge wiser from others' ideas.

TAURUS
Ganesh finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. If you are one, the results you will achieve by the end of the day will far exceed the efforts you put in. This is mainly because your subordinates will be enthusiastic, compliant and cooperative.

GEMINI
Routine work bores you, and today you will go all out to break free from the shackles of boredom. The results, however, may not be as dramatic. You will have to depend on your children, if any, to rescue you from the tyranny of routine. Monetary gains can be expected either in the form of inheritance of ancestral property or as increment in your basic salary.

CANCER
You wish to display your social prestige and monetary clout in front of your relatives. But you have to pay a heavy price for that. Your past experience will teach you something, which will stand in good stead for future dealings.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Ganesh says you realise the importance of family matters today. You have great skills when it comes to negotiations, and you will use them in settling disputes amicably.

LIBRA
It's a full platter today, and you have to manage it all somehow. The day promises to be full of activities, especially those that involve writing letters and reviving old contacts. Expect a call to appear for an interview for a better job.

SCORPIO
Try to take a chill pill as you may be worried about petty issues today. Do not let them hinder your happiness and take a toll on your health. However, the day looks promising towards the end. Friends are just a phone call away, call them and set out for a destination unknown to destress and rejuvenate.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees a day full of promises. People in the creative field, especially artists are going to benefit more. Radio jockey and television anchors can make a note of this day in their diary, as it may serve as a memorable day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have projected yourself as a confused individual. You may have a tendency to remain in a double mind. But, today you'll come up with a very specific plan that will surprise many of the people around you. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve it, guides Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
Today, you're up against those who want to get back at you. But not for nothing are you the king! Ganesh says you needn't worry, as few can match your prowess. Amid all the hullabaloo, your spouse will be a supportive presence.

PISCES
Within adversity, lie the lessons of success; avoid having to resort to that philosophy by implementing your plans, if they are well thought out, in a phased manner. This will help you achieve your targets, says Ganesh.

Hitanshu excited about playing Lord Jagannath



Mumbai: Actor Hitanshu Jinsi, who plays Lord Vishnu in *Vighnaharta Ganesh*, is all set to also essay the role of the deity's avatar Lord Jagannath in the show. "As I play the role of Lord Vishnu in the show, I'm getting an opportunity to explore and act his incarnation as well. Now our show will focus on the track of Lord Jagannath and I'm really excited about it," says Hitanshu. He adds that playing a mythological role is actually helping him move towards spirituality. "I always wanted to visit the Jagannath temple and experience the famous Rath Yatra but couldn't make it happen either for some reason. But now when I am preparing myself for the role by reading and watching clippings on YouTube. I will surely visit the temple once things get normalised. Playing a mythological role is awakening spirituality inside me. I feel blessed and secured," he says. **IANS**

'Want to reprise Al Pacino's Tony Montana of Scarface'

Mumbai: Casting director-turned-actor Abhishek Banerjee would love to reprise Al Pacino's iconic character Tony Montana in Brian De Palma's 1983 classic *Scarface*. "I've been fascinated with Al Pacino all my life. Something like Tony Montana in *Scarface* - that's the kind of dream role I have for me. If I ever get to play something like that, I'm sure I'm going to kill it. The energy, the gruesomeness of such a character is always very exciting. It is very liberating and helps you vent your inner anger," Abhishek said. After working in theatre in Delhi, Abhishek arrived in Mumbai around 12 years ago with the dream of being an actor. He took up casting direction in order to support himself in the expensive city. Although he has been around for a while, life changed after he garnered critical appreciation for his performance in the 2018 horror comedy *Stree*. On the work front, Abhishek features in the latest Netflix anthology *Ajeb Daastaans*. The actor has his kitty full with upcoming projects like *Dostana 2*, *Rashmi Rocket*, *Bhediya*, *Aankh Micholi* and *Helmet*. **IANS**



Abhishek Banerjee

Tamannaah gushes over November Story

Mumbai: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia can't stop gushing about her upcoming web series *November Story*, a murder mystery that casts her as a young ethical hacker named Anuradha, who is trying to sell her father's house so she can pay for his Alzheimer's treatment. "When I first heard the narration of *November Story* from director Ram Subramanian, I could have never anticipated that the storyline was going to be so layered. I have never watched a crime thriller series that is so complex and intriguing at the same time, and one that engages audiences in every episode like an authentic whodunit," she says. "What commences as a plain Jane murder spirals into the unleashing of a series of hair-raising events interlaced with a multitude of characters and narratives that come to the fore, raising more and more questions while building mystery around the killer and motive," she promises.

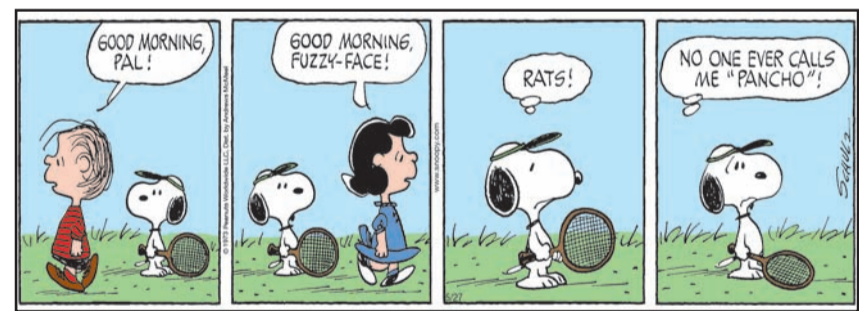
The seven-episode whodunit also features Pasupathy, GM Kumar, Aruldass and Vivek Prasanna among others, and releases May 20 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu on Disney+ Hotstar VIP. **IANS**

FAILURE DOESN'T AFFECT AMYRA

Mumbai: Actress Amyra Dastur says she has reached a point in her career where she is unaffected by a film not doing well. "I think I have had enough films not do well and do well, and realise that it is part and parcel of the job. One film works and one doesn't. I just laugh and get ready for the next film. As long as I get work, I am happy. The day I don't, that's the day I will be worried," she said. The actress adds that there is a lot more she has to achieve. "At the end of the day, I feel I still haven't reached that position where I wanted to be," she says. "I am proud of how far I have come without knowing anyone. It is about hard work and I believe you create your own luck. I am happy to see where my career is going. Hopefully, I will have a long career with different roles," she adds. **IANS**



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

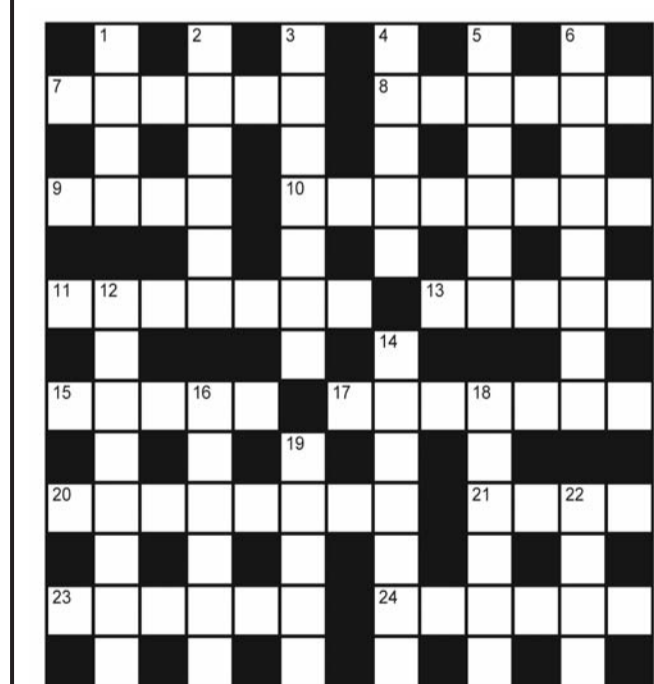


BREVITY



FUN post

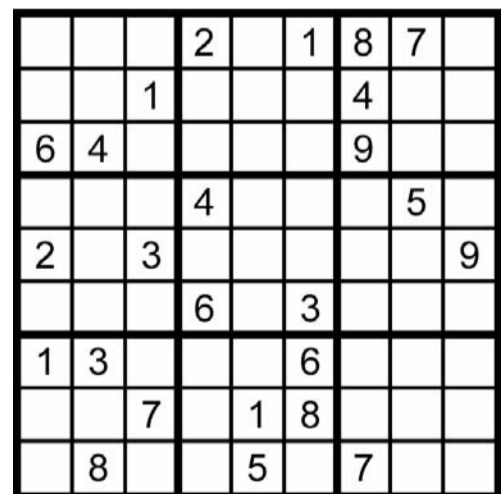
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Can cause problems on a computer
 - 8 Pugilism
 - 9 Radiate
 - 10 Chewed the fat
 - 11 Rabbit holes
 - 13 Runs into
 - 15 Musical composition
 - 17 Gauge
 - 20 They occur in the ocean
 - 21 Mascara site
 - 23 Gardener's tool
 - 24 Reveal
- Down**
- 1 Sob
 - 2 Spit
 - 3 Pirate
 - 4 Corpulent plus
 - 5 Kick the bucket
 - 6 Aardvark
 - 12 German freeway
 - 14 He gets rid of knots
 - 16 Kind of case
 - 18 Smitten (2,4)
 - 19 Confuse
 - 22 Cookbook direction

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.

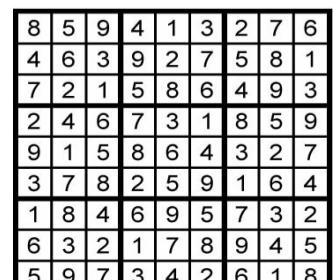


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

FS&CW dept afflicted with governance deficit: HC

POST NEWS NETWORK
New Delhi, May 19: Expressing concern over the sale of plastic bottled water across the state even after expiry date of its use, the Orissa High Court has observed that the department of Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW), vested with maintenance of food safety and standards in the state, seems to be afflicted with governance deficit. Asserting that the manufacturers and retailers have a tendency to tamper with the labelling by erasing the date of expiry and fix a fresh date, a bench of Justice S K Panigrahi held that the state government must activate its enforcement authorities and surveillance mechanism to conduct frequent raids on such manufacturing units and shops wherein such expired goods are sold to consumers.

