AMYRA UNPERTURBED

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

LEISURE



PUTIN-XI HAILS PACT

BHUBANESWAR | THURSDAY, MAY 20 | 2021

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

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

2 farmers die at

Singhu border

Sonipat (Haryana): Two farmers

the group protesting against the

with one of them found Covid-19

Wednesday. The two farmers -

Singh (70) are residents of

Balbir Singh (50) and Mahender

respectively. Both died Tuesday. They were part of the group

protesting at the Singhu border.

from Punjab, who were part of

new farm laws, passed away

positive, officials said

Patiala and Ludhiana

Covid-19 patient

gangraped, dies

infected woman, who was allegedly gangraped by three

MARKET WATCH

DOLLAR **73.63**

SILVER **₹72,558**

39.0°

EURO

GOLD

WEATHER

Patna: A 45-year-old Covid-19

employees of a private hospital, died here Wednesday. Her daughter alleged that her mother was sexually assaulted May 16, a day after her admission.

SENSEX **49902.64** 290.69

VARIATION

1 ₹0.08

₹396

₹638

Light rain

very likely

38.2°

'Yaas' threat looms large

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



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.

storm. The storm is likely to make

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 'Papaa-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 premature 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 the Bengal coast around May 26 evening," Jena said.

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



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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

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 facil2020 - 1517) M Dated, 19-05-6

ity to manage adverse events following immunisation (AEFI).

The ACS said it will be difficult to manage AEFI, if it occurs during the drivein/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 10.2422 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 throng 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 showed. 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 vers 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.

volved 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 '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.



leisure



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.

Mumbai: Actress Amyra



FORTUNE FORECAST

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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. Ganesha says that as a matter of fact you may emerge wiser from others' ideas.

TAURUS

Ganesha finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. 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.

You wish to display your social prestige and mon-etary 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

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 expecta-

I VIRGO

Ganesha says you of family matters today. You have great skills when it comes to negotiations, and you will use them in set-

It's a full platter today,

and you have to manage promises to be full of writing letters and reviving old contacts. Expect a call to appear for an interview for a better job.

Try to take a chill pill as

SCORPIO

you may be worried about petty issues today. Do not let them hinder your hap niness 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

Ganesha 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 Ganesha

CAPRICORN

You have projected your self 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,

AQUARIUS

Today, you're up against those who want to get back at you. But not for nothing are you the king Ganesha savs 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 implement ing your plans, if they are well thought out, in a phased manner. This will help you achieve your targets, says Ganesha



Hitanshu Jinsi, who plays Lord Vishnu in Vighnaharta Ganesh, is all set to also essav 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 in-

well.

Now

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 tem-

ple once things get normalised. Playing a mythological role is awaking 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

ergy, 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

sure I'm going to kill it. The en-

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.

Abhishek Banerjee

On the work front, Abhishek features in the latest Netflix anthology Ajeeb Daastaans. The actor has his kitty full with upcoming projects like Dostana 2, Rashmi Rocket, Bhediya, Aankh Micholi and Helmet. IANS

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.

Tamannaah FAILURE DOESN'T **AFFECT AMYRA**

film. As long as I get work, Dastur says she has reached I am happy. The day I a point in her career don't, that's the day I where she is unaffected will be worried," she by a film not doing well. said. "I think I have had The actress adds that there is a lot enough films not do well and do well, and more she has to realise that it is part achieve. and parcel of the "At the end of the day, I feel I job. One film still haven't works and one doesn't. I just reached that laugh and get position ready where l for the wanted to be at,' next she savs.

> "I am proud of how far l have come without knowing anyone. It is about hard work and I believe vou create your own luck. I am happy to see where my career is going. Hopefully, I will have a

long career with different

SUDOKU

6 4

2

3

8

SOLUTIONS

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a

manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains

4

6

3

8

4

9

3

6

8

5

5

9

the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

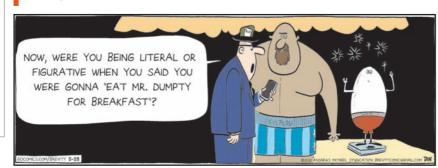
PEANUTS



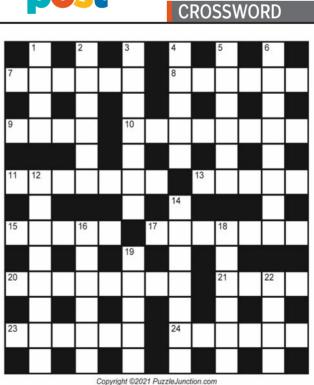
CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



FUN



20 They occur in

cr	<u>oss</u>
7	Can cause
	problems on a
	computer

- 8 Pugilism 9 Radiate
- 10 Chewed the fat
- 11 Rabbit holes 13 Runs into
- 15 Musical
- 17 Gauge
- composition

- 3 Pirate
- 2 Spit
- 4 Corpulent plus
- 1 Sob

the ocean

21 Mascara site

23 Gardener's

tool

24 Reveal

<u>Down</u>

- 19 Confuse 22 Cookbook direction

5 Kick the

bucket

6 Aardvark

freeway

knots

14 He gets rid of

16 Kind of case

18 Smitten (2,4)

12 German

CROSSWORD

W T O B BIKINI ASH O M D C P 4 6 9 2 7 5 8 5 8 6 4 9

ANTEDTEAM

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



NEED OF THE HOUR

	***	COV	/ID-19 '	TRACK	ER
NEED OF THE HOUR			INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
Policemen penalise		World	16,52,32,551	14,43,00,869	34,24,592
lockdown violators at Sundarpada vegetable		India	2,54,96,330	2,19,86,363	2,83,248
market in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday		Odisha	6,44,401	5,46,631	2,378
			: 	: 	:

COV	ID-19 '	TRACK	ER
	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,52,32,551	14,43,00,869	34,24,5
India	2,54,96,330	2,19,86,363	2,83,2
Odisha	6,44,401	5,46,631	2,3

FS&CW dept afflicted with governance deficit: HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 19: Expressing concern over the sale of plastic bot tled 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,



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

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 leach its chemical components into the water.

"Some of the chemical components like BPA (Bisphenol A) used in plastic and plasticisers are strongly suspected of disrupting our hormonal balance. Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals is associated with around 80 diseases, including testicular cancer, obesity and reproductive disorders. Unborn and young children are particularly vulnerable because their hormone system is still at the stage of development," Justice Panigrahi said.

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 Vibhusan 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.

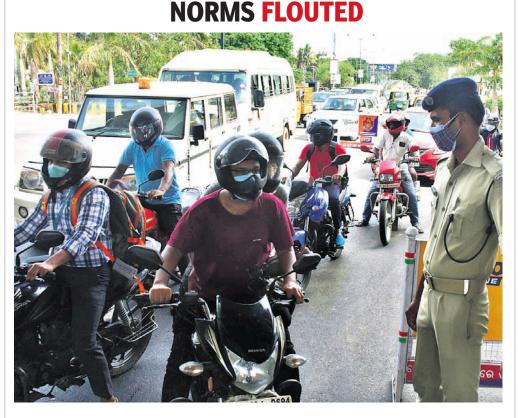
Born September 1, 1973. Prashant, popularly known as Munna, was an opener and righthanded batsman. He made his debut in cricket as an under-19

player of the

buted 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



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

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

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

WILL BE TREATED AS 'GREEN FLAG' CASES. WHILE THE MODERATELY-AFFECTED ONES WOULD BE TERMED AS 'RED FLAG' PATIENTS

Monitoring first

HOME ISOLATION PATIENTS WITH

NO OR MILD SYMPTOMS OF COVID

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 mon-

itoring the Covid situation.

After receiving the list, the executives at 1929 call centre contact the 'Red Flag' or moderatelyaffected 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

While seven doctors are available at 1929 call centre during the morning and afternoon shifts, four doctors are available in the

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 re-

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 lifesaving gas. A total of 919 tankers carrying 16,809MT oxygen have been dispatched under direct escort



FROM VEHICLES CARRYING MEDICAL OXYGEN IN TANKERS UNDER STATE GOVERNMENT

THE ORDER WILL REMAIN IN **FORCE TILL JULY 30**

and supervision of the Odisha Police to 14 such states so far.

sent to Andhra Pradesh and 236 tankers to Telangana so far. Tamil

plied to Uttar Pradesh, 61 to Madhya Pradesh, 22 to Delhi, 4 to Punjab, 6 to Karnataka, 3 to Bihar, 2 each to Chandigarh and Rajasthan in last

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 ac-

"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 The ULBs were asked to identify vulnerable waterlogging and low-lying areas and take steps for discharging water expeditiously

cover has been damaged and take immediate steps to repair and cover the hole. Appropriate signage must be put at places where repair is not possible to caution people," the notification said.