"The department of consumer welfare, vested with the maintenance of food safety and standards that protects consumers from unsafe food through formulation of science-based standards and their enforcement through analysis of food and market surveillance, seems to be afflicted with governance deficit," the bench said. The bench held that there is rampant use of bottled water across the state even after the expiry day of its use. "It is quite rampant in Odisha and elsewhere,"

Doorstep sample collection from pregnant women

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 19: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday began collection of swab samples from expectant mothers in the City for Covid-19 test at their doorsteps. The teams with the civic authority Wednesday collected swab samples of four pregnant women for RT-PCR test who had earlier booked their appointment by calling on 1929 call centre. While the collection was done from two expectant mothers in South-East Zone, one each got themselves checked from South-West and North Zone. It can be mentioned that people can book their appointments by dialing 1929 between 8am and 11am to avail this facility. All zonal deputy municipal commissioners are instructed and deployed for monitoring and ensuring hassle-free collection of samples in their respective zones.

Brace for urban flooding during monsoon: H&UD

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 19: Ahead of the monsoon season, the state government Wednesday instructed district Collectors, municipal commissioners and executive officers of municipalities to prepare action plans for smooth management of flood and waterlogging in urban areas. Issuing a 10-point plan, the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department laid down an exhaustive set of measures to be taken up in an urgent manner. Laying emphasis on drainage clearance, the notification asked the urban local bodies (ULBs) to take up joint verification with respective drainage division of Water Resources department to ensure desilting and repair of all clogged drains. The government also instructed the ULBs to inspect all drains and manholes, and repair or replace drain covers to prevent accidents. "A full verification of all drains and potholes (both open and closed) to be made within the ULB limits. In case of closed drains or potholes, identification is to be made where the drain



PLASTIC HAZARD
The bench held that there is rampant use of plastic bottled water across the state even after the expiry day of its use
The court observed that some of the chemicals used in plastic manufacturing are strongly suspected to be disrupting hormonal balance
THE HC HELD THAT PLASTIC BOTTLES WHEN EXPOSED TO DIRECT SUNLIGHT HAVE THE PROPENSITY TO LEACH ITS CHEMICAL COMPONENTS INTO THE WATER

the bench said. The Orissa High Court observed that some of the chemicals used in plastic manufacturing are strongly suspected to be disrupting hormonal balance. The bench said that the World Health Organisation (WHO) also warned about the possible carcinogenic properties of endocrine disruptors which can increase the chances of breast cancer, infertility and heart diseases. The High Court held that plastic bottles when exposed to direct sunlight have the propensity to



NEED OF THE HOUR

Policemen penalise lockdown violators at Sundarpada vegetable market in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Raghunath's son dies of Covid-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bhubaneswar, May 19: Former Odisha cricket team captain Prashant Mohapatra succumbed to Covid-19 during treatment at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar Wednesday, hospital sources said.

Mohapatra, 47, breathed his last at about 7:51am despite all possible efforts by doctors, said AIIMS, Bhubaneswar superintendent Dr S N Mohanty. Prashant's father Raghunath Mohapatra, Rajya Sabha MP and Padma Vibhushan awardee, had also died of Covid-19 May 9.

Prashant was put in ventilator support after his condition worsened. A special team of doctors was monitoring his condition at the hospital. His brother Jasobant is also admitted at the same facility after he tested positive for the virus. Born September 1, 1973, Prashant, popularly known as Munna, was an opener and right-handed batsman. He made his debut in cricket as an under-19



player of the state and played against Tamil Nadu. Later, he debuted in the Ranji Trophy against Bihar in 1990. He had also played for East Zone in the Duleep Trophy and Deodhar Trophy. Prashant has played 45 first-class matches scoring 2,196 runs with an average of 30.08 with five centuries and 11 fifties to his credit. After his retirement, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had appointed him as a match referee.

State exempts toll on O₂ tankers

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 19: The state government has exempted toll on vehicles carrying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) for treatment of Covid-19 patients. As per a government order, toll will not be collected from vehicles carrying medical oxygen in tankers or cylinders at toll plazas under state government. The order will remain in force till July 30. The decision was taken in view of the current pandemic situation and to facilitate smooth supply of medical oxygen to different hospitals and Covid care centres (CVCs) in the state, it said. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had exempted the user fee May 8 for vehicles carrying LMO at toll plazas across national highways. Odisha has provided medical oxygen over the last 27 days to the states facing shortage of the life-saving gas. A total of 919 tankers carrying 16,809MT oxygen have been dispatched under direct escort



TOLL WILL NOT BE COLLECTED FROM VEHICLES CARRYING MEDICAL OXYGEN IN TANKERS OR CYLINDERS AT TOLL PLAZAS UNDER STATE GOVERNMENT
THE ORDER WILL REMAIN IN FORCE TILL JULY 30

and supervision of the Odisha Police to 14 such states so far. The oxygen is being supplied from Rourkela, Jajpur, Dhenkanal

Brassware artisans in miseries as demand dips

POST NEWS NETWORK
Khurda, May 19: Gone are the days when people had a penchant for bronze and brassware. Utensils of stainless steel and plastic-made household goods have replaced the traditional bronze and brassware. Rapid fall in the demand for bronze and brassware has pushed many artisan families into financial miseries. Several artisan families of Muktapur in Khurda block here are on the verge of losing their livelihood due to low demand for brass and bronze-made utensils and other household goods. Around 50 artisan families of Muktapur used to eke out their living by opting for bronze and brass crafts. These artisans were shaping several varieties of utensils, decorative pieces and idols made from bronze and brass and supplying them to markets. But, shortage of raw materials, low demand for bronze and brassware and reluctance among the youngsters to opt for the traditional craft have forced the artisan families to search for some other sources of livelihood. "Earlier, people had a liking for bronze and brassware. Bronze and brass utensils and decorative pieces were selling like hotcakes in the markets. The mass use of stainless steel and aluminum utensils and



plastic goods has taken a heavy toll on the brass and bronze crafts. Most of the artisan families have left the traditional craft. Now, only five to seven families of Muktapur are engaged in brassware business," said artisans Abhiram Maharana, Pramod Das and Prafulla Das. According to the artisans, they mould brass and bronze at their foundries and shape them into utensils and other goods by hitting with hammers and other tools. "It is not easy to make bronze and brassware. We have to toil hard to shape the moulded metals into household products. But, the remuneration is very low if the amount of labour involved in it is taken into consideration," said Abhiram. Lack of provision for bank loan and assistance from the govern-

COVID-19 TRACKER			
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,52,32,551	14,43,00,869	34,24,592
India	2,54,96,330	2,19,86,363	2,83,248
Odisha	6,44,401	5,46,631	2,378

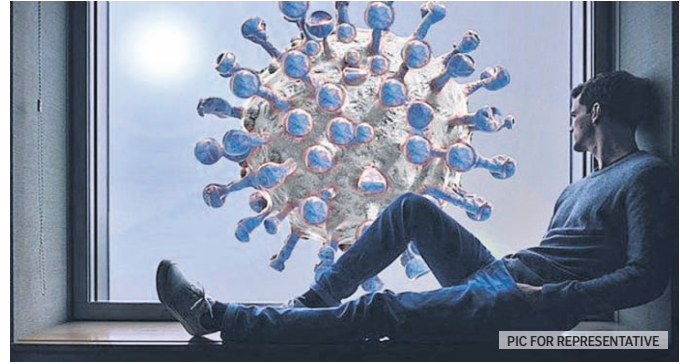
NORMS FLOUTED



Jaydev Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar witnesses traffic snarls Wednesday morning even though the Capital city is under lockdown to tackle the second wave of Covid-19

BMC marks home isolation cases as Red, Green Flags

PNN & AGENCIES
Bhubaneswar, May 19: Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has categorised Covid patients under home isolation into 'Red' and 'Green Flag' cases for better management and monitoring of their health status. Home isolation patients with no or mild symptoms of Covid will be treated as 'Green Flag' cases, while the moderately-affected ones would be termed as 'Red Flag' patients. According to BMC commissioner Sanjay Kumar Singh, in order to know the health status of the 'Red Flag' patients and effectively monitor their health, the civic body will ensure calling them every day for three days at a stretch. The executives, manning the outbound call stations at the 1929-24X7 call centre situated at Bhubaneswar Operations Centre of the Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited office, have already started calling the home isolation patients under the 'Red Flag' category since Tuesday evening. BMC sources said that 22 'Red Flag' patients were called and their health condition was noted. The 'Red Flag' patients' list is prepared after going through the inputs of the Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) at the zonal level. As the civic body is now divided



Monitoring first

HOME ISOLATION PATIENTS WITH NO OR MILD SYMPTOMS OF COVID WILL BE TREATED AS 'GREEN FLAG' CASES, WHILE THE MODERATELY-AFFECTED ONES WOULD BE TERMED AS 'RED FLAG' PATIENTS
RED FLAG PATIENTS' LIST IS PREPARED AFTER GOING THROUGH THE INPUTS FROM THE RRTS AT THE ZONAL LEVEL. 22 'RED FLAG' PATIENTS WERE CALLED AND THEIR HEALTH CONDITION WAS NOTED
into three administrative zones for achieving better citizen-centric service delivery, the list from the respective zonal deputy commissioner's office is being prepared by a senior official deployed for monitoring the Covid situation. After receiving the list, the executives at 1929 call centre contact the 'Red Flag' or moderately-affected patients to know their health status. With categorisation of home isolation cases, BMC is now able to monitor the health parameters of the moderately-affected Covid patients so that when needed, their hospitalisation could be easier. Through this innovative exercise, the moderately-affected patients, in case of any urgent development, could have a conversation with the doctors available at the round-the-clock call centre, according to a BMC source. While seven doctors are available at 1929 call centre during the morning and afternoon shifts, four doctors are available in the night shift.

TALE OF MUKTAPUR
SEVERAL ARTISAN FAMILIES OF MUKTAPUR IN KHURDA BLOCK ARE ON THE VERGE OF LOSING THEIR LIVELIHOOD DUE TO LOW DEMAND FOR BRASS AND BRONZE-MADE UTENSILS AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD GOODS
SHORTAGE OF RAW MATERIALS, LOW DEMAND FOR BRONZE AND BRASSWARE AND RELUCTANCE AMONG THE YOUNGSTERS TO OPT FOR THE TRADITIONAL CRAFT HAVE FORCED THE ARTISAN FAMILIES TO SEARCH FOR SOME OTHER SOURCES OF LIVELIHOOD



and other social functions. Now, the trend has changed. The state government should take immediate steps to revive the traditional craft by allocating funds," said Muktapur brassware artisans' association secretary Banamali Das. Local Sarpanch Bijay Kumar Das too urged the state government to announce certain incentives for the artisans of Muktapur. "Artisans from other states are using modern technology in bronze and brass craft. The state government should take steps to arrange finance and modern technology for the artisans of Muktapur," Das said.

AAP, BJP spar over Singapore tweet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 19: The AAP Wednesday alleged that the BJP and its government were more concerned about their image abroad than the children in India after the saffron party accused Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of serious violation of constitutional propriety with his remarks on COVID strain in Singapore.

The two parties sparred after Singapore called the Indian envoy and conveyed to him its strong objections to the 'unfounded assertions' by Kejriwal and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar ticked off the Delhi chief minister, saying he does not speak for India and irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships.

In his controversial tweet, Kejriwal had Tuesday called for cancelling all air services with Singapore with immediate effect, saying 'a new strain' of coronavirus found there could reach Delhi and was 'very dangerous' for children.

"Meddling in foreign policy matters which is as per the Constitution of India is not a state subject amounts to serious violation of constitutional propriety," BJP



Meddling in foreign policy matters which is as per the Constitution of India is not a state subject amounts to serious violation of constitutional propriety

GAURAV BHATIA | BJP SPOKESPERSON



It only indicates that party and its central government are more worried about Singapore and how Singapore views us. They will not bring vaccines for children but worry about Singapore

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI CM

spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said. He charged Kejriwal with seeking political mileage at the cost of India's image with his 'irresponsible' tweet and said the Delhi chief minister keeps making 'hue and cry' over one issue or another so that nobody questions him on his 'all-round failure' in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in the city.

"Kejriwal has presented his toolkit of spreading confusion and

anarchy and seems to be competing with the Congress in propagating lies and destabilizing the country," Bhatia charged.

The Aam Aadmi Party fielded Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendar Jain to defend Kejriwal. "Vaccines would be available for the adults as well as children in the country, had our foreign ministry shown same swiftness in

procuring vaccines from other countries, with which it has reacted to Kejriwal's statement," Sisodia said. He said the BJP-led government needs to prioritise children, instead of playing politics and 'fixing its image' abroad.

Jain too claimed there was a 'different strain' of coronavirus spreading in Singapore. "There are many strains of coronavirus in India at present... Their

presence is ascertained through genome sequencing. It is a different strain (in Singapore) indeed. Whether it is from Singapore, Delhi, America or London, what's important is that the strains are different," he told reporters.

Sisodia said, "Kejriwal talked of Singapore strain and the children. The issue is not Singapore but safety of our children," he said.

The deputy chief minister further alleged that the Centre had failed to act when scientists and doctors alerted about the "London strain" of COVID which has now led to large number of deaths in India. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal rightly notified two facts to the public - firstly, the development of new strain in Singapore and secondly how this strain might affect children and India needed to be careful, Sisodia said.

"However, instead of preparing or taking any action on this important input, the Central government has shown condemnable behaviour by playing cheap politics of blame and lies," he alleged.

"It only indicates that party and its central government are more worried about Singapore and how Singapore views us. They will not bring vaccines for children but worry about Singapore," he said.

'Karnataka inviting another Covid wave by reducing testing'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 19: Karnataka may be inviting another wave of COVID-19 in the state by reducing the number of tests from 1.9 lakh daily a month ago to over 93,000 now, warned a member of the state COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

The state had conducted 97,236 tests Monday out of which 38,603 people were found to be positive whereas Tuesday 93,247 tests were done and 30,309 people tested positive. This was in sharp contrast to 1.72 lakh tests April 28 and 1.9 lakh April 24.

Battling for extensive COVID-19 tests, Dr Giridhara R Babu, a TAC member and Professor of Epidemiology at the Public Health Foundation of India, said those who have not been tested yet could be spreading the infections further.

"In a way we are inviting third wave because people are spreading the infection and that will continue to fast transmit and then it will result in more people getting infected and we cannot solve this problem. The only solution right now is to test extensively," Babu told PTI.

To a question whether reducing tests was a cost-cutting measure of the government, Babu said lives lost cannot be compared to the test kit price. "How do you cut cost? I am told that there is Rs 30 per kit, which is least in terms of price now. When the test kits are so economical why they (government) have not scaled up buying? This is the best time buy the kits," the epidemiologist said.

He expressed concern over the reduction in the number tests in Bangalore from six lakh a week

to two lakh a week now.

"This is not a nice thing. It doesn't help, according to me. Every test denied is a denied opportunity for entire life of a person, especially for the vulnerable. If the government doesn't test, vulnerable may not test positive. Therefore they may not get treatment and that person may lose his life," Babu said.

Babu and another TAC member Dr C N Manjunath, who is the director of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, said a door-to-door survey and extensive use of Rapid Antigen Tests could offer a solution in early detection of infections.

"Now the Rapid Antigen Tests have also been pushed into the testing protocols. Because, when the testing rate is very high, Rapid Antigen Tests are very handy, which can test in three to five minutes," Dr Manjunath said.

The suggestions of door-to-door survey came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the district collectors and deputy commissioners of the districts with high prevalence of COVID to go for aggressive testing. Karnataka Tuesday reported its highest ever single day recovery with 58,395 discharges, outnumbering fresh cases which is at 30,309. However, the state recorded a spike in fatalities at 525, as the total number of infections stood at 22,72,374 and the toll at 22,838. The number of new COVID-related deaths Monday was 476. Out of the 30,309 fresh cases registered Tuesday, 8,676 were from Bangalore Urban alone, which is a decline of over 4,600 cases compared to Monday, when the city had reported 13,338 cases.

Delhi govt prepares to protect children from third wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 19: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday said his government will form a special task force comprising paediatricians and senior IAS officers to protect children from the third wave of COVID-19.

A committee of officials will also be formed to overlook the availability of medicines, oxygen and beds in the national capital, a statement issued by the Delhi government said.

Kejriwal convened a meeting with officials to review the current COVID situation in Delhi and deliberate on the measures to be taken to prevent the third wave of the pandemic, it added.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who is also the nodal minister for COVID-19, and Health Minister Satyendar Jain were present at the meeting.

"If the third wave of the coronavirus emerges, we have to be prepared in advance to fight it. Took some important decisions today at a meeting with officials - to create a special task force to protect children

from the third wave, adequate beds, oxygen and a better management of essential medicines," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

He said the number of beds in the city hospitals will be increased on priority, along with an enhanced oxygen allocation, according to the statement.

The chief minister directed the officials to work in advance to ensure a sufficient number of oxygen tankers and proper functioning of oxygen plants for an optimum supply of the life-saving gas to hospitals.

The third wave may require Delhi to be prepared with 40,000 oxygenated beds and the city government is making preparations to install 10,000 ICU beds, the statement said.

The management of medicines was also discussed at the meeting.

"Increased number of COVID beds also require an increased amount of oxygen allocation to hospitals. We need to keep enough oxygen tankers at hand so that we do not fall short of supply. We also need to ensure optimum oxygen storage and proper functioning of oxygen plants," Kejriwal told the officials.



ICU ON WHEELS



A state road transport bus converted into an ICU for needy Covid-19 patients in Bangalore, Wednesday. PTI PHOTO

As daily cases decline, vacant beds increase at Delhi hospitals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 19: Amid a steady fall in daily cases of COVID-19 in the national capital, the number of vacant beds has again started to go up at hospitals, offering some relief to coronavirus patients and their families.

According to Delhi corona app, till about 11 am Wednesday, 13,791 beds were available, out of the total 27,726 beds across the facilities, government or private-run.

About a few weeks ago, in the middle of the worst phase of the second wave of the pandemic, there was a massive shortage of beds with oxygen supply, and ICU beds and ICU beds with ventilators, with cases spiralling up to as high as over 28,000 April 20, with a huge number of fatalities recorded every day.

Wednesday, as per the corona app, 11,429 beds with oxygen supply were vacant and 1,246 ICU beds were available till about 11 am for COVID patients.

At the Delhi government-run hospitals, the tally of vacant ICU beds were - GTB Hospital (411 beds out of 900), LNJP Hospital (266 out of 750), Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (133 out of 325), among other facilities. At Centre-run facilities, this figures for vacant ICU beds were - Safdarjung Hospital (10 out of 80) and AIIMS (6 out of 72), as per the app.

COVID beds with oxygen support were also available at many facilities across the city - LNJP hospital (1,198 beds out of 1,750), GTB Hospital (758 out of 1,250), Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel COVID hospital run by DRDO (269 out of 500), Rajiv



Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (283 out of 475), as per the app. The COVID-19 situation has improved in the last few days, with daily cases on the decline, however, fatalities are still being recorded in large

numbers, and doctors say the severity of cases is still the same as it was a few weeks ago.

Delhi has been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country,

claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at hospitals, adding to the woes.

The wave which began late March, spiralled up with over 28,000 cases being recorded April 20.

The national capital had reported a record 448 COVID-19 deaths in a day and 18,043 cases May 3.

Medical experts say that while lockdown majorly has brought down the count of daily cases, the severity of cases is still the same, so "we should not lower our guards".

Sunday, 6,456 cases and 262 deaths were reported, while the tally was 6,430 with 337 deaths on Saturday, and 4,524 cases and 340 deaths Monday. Tuesday, the cases further dipped to 4,482, while the positivity rate slipped to 6.89 per cent, according to official data.