The ULBs were also asked to identify vulnerable waterlogging and low-lying areas and take appropriate steps for discharging water expeditiously. "Wherever there is encroachment of drain channels which cause obstruction to the free flow of storm-water, rainwater or waste-water, same should be evicted/demolished forthwith," the notification added.

Moreover, observing the clogging of drains due to construction waste polythene, the H&UD department asked the officials to increase monitoring of the same. Alerting against the outbreak of vector-borne diseases, the department also suggested proper sanitation measures.

TOLL WILL NOT BE COLLECTED

OR CYLINDERS AT TOLL PLAZAS

The oxygen is being supplied from Rourkela, Jajpur, Dhenkanal

Nadu has received 48 tankers of LMO while Haryana has received 131 tankers, Maharashtra 41 tankers and Chhattisgarh 29 tankers. As many as 52 tankers were sup-

A total of 282 tankers have been

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 brass-

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 re-



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

muneration is very low if the amount of labour involved in it is taken into consideration," said Abhiram.

UTENSILS AND OTHER

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

Lack of provision for bank loan and assistance from the govern-

SOURCES OF LIVELIHOOD ment has prevented the artisans to source raw materials and introduce new technology into the

SEARCH FOR SOME OTHER

bronze and brass crafts. "Earlier, people were buying bronze and brassware for wedding

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.

Pvt vaccinators told to display price on CoWIN

Bhubaneswar, May 19: The state Health department Wednesday announced guidelines for private vaccination centres that are keen to procure vaccine doses directly from the manufacturers for inoculating people in the phase III of the ongoing Covid vaccination drive.

The norms now have asked the private players to abide by all the protocols of Covid-19 vaccination and also to display the price of the vaccine they are offering at their centres.

"Under liberalised pricing and accelerated Covid-19 vaccination strategy under phase-III, for seamless and convenient vaccination to eligible citizens, private hospitals can provide Covid vaccination service by procuring vaccines directly from manufacturers. It is requested that districts/corporations may actively engage with private providers," the communication from the department to Collectors and Municipal Corporations said.

The norms said, "All private hospitals procuring Covid-19 vaccines must be registered on CoWIN and that should be made active by administration. The credentials for the site/vaccination centre manager are to be issued immediately for scheduling sessions and publish the sessions online immediately after getting vaccine to provide visibility of appointment slots to the citizens in advance.'

It also added, "All the private vaccination centres must be informed that, it is mandatory for



Chaos at a Covid vaccination centre at Nayabazar area in Cuttack, while those in the age group of 18-44 queue up maintaining social distance to get inoculated at Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Now, priority vax for health workers' kin The Health department Wednesday allowed priority

healthcare workers. This comes after the doctors' association in Odisha wrote to the state government in this regard. In a communication to the district Collectors and municipal corporations, the Health department Wednesday asked them to ensure vaccination for the family members of health workers on

vaccination for family members of

and Kishori nursing home, Bargarh have contacted Serum Institute for

21 dists show positivity rate

The communication said, "Since beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, our healthcare providers have been fighting relentlessly to provide quality services to the community for saving valuable lives of people in our state. The vaccination of healthcare workers started on priority from January 16, 2021 and in our state more than 95 per cent of healthcare workers have been vaccinated till date."

"In this context, you are re-

quested to review the above in-

mention here that the family members of these healthcare providers are equally at risk for Covid-19 infection because of the nature of work of healthcare providers. In this context, it is requested to facilitate Covid-19 vaccination of the family members of healthcare providers at health facilities in your district/corporation at suitable Covid vaccination centres."

ordination mechanism to ensure vaccination of citizens smoothly,'

ODISHA RECORDS 21 FRESH CASUALTIES

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Odisha's Covid-19 tally surged to 6,44,401 Wednesday 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 1,02,422 since Tuesday.

Khurda district, comprising state capital Bhubaneswar, reported the highest number of 1,460 new cases, followed by Sundargarh (983), Cuttack (867), Angul (552) and Sambalpur (547).

Taking to Twitter, the Health and Family Welfare department said, "Regret to inform the demise of twenty one Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Kalahandi accounted for three deaths, while two each died in Khurda, Koraput, Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur and Sundargarh, the official said.

Odisha has so far conducted over 1.10 crore sample tests, which includes a record number of 60,510 tests Tuesday. The positivity rate stands at 5.83 per cent.

With the state continuing to report around 10,000 new Covid-19 cases daily, authorities Tuesday extended the ongoing lockdown with stricter restrictions by two more weeks till June 1.

The government has also constituted a state-level task force that

Covid scare: HC shuts down for 8 days

CUTTACK: The Orissa High Court and its offices will remain shut from May 20 to 27 in view of Covid upsurge.

However, appeals can be made to registrar (Judicial) for hearing of 'extremely urgent' cases during the shutdown, an official order issued by the High Court mentioned.

As per the order, offices of the HC will resume functioning May 28, 2021 as per the vacation roster. Accordingly, the earlier notified dates of the Vacation Benches will stand cancelled and instead, the Vacation Benches, as notified, will function May 31, June 2 and June 4 during the remaining period of the Summer Vacation, read the order.

It further said, "For the listing of urgent cases during the HC shutdown, mentioning can be made only on the preceding working day before the Registrar (Judicial) and the Deputy Registrar (Judicial). During the period, only extremely urgent matters that cannot wait till May 31 for listing may be mentioned before the Registrar (Judicial) through ohc.mentionmemoskornail.com between 11am and 12 noon.'

will take initiatives to increase production and provisioning of medical oxygen.

Dharitri reporter assaulted by cops in Puri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 19: A reporter of leading Odia daily Dharitri was assaulted by police at Badasankha here Wednesday.

The incident occurred when reporter Dattatreya Nayak was gathering information about police highhandedness on a fruit seller in the locality, sources said.

According to sources, police allegedly assaulted vendor Deepak Kumar Sahoo while he was selling fruit on a pushcart. Sahoo sustained injuries in the attack and was rushed to a hospital.

Soon, vegetable sellers of Badasankha staged a road blockade to protest the incident. "Police personnel attacked me

and tried to drag me into the PCR van while I was gathering information on the incident," Nayak

Protesting police highhandedness. Navak staged a dharna on the Grand Road. Later, the issue was solved though mutual consultation, sources said.

'There was an unfortunate incident involving the policemen and a working journalist. The police action was not intentional and the issue was resolved amicably. The journalist will not opt for any legal recourse," said a press note issued by the police.

Door-to-door survey

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Health and

Family Welfare department Wednesday decided to launch a

door-to-door survey for monitor-

ing Covid symptoms and co-mor-

bid conditions among people May

24. The three-month long survey will

The department also created de-

tailed action plan for undertaking

house-to-house survey by ASHAs

As per action plan, they will

conduct regular fever surveillance

at household level. They will also

ensure that symptomatic cases un-

dergo early testing for Covid-19 at

They will also create awareness

on Covid-appropriate behaviour

by writing messages on Swasthya

Kantha and distribution of leaflets

during door-to-door visit.

continue till August 23, 2021.

and Anganwadi workers.

the nearest facility.

to begin May 24

POST NEWS NETWORK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: As many as 21 districts of Odisha recorded a higher test positivity rate than the state's average positivity rate

of 18 per cent during last week (May 12 to 18). According to the data of Health Ministry, 28 out of 30 districts of Odisha have recorded a test positivity rate (TPR) above 10 per cent.

The TPR is above 18 per cent in 21

them to offer vaccination services

only through CoWIN system and

they must not provide any offline

services." Mandatory disclosure

of vaccine price on CoWIN is to be ensured by the private players as

The government however ex-

tended its helping hand in training

the hospitals for the vaccination

drive but asked them to declare

their pricing for the vaccinations.

It also said that suitable educa-

tional materials must be published

to inform the persons who are tak-

information from the Union gov-

ernment, till now three hospitals-

-SUM hospital, Bhubaneswar,

The department said that as per

per the new norms.

ing the vaccines.

While Angul district was on top position in the list with 36.1 per cent TPR, Khurda was in second position with 33.5 per cent, followed by Boudh (33%), Bhadrak (32.7%), Balasore (32%), Bargarh (26.4%), Sambalpur (26%), Dhenkanal (25.9%), Cuttack (25%), Jajpur

(24.2%) and Kalahandi (24.1%) Similarly, Puri district witnessed from 21% last week despite the increase in testing

Angul district topped the list with 36.1% TPR, followed by Khurda (33.5%) and

TPR is on declining path in Bolangir, Sambalpur, Sundergarh, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Jharsuguda, Bhadrak, Deogarh, Nabarangpur and Gajapati

a positivity rate of 24 per cent while it was 23.3 per cent in Nabarangpur, 23.2 per cent in Nuapada, 22.6 per cent in Sonepur, 21.6 per cent in Jagatsinghpur, 21.2 per cent in Sundargarh, 21.1 per cent in Bolangir, 20.3 per cent in Jharsuguda, 19.8 per cent in Keonjhar and 19.5 per cent in Mayurbhani districts.