Braving risks, volunteers tend to the sick & the dead

REUTERS

Bangalore, May 19: Every day after he wraps up the online classes he teaches at a Bangalore college, Akshay Mandlik puts on his mask, gloves and overalls and heads out to help bury the COVID-19 dead.

The 37-year-old professor of social work is one of many citizen volunteers across India who have stepped up to help families affected by the country's devastating second wave, often risking their own personal safety.

Mandlik helps grieving relatives find burial spaces, carry the dead and even dig graves when no gravedigger is available.

"I took some time to think about getting involved as I am not vaccinated, but the need of the hour was greater than my own fear," Mandlik said.

India, the world's biggest vaccine producer, has fully vaccinated just over 40.9 million people, or only 3.3 per cent of its 1.35 billion



population as of Wednesday. Volunteers say they have been moved to act by desperate pleas for help on social media and in their local communities. Brothers Murthaza Junaid and

"I took some time to think about getting involved as I am not vaccinated, but the need of the hour was greater than my own fear"

AKSHAY MANDLIK | PROFESSOR

Muteeb Zoheb, both well-known motorcycle racers and entrepreneurs, are now volunteering as ambulance drivers in Bangalore, responding to hundreds of calls every week.

Zoheb, 33, said he and his brother decided to volunteer a month ago after hearing accounts of families being overcharged by professional ambulance services.

With the epicentre of India's second wave constantly shifting, Bangalore's COVID-19 death toll

passed 10,000 Tuesday and its daily number of new infections has overtaken those of Mumbai and New Delhi. More than a third of Bangalore's fatalities have occurred so far in May.

Informal groups of volunteers have sprung up, with the likes of IT professionals, investment bankers, estate agents and students working together to locate critical care beds, stocks of Remdesivir, oxygen concentrators or ambulances.

Azmat Mohammed, 44, said he had taken a sabbatical from his job in IT to help full-time, while law student Akshaya, 22, said she was balancing classes with her COVID volunteering.

"I believe that if we do good, you get back good," said Akshaya, who prefers to use only her first name.

"I attend classes and go to the cemetery for burials. I also spend time collaborating with other people to help with ambulances. It is a lot of multi-tasking."

Karnataka announces ₹1,111cr Covid relief package

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, May 19: Amidst speculations about extending lockdown due to rising Covid cases in rural parts of the state, Karnataka government Wednesday announced a relief package of Rs 1,111.82 crore for those in distress due to the Covid induced lockdown.

Karnataka also announced plans to hire 2,150 doctors in the next three days to ramp-up its Covid treatment facilities across the state.

The Covid relief package, announced by Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa aims to bring relief to unorganised labour class and farmers, flower growers, washermen, rag pickers, porters, low-wage labourers, tailors, barbers, housemaids, auto rickshaw and taxi drivers, weavers, construction workers and folk artists.

Announcing the relief package here, Yediyurappa told media persons that the state government realises the need of a relief package as people from all sections of society are facing financial difficulties due to Covid. "There is no respite from this dreaded virus, therefore, we are announcing this relief package second time since last May, 2020," the CM said.

He noted that farmers including flower growers are facing severe problems due to Covid induced lockdowns, shutdowns and other forms of severe restrictions enforced by the governments from time to time to contain the virus.

Karnataka announced compensation of Rs 10,000 per hectare to the maximum extent of one hectare for the flower, fruits and vegetable growers who have suffered loss, which will benefit 89,000 such growers in the state.



In Kerala, so far 15 cases of black fungus has been reported and the saving grace is this will not spread from one affected to another and hence there need not be undue worries. Those who are diabetic and those with other serious co-morbidities have to be careful

PM CONDUCTS AERIAL SURVEY OF GUJARAT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday approved assistance Rs 1,000 crore for "immediate relief activities" in Gujarat after conducting an aerial survey of areas hit by cyclone Tauktae in the state, an official release said. He also announced ex-gratia compensation of Rs 2 lakh for the kin of those killed due to cyclone in all affected states



of the day quote

India has always stood for peaceful resolution of bilateral disputes through political and diplomatic means. Peace and stability in the South Caucasus region is important from the regional security perspective

ARINDAM BAGCHI | SPOKESPERSON IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

All cyclone centres and shelters have been asked to be readied. The district magistrates have been directed to take all precautionary measures in the wake of the warnings

MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CHIEF MINISTER

For those above 45 years, healthcare workers and frontline workers, Covaxin's stock is left for one day, and Covishield's stock is remaining for three days

ATISHI MARLENA | AAP MLA

SHORT TAKES

Ex-NSG chief dies of Covid

New Delhi: Former NSG director general J K Dutt, who headed the commando force during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, died Wednesday due to complications arising out of Covid-19, officials said here. He was 72. Family sources told PTI that the retired IPS officer was admitted to the Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon April 14 after his oxygen saturation started declining. "He passed away today at 3:30 pm after suffering a massive cardiac arrest," one of them said. Dutt is survived by his wife, a son, who works in Noida, and a daughter, who is based in the US.

Oxygen langar in Guwahati

Guwahati: With many Covid-19 patients in the city facing problem in getting oxygen cylinders at home, the Khalsa Centre North East (KCNE) is providing them free oxygen concentrators for four days. Naming the initiative as 'Free Oxygen Langar', KCNE chairman Capt P P Singh Wednesday said the concentrators after four days with a patient will be circulated amongst other needy Covid-19 patients. The 'Free Oxygen Langar' was launched Monday, he said.

5 die of black fungus in Sirsa

Sirsa: Five people have died due to black fungus in Sirsa district of Haryana, officials said Wednesday. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said the infection has become a matter of concern and directed officials to make necessary arrangements for its treatment. Mucormycosis (black fungus), which is primarily affecting people recovering from Covid-19, has claimed five lives in the district in the past two days, Sirsa Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Manish Bansal said. He said 25 people from districts adjoining Sirsa were admitted to a hospital, of whom some were referred to other major health facilities.

4 bootleggers held in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi Police said Wednesday that they have arrested four bootleggers, including one carrying a fake ID card of a prominent media house, with several bottles of liquor and beer. Atul Kumar Thakur, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South Delhi, said that on the intervening night of Tuesday-Wednesday, the police got a tip-off that few bootleggers were selling liquor at very high rates.

NARADA CASE

No court relief for TMC leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 19: The Calcutta High Court adjourned till Thursday the hearing in the Narada sting tape case, in which two West Bengal ministers, an MLA and a former mayor of Kolkata were arrested by the CBI.

In view of the adjournment Wednesday, ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Firhad Hakim, Trinamool Congress MLA Madan Mitra and former city mayor Sovan Chatterjee will continue to remain in judicial custody.

The petition of the CBI seeking transfer of trial in the case and the recalling application filed by the four leaders on the high court's stay order on the bail granted by a CBI court on Monday will be further heard by the division bench comprising acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Arijit Banerjee Thursday.

The high court on Monday night stayed the lower court's decision to grant bail to the four leaders, arrested and charge-sheeted by the CBI in the Narada sting case.

The division bench had said that it deemed it appropriate to stay the special court's order and direct that the "accused person shall be treated to be in judicial custody till further orders". The four leaders were arrested on Monday morning from their residences in the city in connection with the Narada

sting case that is being investigated by the CBI on an order by the high court.

The CBI prayed before the high court that it transfers all proceedings in the Narada sting tape case to itself. It also prayed that the division bench declares that the proceedings before the special CBI court post production of the arrested accused virtually on May 17 are a nullity in the eyes of law and to conduct the proceedings afresh. The CBI further prayed that pending the final hearing and disposal of its petition before it, the high court direct continuance of its order staying the bail granted to the accused by the lower court.

Seeking transfer of the case from the special court, the CBI claimed that all the four persons arrested are very influential persons and it apprehends that they will influence and threaten the witnesses and the system. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, submitted during the hearing through the virtual mode that the incidents following the arrests were unprecedented. The Narada sting tapes, which were made public before the 2016 assembly elections in West Bengal, were claimed to have been shot in 2014, wherein people resembling TMC ministers, MPs and MLAs were allegedly seen receiving money from representatives of a fictitious company in lieu of promised favours.



Policemen stand guard outside the Calcutta High Court during the hearing of the Narada sting case Tuesday

Super Blood Moon in eastern sky on May 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 19: A rare Super Blood Moon will be seen in the eastern sky May 26 evening, just after a total lunar eclipse.

Kolkata had seen its last total lunar eclipse, 10 years ago, December 10, 2011. Director of M P Birla Planetarium and renowned astrophysicist Debiprasad Duari said Wednesday. "On the night of May 26, the sun, earth and moon alignment will be such that from earth it will be viewed as a full moon and also eclipsed for some time. Moon on its journey around the earth will be passing through earth's shadow for a few moments and will be totally eclipsed," Duari said.

The total lunar eclipse will be visible mostly from Eastern Asia, Pacific Ocean, most parts of North and South America and Australia. The partial eclipse of the moon will start at around 3:15 pm and end at 6:22 pm.

Rescued workmen recall horror in sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 19: Battling tidal waves as high as 15 metres and strong winds while trying to stay afloat in the cyclone-hit rough Arabian Sea for almost 12 hours, workmen rescued from a sinking barge near here narrated their horrifying experience in their quest for survival.

One of the survivors said the incident was similar to the scenes from the movie 'Titanic' that depicted the sinking of the RMS Titanic ship in 1912 in the North Atlantic Ocean, while some others said that they had almost lost the hope of making it alive back home. At least 22 personnel on board accommodation barge P305 that went adrift in Cyclone Tauktae fury before sinking in the Arabia Sea off Mumbai coast are dead and 65 still missing, a Navy official said Wednesday.

The Navy said its personnel have so far rescued 186 of the 273 people who were onboard barge P305. "People might have watched in



CYCLONE TAUKTAE

'Titanic' movie the occupants jumping out of the sinking ship to save themselves and dead bodies floating, but we saw all this unfold before our eyes," Vishwajeet Bandgar (28), who worked on the barge as a welder, said after his rescue by the Navy.