Apart from the above list, seven

higher than state's average other districts of Odisha recorded a test positivity rate of above 10 per cent. These districts are—Nayagarh (18%), Koraput (16.5%), Rayagada (15.1%), Ganjam (13.8%), Deogarh (12.3%), Gajapati (12%) and Malkangiri (10.5%).

The average test positivity of Odisha has fallen to 18 per cent from 21 per cent last week despite the increase in testing. The testing target has been revised to 60,000 per day and instructions have been given by the government to conduct 70,000 per day from next week as the antigen test kit availability has improved, sources said.

The TPR is on declining path in the districts like Bolangir, Sambalpur, Sundergarh, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Jharsuguda, Bhadrak, Deogarh, Nabarangpur and Gaiapati, the source said.

NOBLE GESTURE



A volunteer distributes cooked food packets among the needy near Cuttack Railway station, Wednesday

Speed up separation of Plus II from degree colleges: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Higher Education (HE) Minister Arun Sahoo Wednesday asked the School and Mass Education department to expedite the work pertaining to separation of Plus II from degree colleges.

A virtual meeting was held between HE Minister Arun Sahoo and School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranian Dash to resolve issues regarding separation of Plus II and Plus III.

In 2019, both the departments decided to create separate infrastructure for Plus II and Plus III colleges in a phased manner.

Sahoo asked the School and Mass Education minister to complete the process of separating Plus II from degree colleges by setting up separate infrastructure such as buildings and classrooms and also recruiting teachers for Plus II classes.

Naveen praises docs

for saving newborn

Make Covid testing mass movement: Pradhan

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Wednesday appealed to the people of Odisha to make Covid testing a mass move-

In a video message, Pradhan said people in Odisha are not coming forward for testing due to fear and misconception about Covid.

To motivate the people to go for testing is not the job of the gov-



ernment only, rather it is the responsibility of the society and all of us, he said.

Pradhan appealed to all Odias

and senior citizens to join the campaign to make testing a mass movement to combat Covid pandemic. The Union Minister said the en-

tire country, including Odisha, is badly affected by the second wave of the novel coronavirus.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has advised to chalk out strategy to increase testing, tracing and treatment to bring spread of the disease under control.

Pradhan said the testing rate in

than the national average. According to data, 146 people per lakh were tested for the virus in the country, while 120 per lakh were tested for the viral infection

in Odisha till May 17. While the average testing rate per lakh in Kerala is 390, it is 417 in

Pradhan said that the positivity rate in 14 districts of the state, including Sambalpur, Angul, Bargarh, Sundargarh and Kalahandi, is higher than the national average.

girl, Gudiya beat Covid-19 who was battling for life on a ventilator. Gudiya's successful win over Covid-19 is a silver lining amidst the bru-

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik

Wednesday appreciated the dedi-

cation of Dr Arijit Mohapatra and

his team of Jagannath Hospital

in the city for helping a newborn

tal pandemic. In his social media account he admired the work of Dr Arijit Mohapatra and his team.

As per report published in Orissa POST, in a rare case, a 25day-old newborn baby, who was infected with Covid-19 and faced multiple organ failures, defeated the infection successfully.

The infant was admitted at a

private hospital in the city on the 25th day after her birth. Earlier she developed Covid-like symptoms while her whole family was infected with the virus. After diagnosis she was found

Covid positive. The patient, Gudiva belongs to Kalahandi district. She was admitted with several health issues owing to the viral infection.

The baby had complains of poor feeding, fever, respiratory distress

Appreciate the dedication of Dr Arijit Mohapatra & his team of Jagannath Hospital, Bhubaneswar for helping newborn girl, Gudiya beat #COVID1 after battling for life on a ventilator. Gudiya's successful win over #COVID19 offers a huge ray of hope during these Appreciation For Doctors & Healthcare Staff

and found to be suffering from pneumonia. The team of doctors treating the patient put her on ventilator for 10 days but her survival chance was thin owing to the involvement of several organs and infection at the tender age.

However, after regular monitoring, medical assistance and use of essential drugs like Remdesivir and steroids, she was revived, doctors at Jagannath Hospital in the city said

After treatment for three weeks, the baby was discharged in a healthy condition.

State energy sector has huge growth potential: DS Mishra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 19: The state's energy sector has a huge growth potential as Odisha offers opportunities for industrial and commercial development, said state Energy Minister Dibya Shankar

Addressing at ASSOCHAM Odisha Energy Meet Wednesday, Mishra said, "There would be several openings in renewable energy sector especially for solar segment as Odisha offers the in-

frastructure support and has a large land bank. The state has its plan for thermal and hydro power projects as the government is committed to green energy.

The minister also said that the government is open to suggestions from industry and assured full cooperation for other states. He also stated that Odisha believes in firming up business friendly policies and is among the first that privatised the power distribution.

Meanwhile, Chairman of AS-SOCHAM Odisha State Council Vishal Agarwal said the energy sector needs an integrated approach. Technology and innovations can bring in efficiency while areas such as digital media, smart metering, smart grid, distributed generation, electric vehicles hold

potential for future. M Shenbagam, CEO of TP Central Odisha Power Distribution (Tata Power) spoke about the capex investment and the extensive support of all stakeholders in terms of distribution and privatisation.

OHRC for rehab of **Balisahi displaced**

Cuttack: The Odisha Human Rights **Commission directed Cuttack** Collector and the Commissioner of **Cuttack Municipal Corporation to** take immediate measures to rehabilitate and resettle the people of Balisahi slum near Nuapada area, affected due to road expansion. The direction came in response to a petition filed by rights activist and the chairman of 'Human Rights of India' organisation Manoj Jena. The commission also directed both the authorities to submit a detailed report about the incident during the next hearing by June 22. Around 1,200 families were evicted from slums located at Behera Sahi, Ranihat Sagadia Sahi, Pilgrim Road, Das Sahi, Malgodown Jalua Sahi for the expansion of Taladanda canal road.

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Few takers for OMC's chrome ore e-bids

Jajpur, May 19: The state government lost revenues worth ₹10 crore as the e-auction of chrome ore floated by the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) failed to attract buyers due to wrong pricing of chrome ore, a re-

Over 7,000 metric tonnes (MT) of chrome ore have remained unsold as no firm participated in the bid. It was alleged that no industrial firms participated in the bid due to arbitrary pricing of ore.

The failure of the e-auction has dealt a blow to the OMC. The failure of the e-auction has also shocked 14 industrial firms dependent on the OMC for chrome ore. Trade unions have alleged that over 30,000 workers and labourers will lose their livelihood if the problem persists.

Reports said OMC has fixed the floor price of chrome ore at 13.5 per cent of the market price of ferrochrome. Accordingly, the floor price of chromites should have been fixed at ₹12,214 in the e-auction Monday.

16 Khadia tribals

in Similipal area

Baripada, May 19: As many as 16

members of the Khadia tribal com-

munity hailing from villages around the buffer area of Similipal sanctuary

in Mayurbhanj district have tested

A rapid response team (RRT).

comprising of doctors and Asha

workers, immediately visited the

tribal villages and checked on the

health conditions of the tribals in

the villages. The RRT members

have taken readings of the body

positive for Covid-19 Wednesday.

test positive

POST NEWS NETWORK



However, OMC levied an additional ₹3070 on the floor price leading to price escalation. In the e-auction, the floor price of ore was fixed at 15,284 per MT following which not a single tonne of chrome was sold during the auction

The mining body could manage to sell only 14,800 MT of ore out of 35,100 MT put out for sale during an auction held April 23, 2021. Similarly, OMC failed to dispose of all the chrome ore during similar auctions held January 11, 2021, February 10, 2021 and March 15, 2021.

It was alleged that the OMC arbitrarily fixes the floor price of chromite ores based on the advice of the consultancy firm KPMG. Members of Kalinganagar Industries Association (KNIA) and industrial bodies alleged that the OMC has missed the opportunity to liquidate the stockpiles of ore due to a wrong formula and price set by the KPMG. The mining corporation and the state exchequer have suffered huge losses due to lower offtake of chrome ore.

They have requested the stateowned OMC to revise the formula as suggested by the Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). The PWC had suggested fixing the floor price of chrome ores at ₹13, 457 per tonne which is

BATTLE AGAINST VIRUS

12.65 per cent of market price of fer rochrome. However, the OMC had fixed the floor price at ₹16,527 in the bidding process April 23, this year.

It has also urged the OMC not to add additional royalty to the floor price. The floor price of the chrome ore is linked to ferrochrome price, said the industries' body. Notably, firms that do not have captive mines are dependent on OMC for chrome ore.

However, it has become difficult for them to buy chrome ore from OMC at current prices. They apprehend that if the OMC does not reduce chrome price, it might lead to closure of their plants. When contacted, OMC has fixed the floor price of chrome ore at 13.5 per cent of the market price of ferrochrome. Accordingly, the floor price of chromites should have been fixed at ₹12,214 in the e-auction Monday

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The failure of the e-auction has dealt a blow to the OMC. The failure of the e-auction has also shocked 14 industrial firms dependent on the OMC for chrome ore. Trade unions have alleged that over 30,000 workers and labourers will lose their livelihood if the problem persists

PK Swain, regional officer of OMC, refused to comment on the issue stating that the auction is conducted by the sale committee.

Rackets push iron ore smuggling along NH-53



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandikhole, May 19: Some places along the Chandikhole-Paradeep Highway (NH-53) in Jaipur district have turned out to be hubs of iron ore smuggling. The raw material is siphoned off from transporting vehicles. Such illegal activities have been flourishing due to several rackets active in the area, a report said.

According to the report, thousands of trucks have been engaged in mineral transportation from various mines of Keonihar and Sundargarh districts to the Paradeep Port.

Several iron ore-smuggling rackets are active at Kaudikhol and other places along the NH-53. Members of rackets unload a part of ore from trucks with the help of truck drivers. Ore mafia has enrolled scores of truck drivers in their pay roll.

It was learnt that as soon as trucks start mineral transportation from mines, drivers intimate the mafia over phone in advance and strike deals to deliver the qualities of iron ore they want to sell.

Moreover, mafia manages to obtain forged documents for the smuggled iron ore and transport them to various agencies at Paradeep.

Reliable sources said, some truck drivers are handed out temporary permits when they carry minerals from mines. Mafia sent these permits online to transporting agencies. Once approved, the smuggled iron ore is sold with temporary permits.

 $Even \, some \, sponge \, iron \, plants$

LOOPHOLES

part from Kaudikhol, A part from Naudikilos, several other road-side areas between Chandikhole and Paradeep have emerged as convenient places for iron ore siphoning trade that allegedly goes on with the help of local police

Deputy director of mines (Jajpur Road) JS Banra said that raids will be carried out with departmental squads. And accordingly action will be taken against those promoting such illegality, he added

buy such illegal iron ore for their use, it was alleged.

Apart from Kaudikhol, several other road-side areas between Chandikhole and Paradeep have emerged as convenient places for iron ore siphoning trade that allegedly goes on with the help of local police. The Kaudikhol area falls under Mahanga police limits in Cuttack district.

Locals alleged that the district level task force, formed to check all kinds of illegal activities in mining and transportation, has failed to act against the mafia.

They have demanded routine raids at these places along the Chandikhole-Paradeep Highway.

Deputy director of mines (Jajpur Road) JS Banra said that raids will be carried out with departmental squads. And accordingly action will be taken against those promoting such

illegality, he added.

temperature and accordingly dis tributed medicines, an official of the RRT stated. According to sources Khadia tribals residing in Lulung, Kakarapani, Kochilaghati, Tarajodi and Godipokhari villages under Shvamakhunta block located in the buffer area have been visiting Rangamatia community health centre (CHC) for the last few days



A couple of days ago, a member of the Khadia community of Lalpani village had tested positive for Covid-19. Later, a medical team had visited the village and collected swab samples which were sent for RT-PCR testing. Meanwhile, 16 of them have tested Covid positive after their reports came in, the official source added.

Owing to lack of adequate awareness among tribals, many have been getting infected from the deadly virus with no precautions being taken to stop the spread of the pandemic. "Although Covid-19 had not reached out to tribals during the first wave, they are contracting the virus in large numbers during the second wave," a doctor of RRT Uttam Dash said.

Notably, the infected Khadia community members have been put in quarantine at a nearby facility. The tribals are infected by the virus due to exposure while going out in search of work or even for buying daily essentials

Fire personnel sanitising Boinda area under Kishorenagar block in Angul district following a surge in Covid positives

7-month pregnant nurse works for Covid patients, wins heart

Bolangir, May 19: The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc in India. Doctors and healthcare workers have been working round the clock to save lives. The doctors and nurses in hospitals have been at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic. However, nurses have proved to be the lifeline of India's fight against Covid-19. A pregnant staff nurse at special

newborn care unit (SNCU) in Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in Bolangir has set an example for others by dedicating herself to the services of Covid patients. She is now seven months pregnant.

The staff nurse identified as Pragati Putel, 24, is a native of Rengaljuri village under Khaprakhol block in Bolangir district. She is now pregnant for the second time after losing her first pregnancy last year while attending to Covid patients.

However, that hasn't deterred her from discharging her duty. District Collector Chanchal Rana has appreciated the work of the staff nurse and has thanked her for her dedicated service towards the



Pragati Putel (24) of Rengaljuri village has risked her life by dedicating herself to the services of **Covid patients**

Covid patients. Reports said, she stayed calm and collected despite losing her first pregnancy and has been providing healthcare services to Covid and other patients since then. She did not even hesitate to work for the Covid patients when the second wave of

She said attending to Covid patients battling with lives has given her an opportunity to do something for them. She believes her services to the patients will definitely have a positive impact on her unborn child as 'service to mankind is service to god.'

Her husband Rajiv Putel has inspired her most and given her courage to attend to the Covid patients in the hospital. Her husband accompanies her daily from the village and drops her at the hospital and again takes her back home, 80 km from the district headquarters of Bolangir. Her in-laws and parents have also inspired her

Angry over vax halt, people stage protests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Mary 19: Failure to have anti-Covid-19 jabs left people infuriating in Keonihar Wednesday. Alleging administrative apathy during the vaccination drive, they staged protests in front of the Collector's office, a report said.

According to the report, hundreds of people had been waiting in queues outside a vaccine centre in Keonjhar municipality since early in the morning. The administration had intimated about the vaccine shortage on social media on the previous day. However, many residents were unaware of the fact.

After hours of wait, they came to know that vaccines have not been available to the centre. They were infuriated at this and marched towards the collectorate, where they staged a demonstration.

Collector Ashish Thakare came out of his residence and held talks with the agitating people. The locals were explained about the situation.

Covid-19 positive cases and casualties are spiralling in Keonjhar. Panicked, peolpe are desperate to take jabs and throng various vaccine centres in the town every day.

However, it was learnt that supply of vaccine doses not match with the number of people having registered online for vaccination. Locals demanded that online registration and vaccine availabile ity should be streamlined in the larger interest of people.

AGRICULTURAL WORKS is extended up to 28th MAY 2021. The Registered agencies having Registration Certificate as per the rule issued by the Competent Authority, ESI and EPF registration, GST Registration, Service Tax registration certificate, etc. may submit tenders. The Bid document may be downloaded from IIHR

केन्द्रीय बागवानी परीक्षण केन्द्र

CENTRAL HORTICULTURAL

EXPERIMENT STATION

(ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural

Research, Bengaluru-560 089)

AIGINIA, BHUBANESWAR-751 019, ODISHA

Phone: 0674-2471712(0), Tele fax: 0674-2471867

E-mail: headches@rediffmail.com

SHORT TENDER NOTICE No. 03 / 2021

Notice No. 01/2021, it is stated that the date of receipt of

sealed tenders for job contract works towards; FIELD

In continuation to this Office earlier Short Tender

website (www.iihr.res.in) and the cost of bid document shall have to be deposited by the bidder in the form of DD while submitting their bids in sealed cover. The tenders will be received up to 3 p.m. on Dt. 28/05/2021. Tenders will be opened on Dt. 28/05/2021 at 3.30 p.m.

Women turn marigold farming into a gold mine

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 19: With the state government promoting women empowerment, many women SHGs have taken up various income-generating activities that have made them self-sufficient in the state.

A case in point is an SHG working in Baham panchayat under Jujumara block in Sambalpur district. The women of this group have set an example for others by scripting success in marigold farming that earns them ₹25000 a month.

Marigold farming has been a main source of earning for the SHG named as Pudapada Brukhya Surakhya.

"Every week, nearly one and a half quintals of flower are produced from our farm. We get Rs5000 to Rs6000 from its sales. But lockdown has impacted our flower business. Temples and religious places are shut while weddings and other ceremonies have

been restricted," they said. However, in normal months, marigold flower sales mount to ₹25,000 to ₹30,000.



The Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) and ORMAS are the support base for these women. "OLM and ORMAS are jointly working on women empowerment. The SHG members had applied for income-generating activities," said Pushpashri Navak, the coordinator of the OLM.

Thereafter, the women were sug-

gested to take up marigold flower farming and they were imparted training on it. Two years ago, they took up flower cultivation. They had taken flower saplings from Niladunguri nursery of the horticulture department. The male members of their families extended a helping hand to them by tilling the farmland. However,

the women did all other works-from planting saplings to harvesting flowers. They irrigate their farms with water from a bore well and at times from a nearby pond.