"It was worse than the Titanic, as dead bodies of our colleagues, who worked with us, could be seen floating in the water," he said. They had jumped into the water before

us and we saw their life boat was also broken, said Bandgar, a native of Mangalwedha town in Maharashtra's Solapur district.

Thanking the Navy for rescuing him and several of his colleagues, Bandgar said the Navy is like God to them. "We were not sure if we could be rescued until help came. During that horrific situation, we kept supporting each other by saying that we will be alive and there is no need to worry," he said.

COVID DEATHS RISE

Thousands of kids have lost one or both parents

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New Delhi, May 19: Three days after their father died of coronavirus, six-year-old twins Tripti and Pari were found sleeping next to their mother, unaware that she had also become a victim.

Thousands of children have lost one or both parents in the new pandemic wave ravaging India, where there were already millions of orphans.

The prospect of a surge of abandoned minors worries many. Tripti and Pari, whose names have been changed, are now being cared for by their mother's uncle, Ramesh Singh. "I keep telling the girls their parents will come home soon," said

Mr Singh, whose name has also been changed to protect the children's identities. "I don't want to tell them the truth now they're too young." Their heartbroken mother refused to eat properly after her husband's death, which complicated her recovery from coronavirus, Mr Singh said.

When repeated knocks on the door went unanswered, relatives threw water on the girls from a window to make them open up. They were taken away as doctors arrived to declare their mother dead. While the twins are being looked after, the pandemic - which is claiming thousands of lives a day - is leaving others without a caregiver. Such children "are not



only living an emotional tragedy, they are at high risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation", said UNICEF India's chief Yasmin Haque.

DEVASTATING TRUTH

In another case, media reported last month on a baby found next to its mother who had been dead for 48 hours and whose neighbours feared contracting the virus.

The official number of deaths due to the pandemic is more than 2,70,000 in India, though the real number is widely believed to be far higher with many people dying outside of the overwhelmed medical system.

"We don't know how many people are dying, let alone how many

"I was in the water holding on with the life jacket for more than 14 hours. There were gusty winds and waves of more than 15 metres," he said. Talking to reporters here, workman Manoj Gite said, "It was a horrific situation on the barge. I had not thought I would survive. But, I swam in the waters for seven to eight hours with the determination to stay alive and was rescued by the Navy."

Gite (19), a resident of Kolhapur, said as the barge started sinking, all workmen got worried and he along with others wore a life jacket and jumped into the waters. The workman, who had joined as a helper on the barge only last month, said he lost all his documents and mobile phone in the cyclonic storm.

Asked if he would return to the rig again, Gite said he is not keen to go back and is contented to be alive after the nightmarish experience. Another workman, who was injured in the incident, thanked the Navy for saving his life.

Mucormycosis claimed 90 lives in Maha so far

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 19: As many as 90 people have died of Mucormycosis, a rare but fatal fungal infection, in Maharashtra so far, state public health minister Rajesh Tope said Wednesday.

The cases of mucormycosis, also called Black Fungus, have been on rise since the outbreak of coronavirus last year, though the minister did not mention any timeframe.

He also warned against indiscriminate use of steroids to treat Covid-19 patients should be avoided," the minister added.



Factors such as severe diabetes and suppression of immune system also lead to people catching the infection, Tope said. According to medical experts, steroids which suppress immune system make a patient vulnerable to catching the fungal infection.

"The Maharashtra government is prepared to tackle it and has prepared nine-page guidelines for doctors who treat mucormycosis patients. The guidelines also suggest preventive measures such as the use of sterilised or distilled water in humidifiers of oxygen supplying machines (in COVID-19 wards)," he said. Compared to the first wave of coronavirus pandemic, there have been more cases of Black Fungus in the second wave, doctors have noted.

phaned child must be seen by a government official and is put in an institution if there are no relatives to look after them. Smriti Irani, Union minister for women and child development, this month warned that unofficial approaches to adopting Covid-19 orphans are a "trap" and "illegal".

BROKEN GENERATION Children whose parents have died or are sick have been reduced to selling vegetables on the streets, according to the Protsahan India Foundation, a child rights NGO.

"We're looking at a generation of children in extreme distress and facing severe trauma who will grow up to be broken adults," said Sonal Kapoor from the foundation.

national

of the day quote

Different states in the country have received 4,000 oxygen concentrators from the WHO. They will be beneficial in providing treatment to patients. The government has been continuously making efforts to check the spread of coronavirus in the state

VISHVAS SARANG | MP MEDICAL EDUCATION MINISTER

This is a big conspiracy to insult Kumbh Mela and the ancient Hindu religion by preparing such a toolkit. This is a big crime

RAMDEV | YOGA GURU

Now the pandemic is spread in villages. It is apprehended that statements of Pragya Singh Thakur will leave the villagers who have faith in 'Gau Mata' (the cow) confused and they will start tasking this medication (cow urine) ignoring the well-established treatment of allopathy

PC SHARMA | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER



What is happening in UP is nothing less than a crime against humanity

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

TIGRESS KILLS ZOO ATTENDANT

A 35-year-old zoo attendant was mauled to death by a Royal Bengal tigress at the Biological Park in Arunachal Pradesh's Itanagar, an official said



'Vax to all adults by end of year'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Wednesday said India will have procured 267 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses by the end of this year, and will be in a position to inoculate at least all of its adult population, according to an official statement.

The minister said that 51 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses will be made available by July and 216 crore more between August and December. He urged states to ensure that the healthcare and frontline workers are fully vaccinated, as they form the vulnerable categories. Interacting with the health ministers and principal secretaries/ additional chief secretaries of West Bengal and eight northeast states, Vardhan said, "Between August to December 2021, India will have procured 216 crore vaccine doses while, by July this year, 51 crore doses will be procured."

He said that by the end of the year, the country will be in a position to vaccinate at least all of its adult population, according to the health ministry statement. West Bengal and the eight states of the North-eastern region are depicting a higher growth rate in the num-



ber of daily cases, high mortality and increasing positivity rate, the statement said. Pointing out the new emerging trend in the country, Vardhan highlighted that now smaller states are showing an upward trend in terms of number of infections and there is a need to be cautious about this.

Speaking of the government's efforts towards fighting coronavirus, Vardhan said that from having just one Covid testing laboratory at the start of the pandemic, there are over 2000 across the country now. Underscoring the critical importance of vaccination

drive, the minister highlighted that India has achieved another landmark by crossing 18 crore doses recently.

He also pointed out that more than one crore doses are still in stock with the state governments.

Highlighting the critical challenges faced by the NE states and West Bengal, Vardhan said in Mizoram, all districts are showing a rise in new cases. Nagaland has shown a sharp increase in daily cases (15-20 per day to 300 per day) and weekly positivity rate (1 per cent to 34 per cent); there is a need to strengthen testing facil-

India tells WhatsApp to roll back privacy policy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 19: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has again directed WhatsApp to withdraw its much controversial revised privacy policy and has warned action against the platform.

According to official sources, in its notice to the company, the ministry has said that there are various options available for the messaging platform under Indian law.

The government has told WhatsApp to respond to its concerns by May 25.

Noting that many Indian users depend on WhatsApp for communicating on a daily basis, the ministry said that it is irresponsible for WhatsApp to leverage position in Indian market to impose unfair terms and conditions.

As per the ministry, the changes to WhatsApp privacy policy and the manner of introducing the changes undermines the sacrosanct values of informational privacy, data security and user choice and harms the rights and interests of Indian citizens. The communication also notes how WhatsApps its new privacy policy



is a violation of several provisions of the existing Indian laws and rules. The ministry has also strongly taken up the issue of WhatsApp's discriminatory treatment to Indian users in comparison to the users in Europe.

WhatsApp's decision to share data with its parent company, Facebook as per its revised privacy policy drew a lot of flak from the public and the government.

It had deferred its new privacy policy beyond May 15, 2021. The matter is sub-judice as the ministry approached the Delhi High Court over the same.

SHORT TAKES

Chacko made NCP chief in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: Former senior Congress leader PC Chacko was Wednesday appointed as the NCP's new Kerala President by party supremo Sharad Pawar. A press statement issued by party General Secretary and former Union Minister Praful Patel, said Chacko, 74, has been asked to assume office immediately. He replaces veteran TP Peethamabaran, who has been heading the NCP's Kerala unit for some time now. Incidentally, unlike the national level where it is allied with the Congress, the NCP in Kerala is part of the CPI-M led Left Democratic Front.

Five injured in acid attack

Patna: At least five persons have sustained burn injuries in Bihar's Supaul district following an acid attack, the police said. The incident happened during an altercation between some villagers in Machaha village under Triveniganj police station. Sunil Kumar, investigating officer of Triveniganj, said: "A puja was organised in the house of one Rupesh Shah. As per the ritual, the family members of Shah spread pop corn in the adjoining areas including in front of the house of one Anmol Yadav."

12 booked for killing dolphin

Sitapur (UP): Twelve persons have been booked for killing a rare fresh water dolphin from the Sharda auxiliary canal. Fresh water dolphins are categorised as endangered species in the International Union for Conservation of Nature red book. The FIR was lodged after a video of the incident started doing the rounds on social media. Sitapur superintendent of police (SP), Rakesh Prakash Singh said that one Prithvi Sahu has been arrested and two teams formed to arrest the other accused.

Man shoots self

Agra: A 28-year-old man shot himself with his father's licensed gun here Wednesday as he was allegedly disturbed after the death of his wife, police said. Son of a retired sub-inspector, Lavkesh shot himself at around 9.30 am in Tagore Garden locality under New Agra Police Station, they said. His family members informed the police after they found him lying in a pool of blood alongside the gun.

Did Shailaja dig her own grave?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 19: The decision is now final that people's 'shero' outgoing Kerala Health Minister K.K. Shailaja is not going to be there in the new Pinarayi Vijayan cabinet, which will be sworn in here Thursday and even though none doubts her performance, the moot question is did she dig her own grave?

The decision by the party to leave out Shailaja has come under heavy criticism, especially on the social media, even demanding the party to change their decision. This clearly shows she will go the way her illustrious predecessors KR Gowri who passed away last week and late



Susheela Gopalan went after raising high hopes of even being considered for the post of Chief Minister.