'Saplings were planted in January and February. Flower harvesting starts in March and continues till June. If someone takes up this farm**OLM and ORMAS are** jointly working for women

empowerment through income-generating activities PUSHPASHRI NAYAK I OLM COORDINATOR

ing, he or she can have good earning," they observed.

They lamented that due to pandemic, the flower business has been caught in slump with restrictions imposed on political meetings, temples, religious activities and weddings. They are worried about unsold flowers that are left to rot. They are now planning to use unsold flow-

ers to make gum and perfumes. Dry flowers and the flowers abandoned after rituals are being recycled in other states, they pointed out, stating that a cold store is required to pre-

serve the unsold flowers. Several other SHGs have also successfully taken up flower cultivation in Bamara and Kuchinda areas. But sometimes they also face distress sale.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

DRAINAGE DIVISION, JAGATSINGHPUR - 754103 e-Procurement Notice No. EEDD-JSPUR-01/2021-22

1.	Name of works	Improvement to Patenigaon Drainage Cut and its Link Drains
2.	Total No. of Works	: 01 (One) No. of Package
3.	Tender Cost of the work	: Rs.46.53 lakh
4.	Bid Identification No.	: EEDD-JSPUR/JSP-01/2021-22
5.	Period of Completion	: 9 (Nine) Calendar Months
6.	Availability of Tender Online	. 21.05.2021 from 11.30 hours to 31.05.2021 upto 17.30 hours.
7.	Receipt of Bids in the portal	21.05.2021 from 11.30 hours to 31.05.2021 upto 17.30 hours
8.	Date of Opening of Bid	01.06.2021 at 11.30 hours in the O/o. the Executive Engineer, Drainage Division, Jagatsinghpur
9.	Date of Lottery (if required)	07.06.2021 at 11.30 hours in the O/o. the Executive Engineer Drainage Division, Jagatsinghpur
10.	Procurement Officer	Executive Engineer, Drainage Division, Jagatsinghpur
11.	Class of Contractor	'B' & 'A' Tenders will be accepted if registered under CDMS portal only as per codal provision. Registration in any other manner will be cancelled.

gov.in

ny Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender can also be seen ne same website. Sd./- Executive Engineer

Drainage Division, Jagatsinghpur OIPR-32378/11/0001/2122



Always do what you know to be the best even if it is the most difficult thing to do.

THE MOTHER



Maneka Gandhi

I cannot bear the

environmentally

beings when I die

idea of being

Green Funeral

he day that the COVID testing team (I have no idea where they came from. There are so many astronaut like creatures floating about from so many different departments, governments, hospitals, testing centres, that I stopped wondering a long time ago and now just meekly submit to sticks being poked into my nose and throat, and blood taken) declared I had the virus, my thoughts went immediately to death. So many people I know have died. Two died when I was on the phone trying to get oxygen for them. Another was admitted by me into hospital after begging the owner. Every morning a person I know turns into a memory.

So, the next step was, what would I like to do with my body? If I have COVID there is not much that can be done: they will probably come and take it, wrap it up in plastic and throw it in the heap to be burnt.

But I don't want to be burnt. I want to go like the actor Luke Perry. For years I have been demanding from my family that I be buried in my garden, that part of the earth that I have turned into a forest of calm and wonder. When I wake up every day, I throw the door open to see its beauty. I hear the sounds of hundreds of busy birds day and night. I watch the seasons change as the berries of the trees change. My granddaughter found two four-leaved clovers hidden in the undergrowth. I want to be buried in this wild place. This Eden created by me, where all the trees are alive and the old Pipal tree looks after us all.

I don't want to be embalmed. I don't want to be cremated in that ugly emotionless, soot filled government crematorium, and I would just die of shame if I learnt that I was burnt with wood.

But how do I want to be buried? Not wrapped in an old white sheet and smothered with salt. I want to be interred like the actor Luke Perry.

Luke Perry died at the age of 52. I had never heard of him before he died, but his burial interested me. He was buried in his farm in a suit made of mushrooms, a mycelium based coffin designed to accelerate natural decomposition, and help remediate contaminated soils. It neutralizes toxins and boosts plant growth.

There is a company called Coeio.com that makes them in America. "The self-recycling organic cotton suit/shroud is infused with a biomix of mushroom mycelium and other microörganisms that aid in decomposition, work to neutralize toxins found in the body, and transfer nutrients to plant life, so that the remains of

vicious to other living the person lost end up helping create new life." "My dad discovered it, and was more excited by this than I have ever seen him," his daughter wrote on Instagram. "He was buried in this suit, one of

and I want to share it with all of you." The idea came from the Dutch researcher Bob Hendrikx. The Living Cocoon, as he calls it in his company Loop, is made from mycelium – the threadlike, vegetative part of a fungus. The idea is to accelerate the natural processes of decomposition, while also improving the surrounding soil as the body and its container gradually break down within a couple of years.

his final wishes. They are truly a beautiful thing for this beautiful planet,

The Living Cocoon is made from fungal mycelium mixed with an organic substrate and placed into a mould. The mycelium gradually consumes the substrate, slowly growing to fill the mould to form the shape of the coffin, a process that takes about a week. The process is natural: it doesn't require any heat, light or energy. As it breaks down in the soil it removes contaminants like heavy metals, petroleum-based fuels, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, herbicides and more.

As Hendrikx explains, the aim is to use the transformative powers of mycelium to close the loop of life. "Our behaviour is not only parasitic, it's also short-sighted. The Living Cocoon enables people to become one with nature again, and to enrich the soil instead of polluting it.'

Hendrikx adds, "This will help us to convince local municipalities in the future to transform polluted areas into healthy woodland, using our bodies

Even in death humans kill the planet. Some religions embalm bodies so that the dead look as if they are sleeping. In just one country – the USA-burials entail the use of approximately 4.3 million gallons of embalming fluid a year, according to Cornell University research, and 827,060 gallons of that is formaldehyde, methanol, benzene, glutaraldehyde and phenol. They put the bodies into caskets which are increasing more expensive and bizarre. Caskets and vaults use 20 million board-feet of hardwoods, including rainforest woods, as well as 17,000 tonne of copper and bronze, 64,500 tonne of steel leaches iron, copper, lead, zinc and cobalt into the environment. And thousands of tonnes of toxic plastic. The funeral industry itself earns over 20 billion dollars. And it takes more than 10 years for the body to decompose and leach all these toxic substances into the soil.

Other religions cremate. Lakhs of trees are cut down, especially mango trees. There will come a time in the next twenty years when there will be no mangoes left in a mango country. Cremation in an electric crematorium is not much better. The process uses fossil fuels to reach, and maintain, 1,900 degrees Fahrenheit for more than two hours, releasing dioxins and mercury into the air and water, and creating byproducts like nitrogen oxide, dioxins and particulates that are found in acid rain.

I cannot bear the idea of being environmentally vicious to other living beings when I die. So an eco-friendly way will have to be found. It may seem bizarre now, but people will move towards "green funerals." Starting with urns that biodegrade and grow into trees as the seeds within mix with the ashes of the cremated human.

The concept of transforming our dead bodies into something that will nurture the earth again is something that appeals to me. All these years all the animals that have shared my life and gone to that great Heaven, where my husband lives, have been buried in the garden and we have grown trees on their bodies. They have simply changed form - as I will, if you allow me this luxurv after I die.

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org

WISDOM CORNER

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

The time is always right to do what is right.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

WORDS**WORTH**

Natiform

Something *natiform* resembles or has the form of the buttocks. It derives from Latin *nates*, plural of *natis*, a buttock. Ammon Shea mentions this word in his book Reading the OED, in which he records his experience of spending a year scanning the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary cover to cover, all 21,730 pages of it. He wrote that he was surprised to learn that it had never been used as an insult, so refuting the premise of an entry in Depraved and Insulting English, which he earlier wrote with Peter Novobatzky. This may be explained easily enough. The word never moved beyond a limited medical circulation and so it never gained the instant recognition necessary for it to be applied insultingly. Also, it has never been employed to refer to the buttocks themselves, instead always to some anatomical feature that contains a deep cleft. The OED marks it as obsolete, though *natiform skull*, bony nodules on the surface of the skull in infants with congenital syphilis (also called Parrot nodes), is in some current medical dictionaries.

FOCUS PLANET

THE CLIMATE X FACTOR



Sanna Marin

STRANGE AS IT MAY SOUND, WE ARE NOT FAR FROM BEING ABLE TO CREATE FUELS OUT OF THIN AIR

limate change and biodiversity loss are the most pressing challenges of our time, so all responsible political leaders must offer long-term policies for confronting them effectively. We need clear strategies based on achievable targets, and we must be bold in deploying all means at our disposal. In particular, any credible climate strategy must take proper account of technological innovation.