In 1987 Gowri and in 1986 Gopalan that hogged centre stage - even being considered as the first woman Chief Minister, but at the last minute on both occasions, Comrade EK Nayanar breastst the tape and the CPI-M said they never said anything like this and the party's decision was final.

Incidentally, Shailaja's status grew as a Minister after Nipah struck the northern district of Kozhikode in 2018 and it came at a time, when murmurs made rounds in the party that her performance was not as desired, but since then

her status changed.

Then came the mega floods that year and again in 2019 and her status in people's eye catapulted when Covid pandemic struck in 2020 January, when the first Covid case in the country was identified in Thrissur.

Since then Shailaja has been a constant on TV screens on a daily basis explaining the Covid situation and even the international media came calling on her and there were even talks she might be considered for a Nobel prize.

There were times, when the local media had to wait for days to get an interview with the Teacher and the answer that was given was "you are in the queue as even the international media is waiting".

Sensing the shift, Vijayan, who is known for his anti-media stand, broke the shackles and his daily Covid briefing soon became one of the most viewed TV programme. Ever since then Shailaja was seen only as an onlooker and day by day, her place in the public domain was restricted.

What's more surprising Shailaja was very active when the state had a handful of cases and she disappeared into oblivion when the daily cases crossed 40,000 cases and then the talk of the town was - did she dig her own grave and was she portraying herself above other party leaders and even the party.

Incidentally after her stunning victory by recording the highest ever margin of over 60,000 in the April 6th assembly polls, the media went to town that Vijayan will retain only Shailaja in his new team from his party and it remained intact till Tuesday when at the State Secretariat meeting of her party which she is also a member decided not to include her.

Though a weak defence came from a few, the decision not to include anyone from the previous cabinet was conveyed to the nearly 80 member state committee and here too it was cleared, paving the way for her exit.

BEATING THE RAIN



A vegetable vendor uses a plastic sheet to protect herself during a shower in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Record 4,529 fatalities in single day

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: India saw a record 4,529 fatalities due to coronavirus in a single day pushing the Covid-19 death toll to 2,83,248, while 2.67 lakh fresh cases were recorded, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Wednesday.

With a total of 2,67,334 fresh infections, India's total tally of cases climbed to 2,54,96,330.

The active cases dipped to 32,26,719 comprising 12.66 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 86.23 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,19,86,363 while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.11 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark August 7, 30 lakh August 23, 40 lakh September 5 and 50 lakh September 16.

It went past 60 lakh September 28, 70 lakh October 11, crossed 80 lakh October 29, 90 lakh November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore May 4.

According to the ICMR, 32,03,01,177 samples have been tested up to May 18 with 20,08,296

samples being tested Tuesday. The 4,529 new fatalities include 1,291 from Maharashtra, 525 from Karnataka, 364 from Tamil Nadu, 265 from Delhi, 255 from Uttar Pradesh, 231 from Punjab, 153 from Chhattisgarh, 146 from Rajasthan, 145 from West Bengal, 124 from Haryana and 111 from Bihar.

A total of 2, 83,248 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 83,777 from Maharashtra, 22,838 from Karnataka, 22,111 from Delhi, 18,369 from Tamil Nadu, 18,072 from Uttar Pradesh, 13,576 from West Bengal, 12,317 from Punjab and 12,036 from Chhattisgarh.

India's vax drive stumbling when it is most crucial: Report

Over the past six weeks, the number of vaccinations per day has fallen by about half, from a high of 4.2 million per day April 2 to 2 million last Thursday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 19: Vaunted as the largest in the world, India's vaccine programme is being hobbled by supply shortages and an abrupt shift in procurement policy that appears to be without parallel. The woes of the inoculation drive are especially striking given India's unique advantages, including a large vaccine industry and a record of mass immunisation campaigns, the report said.

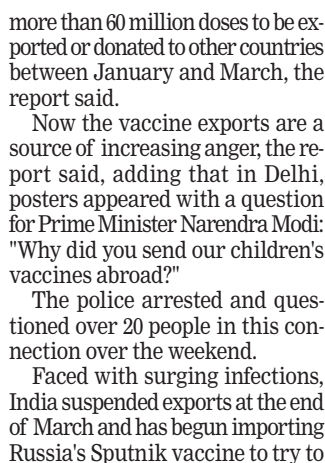
Just months ago, public health experts were counting on India to play a crucial role in supplying Coronavirus vaccines to the world. The government was so confident of its ability to meet domestic demand for vaccines that it allowed

more than 60 million doses to be exported or donated to other countries between January and March, the report said.

Now the vaccine exports are a source of increasing anger, the report said, adding that in Delhi, posters appeared with a question for Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "Why did you send our children's vaccines abroad?"

The police arrested and questioned over 20 people in this connection over the weekend.

Faced with surging infections, India suspended exports at the end of March and has begun importing Russia's Sputnik vaccine to try to



alleviate the shortfall in local production. Last week, the government acknowledged that vaccine shortages in India will persist at least until July, the report said.

The inability to accelerate the vaccination drive in the short term means that immunisations will do little to blunt the ferocity of the current wave of infections, it said.

Vaccinating India's more than 1.3 billion people was always going to be a monumental task. But experts say that India's present predicament is the product of miscalculations and optimistic predictions by policymakers and manufacturers, the report said.

international



The bilateral meeting will take place after the evening's final Arctic Council event and will provide an opportunity to test the proposition of whether we can achieve a relationship with Moscow that is more stable and predictable
NED PRICE | POLITICAL ADVISOR, US

PRINCESS BEATRICE EXPECTING A BABY
The Buckingham Palace said Wednesday that the 32-year-old granddaughter of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi are due to have their first child in the autumn



of the day quote

The purpose (of the call for a ceasefire) is to protect civilians and to give full humanitarian access in Gaza. We condemn the rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on the Israeli territory
JOSEF BORRELL | FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF, EU

In the absence of a peaceful settlement within a reasonable timeframe - in the event that Azerbaijan's military does not return to its original positions without any preconditions - the Armenian armed forces have the right to resolve the issue by other means, including by force
SERGEI LAVROV | FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

I share his horror at the outbreak of anti-Semitic incidents and the government has conveyed that message loud and clear to those who are responsible for enforcing the law against hate crime
BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK

SHORT TAKES

Anti-Asian crimes bill passed by US

Washington: US lawmakers Tuesday sent an anti-hate bill to President Joe Biden's desk that aims to prevent violence against Asian Americans, following an alarming rise in attacks including murders during the coronavirus pandemic. The House of Representatives passed the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act with a strong bipartisan vote of 364 to 62. "Together, these steps will make a significant difference to address hate crimes in America -- not only during this pandemic, but for years to come," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

UK launches Covid booster

London: Thousands of volunteers will receive a booster Covid-19 vaccine in a new clinical trial to study the impact of the third jab to protect against the deadly virus. The Cov-Boost study will trial seven vaccines to provide data on the impact of a third dose on patients' immune responses. During a briefing, Hancock reiterated UK PM Boris Johnson's earlier statement that there is "increasing confidence" that the vaccines are effective against B.1.617.2 variant.

Turkey bans plastic imports

Istanbul: Turkey has banned the importation of ethylene polymer plastic waste as environmental groups sound the alarm on the world's plastic consumption and lack of effective recycling. In an amendment published in Turkey's Official Gazette Tuesday, the Trade Ministry added ethylene polymer plastics to its list of waste materials that are illegal to import. The environmental group Greenpeace Mediterranean welcomed the news, calling it a "very important step towards the goal of zero waste importation".

Quake jolts Nepal

Kathmandu: A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal's central Lamjung district Wednesday, injuring at least six persons and damaging dozens of houses, officials said. The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 5:42 AM, was located at Marshyangdi Rural Municipality of the district. The 5.8-magnitude quake damaged around two dozen houses and left six people injured.

CORAL COLLECTION



Aquarist Jeremy Simmons is watched by Marcelo Noone-Taylor as he plants corals rescued from illegal trading, in a seven-metre-long reef tank ahead of ZSL London Zoo's reopening of indoor exhibits in London, Britain

Kachin rebels hit junta's aviation fuel supplies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Yangon, May 19: Rebels of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) hit and set ablaze seven tanker trucks in northern Shan state with artillery to cut down aviation fuel supplies for Myanmar's military junta.

The trucks were attacked on the Union Highway and Kutkai-Hseni road, transporting fuel from China through Muse. The fuel is used by Burmese Air Force to bomb and strafe rebel targets or for helicopter gunship raids on them. KIA information officer Colonel Naw Bu told IANS five tanker trucks were hit on the Union Highway, two in separate attacks on the Kutkai-Hseni road Monday and Tuesday. "People told us that the fuel is not for public use but for the military aviation, so we opened fire," said Col. Naw Bu.

There was no fighting with the military in northern Shan State, apart from these artillery attacks, he said. Myanmar's military used jet fighters to retake control of the strategic hilltop Alaw Bum base on the Chinese border in Kachin State's Momaik Township, which was seized by the KIA in late March. The outpost allows the KIA to control the road between Kachin State's capital, Myitkyina, and Bhamo, also in Kachin State. The KIA had good reason to believe the tanker trucks were providing jet fuel to bomb Momaik, Col. Naw Bu said.

Russian lawmakers exit from 'Open Skies Treaty'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, May 19: The Russian parliament's lower house voted Wednesday to withdraw from an international treaty allowing surveillance flights over military facilities following the US departure from the pact.

The Russian exit from the Open Skies Treaty is yet to be endorsed by the upper house of parliament and needs to be signed by President Vladimir Putin to take effect. The withdrawal vote comes hours before US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov were to hold their first meeting on the sidelines of a gathering of top diplomats from the Arctic countries in Reykjavik, Iceland. The Open Skies Treaty was intended to build trust between Russia and the West by allowing the accord's more than three dozen signatories to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territories to collect information about military forces and activities. Then US President Donald Trump pulled out of the pact last

year, arguing that Russian violations made it untenable for Washington to remain a party. Washington completed its withdrawal from the treaty in November. Moscow has deplored the US withdrawal, warning that it will erode global security by making it more difficult for governments to interpret the intentions of other nations, particularly amid heightened Russia-West tensions. The European Union has urged the US to reconsider its exit and called on Russia to stay in the pact and lift flight restrictions, notably over its westernmost Kaliningrad region, which lies between NATO allies Lithuania and Poland.

Moscow has signalled its readiness to reverse the withdrawal procedure and stay in the treaty if the US returns to the agreement

Indian expats in UAE warned against spreading rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 19: Indian expatriates in the UAE have been warned against spreading unverified reports that applications would be opened for elderly persons on visit visas to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, according to a media report Wednesday.

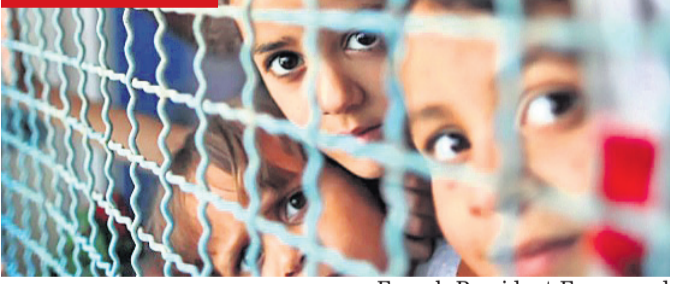
Speaking to the Gulf News, an official with the Indian Consulate in Dubai said: "We have no such information from local authorities here and currently, only UAE residents holding valid Emirates ID are eligible for vaccination. People should not believe in such information and avoid forwarding such stories to others."

COVID VACCINATION

will first cater to the permanent citizens and that such rumours should not be spread, the newspaper reported. "Beware of rumours. Always check with a trusted source before forwarding a message," the consulate wrote on its Twitter handle. Indians are the largest expatriate group in the UAE based on nationality.

France files ceasefire resolution at UN

ISRAEL-GAZA CONFLICT



AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

Paris, May 19: France has proposed a resolution with the UN Security Council, in coordination with Egypt and Jordan, calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict, the president's office said late Tuesday.

52K Palestinians take refuge in UN run schools

A UN report said Tuesday that 52,000 Palestinians took refuge at schools run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip, as a round of probably heaviest fighting between Israel and Gaza since 2014 has lasted nine days, the Palestinian news agency WAFA reported. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that Israeli fighter jets destroyed, 448 constructions in the Palestinian coastal enclave since May 10. Jens Laerke, a spokesman for OCHA, said in the statement that 132 buildings were completely destroyed and 316 partially destroyed, including six hospitals and nine healthcare centres.

ing must stop, the time has come for a ceasefire and the UN Security Council must take up the issue," the Elysee Palace said. France, which has been calling for a rapid ceasefire for several days, said it supports mediation led by Egypt. Macron had Monday underlined the importance of Egyptian mediation after talks in Paris with Sisi, a key ally and defence client of France despite activists' concerns over Cairo's rights record. The UN Security Council has failed to adopt a simple declaration on the conflict, with the United States, a staunch Israel ally, having rejected three prior statement drafts proposed by China, Norway and Tunisia which called for an end to the fighting.

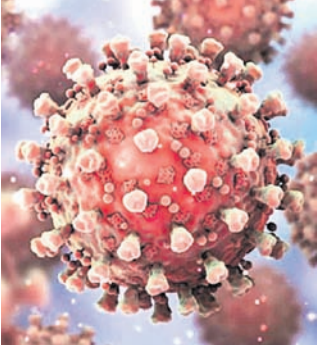
New antiviral developed with 99.9% efficacy against Covid

The new antiviral approach used gene-silencing RNA technology called siRNA (small-interfering RNA) to attack the virus' genome directly, which stops the virus from replicating

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Sydney, May 19: An international team of scientists, from Australia and the US, has developed an experimental direct-acting antiviral therapy that can reduce viral load by 99.9 per cent and may be a new treatment against Covid-19. Traditional antivirals, which include Tamiflu, zanamivir and remdesivir, reduce symptoms and help people recover earlier. The new antiviral approach

used gene-silencing RNA technology called siRNA (small-interfering RNA) to attack the virus' genome directly, which stops the virus from replicating, as well as lipid nanoparticles designed at Griffith University and City of Hope to deliver the siRNA to the lungs, the critical site of infection. "Treatment with virus-specific siRNA reduces viral load by 99.9 per cent. These stealth nanoparticles can be delivered to a wide range of lung cells and silence



viral genes," said co-lead researcher Nigel McMillan, Professor at Menzies Health Institute Queensland (MHIQ) at Griffith. When tested in SARS-Cov-2 infected mice the treatment with the therapy improved survival and loss of disease. Remarkably, in treated survivors, no virus could be detected in the lungs, the findings published in the journal Molecular Therapy, showed. "This treatment is designed to

work on all betacoronaviruses such as the original SARS virus (SARS-CoV-1) as well as SARS-CoV-2 and any new variants that may arise in the future because it targets ultra-conserved regions in the virus' genome," added Kevin Morris, Professor and associate director of the Center for Gene Therapy at City of Hope. Further, the researchers also showed that the nanoparticles are stable at 4 degrees Celsius for 12 months and at room temperature

for greater than one month, meaning this agent could be used in low-resource settings to treat infected patients. The results suggest that siRNA-nanoparticle formulations can be developed as a therapy to treat Covid-19 patients, as well as used for future coronavirus infections by targeting the virus' genome directly. "These nanoparticles are scalable and relatively cost-effective to produce in bulk," Morris said.

China-Russia biggest nuclear energy project put in motion

China and Russia signed a strategic package of agreements on nuclear energy in June 2018 to jointly construct four nuclear power units, with a total contract value of over 20 billion yuan (about USD 3 billion)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, May 19: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin Wednesday hailed the nuclear cooperation between the two neighbours as they virtually attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the biggest nuclear energy project to build four nuclear power plants in China costing about USD 3 billion.

The ceremony, which was attended by the two leaders via a video link, was held to mark the first day of construction of power units No. 7 and 8 of the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant, and No. 3 and 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant. The Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant is located in the city of Lianyungang in eastern Jiangsu province. The Xudapu Nuclear Power plant is located in Xingcheng in northeastern Liaoning province. "This has been the biggest China-Russia nuclear energy cooperation project to date and represents the highest level of practical cooperation between the two sides," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian told a media briefing Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Xi reiterated China's close attention to energy cooperation with Russia as it is a traditional cooperative area between the two countries. He hailed the beginning of con-



This has been the biggest China-Russia nuclear energy cooperation project to date and represents the highest level of practical cooperation between the two sides

struction of the nuclear power plants, and noted that the energy projects set an example for bilateral cooperation in other sectors. Stressing that the bilateral cooperation on nuclear energy is meaningful for the high-level development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, Xi said he hopes the two sides will follow the sound momentum and conduct more effective cooperation in other sectors. China and Russia signed a strategic package of agreements on nuclear energy in June 2018 to jointly construct four nuclear power units, the biggest of such between the two countries so far, with a total contract value of over 20 billion yuan (about USD 3 billion), state-run CGTN-TV reported. All four units will adopt the third-generation VVER-1200 reactors developed by Russia. Compared to its predecessor VVER-1000 reactor, the latest VVER-1200 reactor features advantages in many aspects, according to Russia's Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation. Once completed, the four units are expected to effectively reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The two countries firmed up their close ties as they faced mounting adversity from the US and European Union on a host of issues including human rights violations.

Spain's enclave struggles to handle migrant influx

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ceuta, May 19: Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta Wednesday saw thousands of migrants who crossed over from Morocco spent the night sleeping where they could find shelter.

Exhausted by either scaling a doublewide border fence or swimming in the Mediterranean, some migrants spent the night in an overcrowded warehouse under the gaze of Spanish police. More than 8,000 people crossed into Spanish territory during the previous two days. Spain's Interior Ministry said

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS



that it had returned roughly half of the migrants, but there were many unaccompanied minors, which Spanish law says must be taken into care by authorities. While Morocco was tightening controls of a border after two days of allowing crossings, Spanish authorities increased their criticism of counterparts in Rabat. "This is an act of defiance," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told Spain's Parliament, a day after he visited Ceuta. "The lack of border control by Morocco is not a show of disrespect of Spain, but rather for the European Union." Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya also increased her tone Wednesday, saying for the first time in public that Spain believes Morocco loosened its border control to retaliate for Spain having given medical assistance to the head of the Western Sahara liberation movement, a disputed territory to Morocco's south.

business

of the day quote

As Ola scales up further and expands into new areas such as connected manufacturing, intelligent charging infrastructure, and a sophisticated global supply chain, having a robust IT infrastructure enabling this growth is imperative

LPS would carry a total of more than 50 product lines and would offer a seamless credit lifecycle with over 35 interface touch points to many satellite systems

I reckon that for the survival of the F&B industry through this second wave, revenue share is a very fair model that will ensure that malls don't lose out if we see an unexpected early surge in business volumes



The shrunken base of the lockdown in April 2020 has boosted the pace of year-on-year expansion of several high-frequency indicators in April 2021, resulting in a widespread improvement compared to the performance in March 2021. However, the optimism generated by this trend is limited

ADITI NAYYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

PFRDA SUBSCRIBER BASE UP BY 23PC TO 4.27 CR

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has registered over a 23 per cent jump in the subscriber base under its two flagship pension schemes at 4.27 crore by the end of April this year, data showed on Wednesday



Govt to conclude CPSE privatisation this fiscal

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: Notwithstanding the disruption to businesses caused by the second wave of COVID-19, the government is aiming to conclude privatisation of PSUs like Air India, BPCL and Shipping Corporation - where the divestment process has already started - this fiscal, sources said Wednesday.

The worst outbreak of pandemic in the country has led to disrupting the timetable of scheduled activities such as physical due diligence because of travel restrictions. But the process is likely to get back on track from September, the sources with the direct knowledge of the government's privatisation plans said.