With the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2035 and carbon negative (removing more atmospheric carbon than is emitted) soon thereafter, Finland's climate targets are among the most ambitious in the world. My country aims to be a leader among advanced economies, not just in terms of emissions reductions, but also by ushering in a circular economy focused on sustainability and the elimination of waste. Our plan is to double our resource efficiency and circularity rate (the percentage of all material that is fed back into the economy) by 2035.

These are the key benchmarks on our path to becoming the first country to liberate itself from fossil fuels. But achieving climate targets is not possible without better methods of preserving our valuable natural resources. Scientific discovery, new technologies, and innovation will play a central role in any long-term so-

But, first, all national leaders must examine more closely how they intend to move their countries away from fossil fuels. The focus should be on increasing the use of fuels and energy sources that do not compromise biodiversity. We must encourage uptake of fuels that adhere to strict sustainability criteria and reduce emissions throughout their lifecycle.

For example, the byproducts of biomass fuels can be used for highquality sustainable and biodegrad-



The climate and biodiversity crises we face demand that we not only shift to carbonneutral energy sources, but also usher in a circular economy in which a significant share of material resources are reused and repurposed

able products such as textiles and construction materials, thereby safeguarding biodiversity by reducing the demand for resources harvested from our forests. And 'Power-to-X' conversion technologies open the door for a variety of processes that turn electricity into heat, hydrogen, or synthetic fuels.

With more investment and innovation, these technologies could allow us to part ways with coal, oil, and natural gas, by making it possible to produce synthetic fuels from captured carbon-dioxide emissions. Here, one can start with the existing industrial flue gases generated by bio-based industry, cement kilns, and solid waste incinerators. But soon enough, new technologies could be developed to harness less concentrated sources of carbon, such as by collecting exhaust air from office buildings or even by direct air capture (DAC).

Experimentation is already underway. Using hydrogen produced by electrolysis, CO2 emissions from industrial plants and DAC could become a source of synthetic liquid and gaseous fuels for carbon-neutral road, maritime, and air transportation. These methods produce synthetic methanol as an intermediate product, which can then be converted into gasoline, kerosene, and diesel. Strange as it may sound, we are not far from being able to create fuels out of thin air.

These new technologies and processes may start out with a large price tag. But as we've seen with solar panels and fuel cells, a technology's costs tend to plummet as soon as its usage starts to scale up. Moreover, markets for other new climate-friendly technologies are developing quickly, though these vary in depth and scope, depending on the level of government support (through measures such as blending regulations for fuels and carbon pricing).

For example, promising new hydrogen-based technologies will require a massive increase in fossil-fuel-free electricity production in order to achieve scale. But this need can be met by expanding the

use of wind and solar power, which are already the least costly options for power generation in many parts of the world.

New technologies will enable a major shift toward sustainably fueled transportation in many developed and developing countries. They will not only allow us to reduce global CO2 emissions, but will also position many industries to become carbon-negative in the future.

But technology will not solve the climate crisis for us. We also need to create the right policy environment. A key component of the green transition will be higher carbon pricing, which requires coordination and support at the international level. Agreeing on sustainable criteria for carbon-market mechanisms would be an important step forward. And governments should do more to support structural changes through regulatory frameworks and financial incentives.

The global transition away from fossil fuels will require a transformational shift in energy production and industrial processes. And even then, much more work will need to be done to develop a genuinely circular and green economy. Different countries will have different needs and advantages. But the best solutions will be the ones that can be scaled up in industrialised and developing countries alike.

The bottom line is that global emissions must peak soon if we want to achieve our emissions reduction targets and avert future climate disasters. The full suite of promising new technologies will need to be developed, optimised, and deployed globally if we are going to create a fully climate-neutral, circular world economy.

> The writer is Prime Minister of Finland.

SPECTRUM ODISHA

Fiscal prudence amid crisis



Amarendra Das

FOR A POOR STATE LIKE ODISHA, **HOW FAR IS** THIS FISCAL **OVER-DISCIPLINE** WISE?

The COVID-19 pandemic has largest and has a maximum revposed serious fiscal challenges before the Union and state governments. Keeping in view the slowdown of GDP/GSDP growth rates, states were ready to embrace a significant revenue contraction and explore ways to finance a large deficit. In order to cope up with the fiscal shock, the Union Finance Minister had relaxed the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Rules and allowed states to borrow extra two per cent of GSDP. State governments were allowed to incur up to five per cent fiscal deficit from the normal time target of three per cent of GSDP. The state governments fought hard with the Union government to avail the promised GST compensation at any cost. At the end of the fiscal year 2020-21, let's see how the states have managed their finances.

For most of the states, the monthly data provided by the CAG is available up to February 2021. Only for a few states is it available up to October (Arunachal Pradesh) or December (Assam and Bihar). Among all states, only Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Uttarakhand had recorded revenue surplus, and all other states had revenue deficits. All states have recorded fiscal deficits at different levels. Among the states with a registered revenue surplus, data is not available up to February for two states. Among the rest four states, Odisha is the enue surplus. Therefore, I focus on Odisha for a detailed fiscal analysis during 2020-21.

Before we get into a detailed fiscal analysis, we should know the relative economic position of the state vis-à-vis the national level. In 2019, Odisha's per capita GSDP at ₹1, 12, 907 was 80 per cent of the national average of ₹1, 40, 422. The tax GSDP ratio of the state was 6.2 per cent against the national average of 6.3 per cent. The state government has proposed to spend ₹1.50.000 core during 2020-21. The state government had ₹6,500 crore off-budget resources under multiple sources like the Odisha Mineral Bearing Area Development Corporation, District Mineral Fund, state PSUs during 2020-21. By February 2021, the state had spent only ₹91,808.96 crore against the total expenditure of ₹1,03,425.18 crore by February 2020, which is an 11.2 per cent reduction in total spending.

Surprisingly, during the time of $% \left\{ 1,2,...,n\right\}$ a major socio-economic crisis caused by the pandemic, Odisha has chosen to maintain revenue surplus and reduce the fiscal deficit compared to last year. By the end of February 2021, Odisha had ₹5,435.76 crore revenue surplus compared to ₹3,346.44 crore during February 2020. The fiscal deficit of Odisha fell to ₹7,664.58 crore in February 2021 from ₹13.968.96 crore in February 2020. What does it imply for a poor state like Odisha?

enue during the pandemic to maintain a higher revenue surplus and reduce the fiscal deficit? Compared to the previous year, Odisha's total revenue receipts have fallen by 5.8 per cent from ₹90,288.70 crore in February 2020 to ₹85.019.23 crore in February 2021. Tax revenue has fallen by 8.6 per cent from ₹54601.49 crore in February 2020 to ₹49924.88 crore in February 2021. GST collection has fallen by 4.1 per cent. Stamps and registration fees have gone up by 95 per cent. Land revenue collection has gone up by 10.6 per cent. Sales tax has fallen by 1.6 per cent. State excise duty collection has fallen by 16.4 per cent. State's share in the Union Taxes has fallen the most by 21.5 per cent. Collection of other taxes has gone up by 19.4 per cent compared to the situation in February 2020. Overall, non-tax revenue collection has gone up by 21.5 per cent, in which grants-in-aid has fallen by 14.6 per cent. The borrowing and other liabilities of the state have fallen by 45 per cent.

Did Odisha mobilise more rev-

The state has reduced the revenue expenditure by 8.5 per cent and capital expenditure by 25.8 per cent. In sectoral spending, the state has reduced the social sector expenditure spending by 15.6 per cent and economic sector spending by 14 per cent compared to February 2020.

For a long time, Odisha has been over-complying with the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget

Management Act by maintaining revenue surplus and also fiscal surplus in a few years. For a poor state like Odisha, how far is this fiscal over-discipline wise? The state had a poverty rate of 32.6 per cent in 2011-12 (Tendulkar methodology) compared to the national average of 21.92 per cent. Of the 30 districts of the state, 10 are recognised as aspirational districts by the NITI Aayog. As per the ranking on the SDG Index of the NITI Aayog (2019), Odisha ranked 16th among Indian states. The state needs to improve its performance in 10 out of 17 indicators, namely on SDG-1 No Poverty, SDG-2 Zero Hunger, SDG-3 Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG-4 Quality Education, SDG-6 Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG-7 Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG-8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG-9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG-11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG-16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

The 15th Finance Commission, in its state-specific recommendation, has suggested the Odisha government "take decisive steps to break the low-income trap and improve social outcomes. But it is hard to understand why the state government prefers to be fiscally prudent and remain socially bankrupt."

> The writer is Reader-F (Economics), NISER Bhubaneswar.

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Shailaja shunned

Sir, The exclusion of popular health minister KK Shailaja from the second Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government in Kerala has raised eyebrows. Barring the Chief Minister, no other CPM member from the outgoing Cabinet made it to the new Cabinet, which also has the chief minister's son-in-law and DYFI national president Mohammed Riyas. Shailaja had gained international fame and became the face of the LDF government on handling the Covid-19 and Nipah outbreaks in the state. Though the CPI(M) defended the policy to rotate responsibility, one suspects that Shailaja's larger-than-life image made

the party clip her wings. NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Safe vaccination

Sir, Vaccination has started almost everywhere in the country. However, in Cuttack it is quite disappointing to see crowds at vaccination centres not following Covid protocols. This has been happening as there is fixed time duration in a day to get the vaccine and that duration is not enough to cater to the people waiting for vaccination. The state government should take action against people flouting Covid protocols at vaccination centres. Besides, more precautionary steps should be taken to make the vaccination process smooth and safe. Otherwise the vaccination centres may become Covid hotspots. Swagatika Pradhan,

CUTTACK

Judicial transparency

Sir, Accessibility to the day-to-day trials of higher courts is a far cry for the majority of Indians. High courts and their benches and the SC are located in major cities as a result of which a common man is handicapped to be there physically. The appellate courts are attended by only a handful of people apart from judges and concerned lawyers. The general public has a shockingly altered conception about court proceedings. It is often swayed by highly exaggerated depiction of court proceedings in cinemas. Due to the pandemic, most of India's higher courts have gone virtual, the first time in the country's judicial history. Even here, barring the presiding judges, the lawyers and their clients, no others are privy to the proceedings. If key cases of national importance are telecast live then the open court concept propagated by many judges may receive a boost. No less than the CJI NV Ramana has expressed his keenness to permit live telecast of important cases. Live airing of court hearings will provide the much needed shot in the arm for public participation and judicial transparency.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



TWOSTATES





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, saving 'a new strain' of coronavirus found there could reach Delhi and was 'very dangerous'

"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 DY 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-

COVID-19 pandemic in the city. "Kejriwal has presented his toolkit of spreading confusion and

round failure' in dealing with the

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

Batting 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 to two lakh a week now

'This is not a nice thing. It does n'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 Maniunath, who is the director of Javadeva 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 Maniunath 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



ICU ON WHEELS



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

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 Centrerun facilities, ths 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

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



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 I 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,

who prefers to use only her first "I attend classes and go to the cemetery for burials. I also spend

ple to help with ambulances. It is

a lot of multi-tasking."

you get back good," said Akshaya, time collaborating with other peo-

₹1,111cr Covid relief package

Karnataka announces

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, flowergrowers, 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 sufferedloss, which will benefit 89,000 such growers in the state.

national



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

PINARAYI VIJAYAN I KERALA CHIFF MINISTER

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

TAUKTAE AFTERMATH





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

All cyclone centres and 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 Khattai 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 Mukheriee 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

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

Workers remove garbage from the Mahim beach in Mumbai

How celebs, politicians get nCoV drugs, asks Bombay HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 19: The Bombay High Court Wednesday directed the Maharashtra government and the Centre to file affidavits explaining how celebrities and politicians were procuring anti-Covid-19 drugs, medical oxygen and other relief materials for coronavirus

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni had asked for such details last week as well from the the Maharashtra government and the Centre, who faced flak during hearing for non-compliance of previous orders. However, Wednesday the state government submitted a report merely saying it had served show cause notices (on procuring Covid-19 relief materials) to Mumbai Congress MLA Zeeshan



Siddique and the Sood Charity Foundation (an NGO of actor Sonu Sood), but was vet to receive their replies. Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh told the HC the Union government had not filed any report since procurement and distribution of Remdesivir (a key Covid-19 drug) and medical oxygen, among other items, were the

prerogative of a state and the Centre merely allocated such resources to states based on the latter's demands. The bench took an exception to

the responses of the state government and the Centre (represented by Singh). The HC said it had expected better replies and compliance of its previous orders from both the respondents. "These persons (celebrities) have no licence (to procure Covid-19 drugs, medical oxygen), who will take the guarantee? There should have been a report. "You (the state government)) have only issued show cause notices, we said place a report on this. We are not happy with this," the HC said. The bench said its primary concern was that the needy must

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. "So far, 90 people have died due to mucormycosis in Maharashtra. It is serious. It should not be taken lightly," he told reporters here. "Indiscriminate use of steroids to treat Covid-19 patients should be avoided," the minister added



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.

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



'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.

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,

not miss out on getting relief since

all were not in a position to make

"I was in the water holding on

ith the life jacket for more than

appeals on social media

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 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.

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

children are orphaned," said Akancha Srivastava, a cybersecurity expert who has launched a coronavirus helpline for children. However online evidence points to a devastating scale. Social media appeals are being made for breast milk and food for infants who have lost their mothers.

Some coronavirus orphans are also being put up for illegal adoption on social media. Ms Srivastava said her helpline received at least 300 calls and messages in a day. "Our authorities are overburdened, people are hassled. It's extremely easy in these circumstances to misassign a child to some trafficking racket or an adoption racket," she said. According to the law, an orphaned 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 ঽ 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 growup to be broken adults," said Sonal Kapoor from the foundation.

national



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



Different states in the country 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

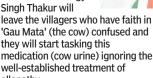
VISHVAS SARANG MP MEDICAL EDUCATION MINISTER

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



RAMDEV YOGA GURU

Now the pandemic is spread in villages. It is apprehended that statements of Pragya



PC SHARMA | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

'Vax to all adults by end of year'

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



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 facilities in peri-urban and rural areas. the statement said. In Assam, Kamrup (Metropolitan) is contributing almost 45 per cent of the daily new cases; while in Meghalaya, East Khasi Hills and Righboi are reporting sharp increases in daily cases. Manipur's recovery rate of 78 per cent and case fatality rate (CFR) of more than 1 per cent was highlighted as a matter of concern, it underlined. States were advised to ensure

complete utilisation of available vaccination slots for 45+ agegroup/HCW. Vardhan assured the states of all support from the Centre in augmenting their vaccine drive. Biplab Kumar Deb, the Chief Minister and Health Minister of Tripura; Keshab Mahanta, the Health Minister of Assam; AK Hek, the Health Minister. Meghalaya,; Lalpoklakpam Jayantakumar Singh, the Health Minister of Manipur; Dr R Lalthangliana, the Health Minister of Mizoram; AloLibang, the Health Minister of Arunachal Pradesh: PangnyuPhom, the Health Minister (Nagaland) and Dr Mani Kumar Sharma, the Health Minister (Sikkim) were present virtually in this meeting.

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 WhatApp 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 privacv. 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

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 Prithivi 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 1996 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 breasted 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.



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

Record 4,529 fatalities in single day

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

A total of 2, 83,248 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 83,777 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.

Plea moved in SC seeking probe into 'Toolkit' INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 19: A plea has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking direction for an investigation into the 'Toolkit'. The plea also sought suspension of registration of Congress party, if charges against the party for indulging in anti-national acts and playing with lives of people were found true.

On Tuesday, the BJP alleged a "Toolkit' has been prepared by the Congress party to tarnish the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over handling of the Covid-19 pan-

However, the Congress party had accused BJP leaders of releasing a forged and fabricated letter and termed it as an attempt to divert attention of the people and to hide the failures of the government in the handling the health

The plea moved by advocate Shashank Shekhar Jha urged the top court to issue direction to the Centre to prepare guidelines against hoarding of essential items during the Covid-19 pandemic. The petition named the Indian National Congress, the Union government and the Election Commission as respondents.

"Issue a writ, order, or direction in the nature of mandamus or any other direction the respondent no. 2 (Union government) to register a preliminary inquiry pertaining to the alleged Toolkit for the purpose of enquiring whether the Toolkit or any actions pursuant to it, disclose any offence under Section 124-A, 153A and 120B of the Indian Penal Code and Section of the UAPA, 1967, and for the said purpose to secure the custody of the said Toolkit", said one of the prayers of the plea before the top court. The plea also urged the apex court to direct the Union government to issue necessary guidelines to each and every political party, group, and individual to stop all kinds of

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, Indias vaccine programme is being hobbled by supply shortages and an abrupt shift in procurement policy that appears to be without parallel, The Washington Post reported.

The report said as India confronts a devastating Covid outbreak where thousands are dying each day, the country desperately needs to vaccinate its population as soon as possible. Yet the vaccine drive is stumbling just when

it is most crucial, it said "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 vou 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 predictionsby 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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, May 19: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian coun-

terpart Vladimir Putin Wednesday hailed the nuclear cooperation between the two neighbours as they

virtually attended the ground

breaking ceremony of the biggest

nuclear energy project to build

four nuclear power plants in China

The ceremony, which was at-

tended 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.

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.

Russia nuclear energy coopera-

tion project to date and represents

the highest level of practical co-

operation between the two sides,

Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesman, Zhao Lijian told a

Speaking on the occasion, Xi re-

iterated China's close attention to

energy cooperation with Russia

as it is a traditional cooperative

He hailed the beginning of con-

area between the two countries.

media briefing Tuesday.

"This has been the biggest China-

The Tianwan Nuclear Power

costing about USD 3 billion.

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

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)

struction of

the nuclear

plants, and

noted that

the energy

projects set an ex-

ample for bilateral

tion in other sectors.

cooperation in other sectors.

Stressing that the bilateral co-

operation on nuclear energy is

meaningful for the high-level de-

velopment of the China-Russia

comprehensive strategic partner-

ship of coordination for a new era,

Xi said he hopes the two sides will

follow the sound momentum and

conduct more effective coopera-

China and Russia signed a strate-

gic package of agreements on nu-

clear energy in June 2018 to jointly

construct four nuclear power units,

the biggest of such between the

Spain's enclave struggles

China-Russia nuclear

energy cooperation project to

date and represents the highest

level of

the two sides





(of the call for a ceasefire) is to humanitarian access in Gaza. We condemn

the rocket attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on the Israeli

JOSEP BORRELL FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF, EL

In the absence of a peaceful within a reasonable 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



message loud and clear to those who are responsible for enforcing the law against hate crime

BORIS JOHNSON PRIME MINISTER, UP

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 B1.617.2 variant.

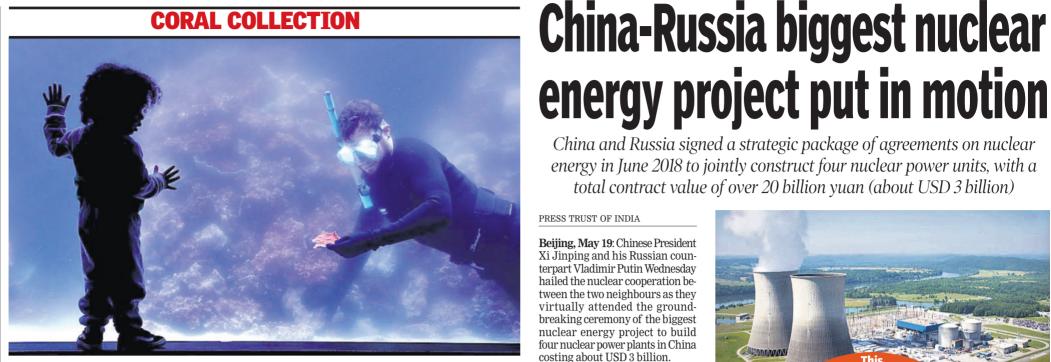
Turkey bans plastic imports

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-magnitute 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 Myanmars 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 Momauk Township, which was seized by the KIA in late March.

The outpost allows the KIA to control the road between Kachin State's capital, Mvitkvina, and Bhamo, also in Kachin State. The KIA had good reason to believe the tanker trucks were providing jet fuel to bomb Momauk, Col. Naw

Russian lawmakers exit from 'Open Skies Treaty'



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

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.

its readiness to reverse

to handle migrant influx

Ceuta, May 19: Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta Wednesday saw thousands of mi-

grants 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

France files ceasefire resolution at UN



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 'This is an act of defiance.'

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez 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.

far, with a total

of over 20 billion

yuan (about USD

3 billion), state-run

CGTN-TV re

ported.

third-generation VVER-1200 reac-

tors developed by Russia. Compared

to its predecessor VVER-1000 re-

actor, the latest VVER-1200 reactor

features advantages in many as-

pects, according to Russia's Rosatom

State Nuclear Energy Corporation.

are expected to effectively reduce

carbon dioxide emissions.

Once completed, the four units

The two countries firmed up

their close ties as they faced mount-

ing adversity from the US and

European Union on a host of issues

including human rights violations.

All four units will adopt the

Foreign Minister Arancha González Laya also increased her tone Wednesday, saving 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.

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, ac-

COVID VACCINATION cording 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.'

Last week, a WhatsApp message was circling in the Indian diaspora which stated that elderly persons on visit visas would be inoculated against Covid-19 and that the Indian mission here was making necessary arrangements. Indian Consulate officials said

the vaccination drive in the UAE 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 na-

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 con-

flict, the president's office said late

French President Emmanuel Macron and his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who is in Paris for summits on Africa, agreed on the resolution in a video conference with Jordan's King Abdullah II, the statement said.

'The three countries agreed on three simple elements: The shoot-

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

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

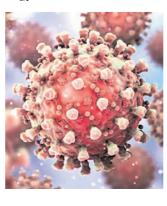
Sydney, May 19: An international team of scientists, from Australia and the US, has developed an experimental direct-acting antiviral therapy that can reduce viral load by 99.9 per cent and may be a new

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

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 jour-

nal Molecular Therapy, showed. "This treatment is designed to

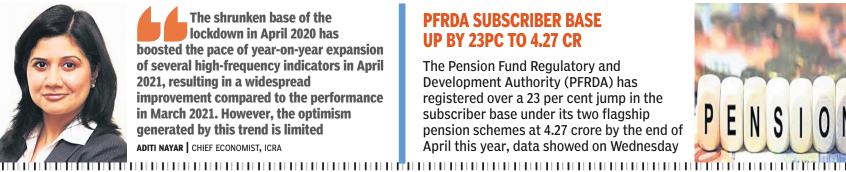
work on all betacoronaviruses such as the original SARS virus (SARS-CoV-1) as well as SARS-CoV-2 and any new variants that may arise in the future because it targets ultra-conserved regions in the virus' genome," added Kevin Morris, Professor and associate director of the Center for Gene Therapy at City 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 siRNAnanoparticle 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 scal- able and relatively cost-effective to produce in bulk," Morris said.

business



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 NAYAR | 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





As Ola scales up further and connected manufacturing intelligent charging

infrastructure, and a sophisticated global supply chain, having a robust IT infrastructure enabling this

BHAVISH AGGARWAL | CHAIRMAN AND GROUP

LPS would carry a total of more than 50 product lines and would offer a seamless credit lifecycle with over 35



SURESH KHATANHAR DEPUTY MD. IDBI BANK



very fair model that will ensure that malls don't lose out if we see an unexpected early surge in business volumes

ANURAG KATRIAR PRESIDENT, NRAI

SHORT TAKES

DAP fert subsidy raised by 140 pc

New Delhi: In a major pro-farmer decision, the Centre on Wednesday hiked the subsidy on DAP fertiliser by 140 per cent, costing the exchequer an addi tional ₹14,775 crore, in a bid to ensure the soil nutrient is avail able to farmers at old rates despite a sharp rise in global prices. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a PMO statement. After urea, Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the most widely used used fertiliser in the country. "A historic decision was taken to increase the subsidy for DAP fertiliser from ₹500 per bag to ₹1200 per bag, which is an increase of 140 per cent.With today's decision, farmers will continue to get a DAP bag for ₹1200,' the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. Desnite the rise in international market prices of DAP, it has been decided to continue selling it at the older price of ₹1,200 per bag, it said

₹24,792 crore I-T returns refunded

New Delhi: The Income Tax department Wednesday said it has issued over ₹24,792 crore refunds to more than 15 lakh taxpayers so far this fiscal. Of this personal income tax refunds worth ₹7,458 crore has been issued in over 14.98 lakh cases. Corporate tax refunds of ₹17,334 crore have been issued to 43,661 taxpayers. "CBDT issues refunds of over ₹24,792 crore to more than 15 lakh taxpayers between 1st April 2021 to 17th May 2021,' the Income-tax department tweeted. The I-T department did not specify the financial year for the refunds. However, it is believed that the refunds are for tax returns filed for the 2019-20 fiscal. In the previous fiscal, which ended March 31, 2021, the department had issued ₹2.62 lakh crore worth refunds to more than 2.38 crore taxpayers.

Audi warranty

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.

Govt to conclude CPSE privatisation this fiscal

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 divestment process has already

The Budget for 2021-22 has set a disinvestment 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

disinvestment target of ₹1.75 lakh crore, higher than ₹32,835 crore garnered in the last fiscal. Of the ₹1.75 lakh crore, ₹1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions. ₹75,000 crore would come as CPSE disinvest-



In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said strategic disinvestment 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

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

Royal Enfield to recall 2.37 lakh units to fix coil

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 19: Mid-sized motorcycle maker Royal Enfield Wednesday said it is recalling around 2,36,966 units of Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models in India and various international markets to replace defective ignition coil.

The company has discovered a defect in one of the parts used across some of the motorcycle models it manufactures and sells, Royal Enfield said in a statement.



The defect is in the ignition coil that can cause misfiring, reduced vehicle performance, and in rare cases, an electric short circuit, it added. The company will be calling in close to 2,36,966 motorcycles of the Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models, Royal Enfield noted. Of these, the company will call in Meteor motorcycles manufactured and sold between December 2020 and April 2021, and the Classic and Bullet manufactured and sold between January and April 2021, it added.

'These motorcycles will undergo inspection and replacement of the said defective part if required. We estimate that less than 10 per cent of these motorcycles will require replacement of the part," the company, which is a part of Eicher