The process of privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Pawan Hans, BEML, Shipping Corp and NINL has already moved to the second stage after the government received multiple expressions of interest (EoI) for these CPSEs. The Budget for 2021-22 has set a

GOALPOSTS SET

Privatisation of PSUs like Air India, BPCL and Shipping Corporation, Pawan Hans, BEML and NINL - where the divestment process has already started - will end this fiscal

The Budget for 2021-22 has set a divestment target of ₹1.75 lakh crore, higher than ₹32,835 crore garnered in the last fiscal

Once a court recognises Air India as the alter ego of the Indian government, Cairn can seek attachment or seizure of its assets in the US such as airplanes



In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said strategic divestment of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, among others, and IPO of LIC would be completed in 2021-22.

The process of privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Pawan Hans, BEML, Shipping Corp (SCI), Neelachal

Ispat Nigam Ltd, and Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd (FSNL) is ongoing. The sources said privatisation of these PSUs will be completed this fiscal ending March 2022.

They said Air India privatisation is on track despite Cairn Energy's lawsuit to get Air India recognised as the alter ego of India and that "it should be held jointly and severally responsible for India's debts, including from any judgment resulting from

recognition of the award".

Once a court recognises Air India as the alter ego of the Indian government, Cairn can seek attachment or seizure of its assets in the US such as airplanes, immovable assets and bank accounts to recover the amount it was awarded by the arbitration tribunal.

"India is defending itself in the tax case. The Air India privatisation is on track and will not be impacted," a source said. Air India, which was earlier this week served the lawsuit filed by Cairn in a New York court, will challenge it being made liable for the discharge of any payment obligations of the Government of India.

Even if Cairn succeeds in getting Air India recognised as alter ego of the government, it would not mean that the airline's assets will fall into the hands of the British firm, the sources said. All it means is that Cairn can seek the seizure of any asset Air India may have in the US. There may not be many such assets.

Das asks PSBs to quickly implement RBI directives

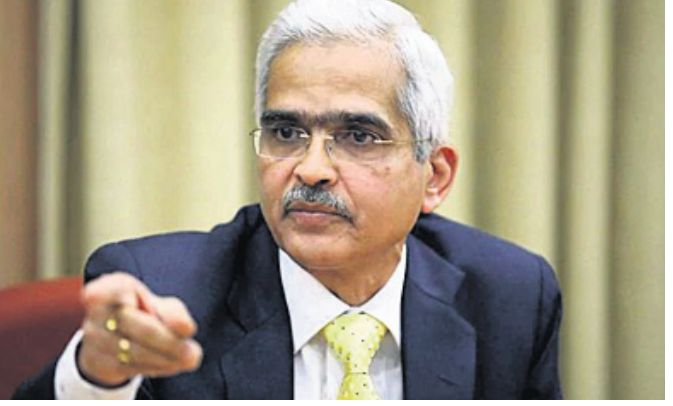
AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 19: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday asked state-owned banks to quickly implement measures announced by the central bank recently in the "right earnest", and to continue focussing on steps to enhance the resilience of their balance sheets.

Das during a meeting with the MDs and CEOs of public sector banks acknowledged the important role being played by PSBs in extending various banking facilities including credit facilities to individuals and businesses while tackling the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

"He impressed upon the banks to quickly implement the measures announced by RBI recently in the right earnest. He also urged the banks to continue focussing on steps to enhance the resilience of their balance sheets," the RBI said in a statement post the meeting held over video conference.

Earlier this month, the governor had announced a slew of measures, including term liquidity facility of ₹50,000 crore to ease access



to emergency health services, to further improve lending to MSME sector, restructuring of loans, and rationalisation of compliance to KYC, in wake of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other matters that came up for discussion during the meeting, included the current state of the financial sector; credit flows to different sectors including to small borrowers, MSMEs; and progress in the implementation of Covid Resolution Framework. Monetary policy transmission

PPT GETS MEDICAL O2 FROM SINGAPORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Paradip Port Trust (PPT) handled 24 medical oxygen cylinders (40-litre capacity each), along with five medical oxygen cylinder and oxygen regulator-humidifiers, brought in by MV Anna Maria from Singapore for distribution among various state-run hospitals in Jagatsinghpur district. Paradip ADM Kanhu Charan Dhir received the oxygen cylinders on behalf of the state government.

Paradip International Cargo Terminal Private Limited (PCTPL) also handled 30 medical oxygen cylinders (10-litre capacity each), sent by the shipping line Louis



Dreyfus Company Freight Asia from Singapore in MV Glory Amsterdam for PPT Hospital. In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Steel Authority of India along with Paradip Customs has provided necessary assistance for this endeavor. This is the first time medical oxygen is being handled at PPT.

Ongo empowers 12,000 micro merchants in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Ongo, one of India's leading digital payments brands, has supported micro merchants across Odisha by transforming their day-to-day business with cost-efficient and secure digital payment solutions.

Ongo has empowered over 12000 merchants across Odisha with various POS-based and device-less solutions. Over 1600 merchants from Bhubaneswar use Ongo's digital platform to offer seamless and secure services to their customers.

The company offers innovative digital solutions that transform traditional merchants into smart merchants. Currently, it has about 440 device-less payment touch points in Odisha. This includes link-based payments, QR-based payments and payment gateway in 60 locations across the state.

Furthermore, Ongo offers multiple services like card-based payments, QR payments, Cash@PoS, bill payments, Ongo motor insurance as well as loyalty programs that enable merchants to improve customer experience. President of Digital Business,



India Transact Services Ltd, Sunil Khosla, said, "We strive to bridge the digital parity by offering a wide range of payment solutions to our merchant partners. Our efforts have also been towards educating our merchant-base about various digital initiatives that will help them provide customized solutions and value-added services that can aid growth for small businesses across the state."

GOOGLE ANNOUNCES NEW PRIVACY SETTINGS, AI TOOLS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: Google has announced a slew of new features including new privacy settings, AI tools and release of the first beta of Android 12 that will become part of its products over the course of the year.

Kicking off Google I/O 2021 in a virtual format from the Mountain View campus, Google CEO Sundar Pichai also announced additions to Google Workspace that will enable richer collaboration, especially in view of the pandemic that has driven enterprises across the globe to embrace remote working solutions.

Pichai said that COVID-19 has deeply affected every community over the past year, and "places like Brazil, and my home country of India, are now going through their

most difficult moments yet". "COVID-19 has deeply affected every community, it's also inspired coordination between public and private sectors, and across international borders.

"At Google, we launched products and initiatives to help one another through this time - to help students and teachers continue their learning from anywhere, to help small businesses adapt and grow, and to get emergency relief and vaccines to communities in need," he said on late Tuesday night.

Pichai and other Google executives laid out the roadmap for tools and features that will be rolled out through the year across products like Search, Lens, Photos, Maps and Shopping among others.

For enhanced privacy, Google is introducing a new "quick delete"

FB rolls out Covid announcement tool

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: Social media giant Facebook Wednesday said it is expanding its 'COVID-19 Announcement' in India that will help health departments of states and Union Territories share essential COVID-19 related updates with their communities. India is the second country after the US to launch this feature.

Facebook said it has partnered with 33 states and UTs to roll out this tool in their respective jurisdictions. "The COVID-19 Announcement feature will give health departments the ability to push out timely, credible COVID-19 and vaccine information to people in their local communities/



state jurisdictions. States will be able to issue these alerts statewide or to specific cities within their state," it added. The roll out of the COVID-19 Announcement tool in India is part of the company's ongoing efforts to support the public health authorities' work to keep people safe and informed during the coronavirus public health crisis, it said.

"When posts by state health department pages on Facebook are marked as COVID-19

Announcements, we amplify their reach so that people located in the community are more likely to see them. We will send notifications to people located in the affected area, and will also show that information on the COVID-19 Information Center," Facebook said.

This will help distribute important and urgent updates related to COVID-19 or COVID-19 vaccination efforts to people in the community, it added. Facebook said COVID-19 Announcements can be used to communicate information on existing COVID-19 resources such as helplines; updates on hospital bed availability in districts such as Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and oxygen supported beds; and changes to existing COVID-19 rules

and regulation that can impact communities and day-to-day actions like lockdowns, night curfews and changes to treatment protocols. The tool can also be used to share information about vaccine eligibility and registration, and the logistics of acquiring a vaccine; providing accurate information on COVID-19 appropriate behaviour; and suggesting preventive behavioural health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, it added.

Previously, the FB had said it would roll out a vaccine finder tool on its mobile app in India to help people identify places nearby to get inoculated. The company had also announced a USD 10 million grant for emergency response efforts for COVID-19 situation.

Audi warranty service extended

New Delhi: German luxury carmaker Audi on Wednesday said it has extended warranties and service plans for its customers in India till June 30 in the wake of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The extension of standard and extended warranty and service plans are applicable to those customers whose plans lapse during the lockdown months of April and May. Customers facing challenges owing to the lockdown will benefit from these extended plans. Audi India Head Balbir Singh said, in line with the need of the hour, we are rolling out extensions on standard warranty.



option that will help delete the last 15 minutes of search history with a single tap from the Google Account Menu. It is also introducing Location History reminders in Maps Timeline.

"Locked Folder" is a new password-protection feature in Google Photos where select photos can be saved separately and these photos won't show up as users scroll through their grid or in shared al-

Boosting security

Additions to Google Workspace will enable richer collaboration, especially in view of the pandemic that has driven enterprises across the globe to embrace remote working solutions

Google is introducing a new "quick delete" option that will help delete the last 15 minutes of search history with a single tap from the Google Account Menu

bums. The feature will be introduced to Google Pixel phones first, and more Android devices throughout the year. Google has also announced new

enhancements to its Password Manager, which helps users create, remember, save and auto-fill passwords across the web. This will help easily change compromised passwords with Google Assistant; provide automatic, proactive notification of compromised passwords; and provide a new tool to make it easy to import passwords from files or other password managers.

The tech giant is also releasing the first beta of Android 12, featuring the biggest design change since 2014. The latest version includes features that give more transparency around which apps are accessing user data, and offers more controls so users can make informed choices. Currently, there are 3 billion active Android devices around the world.

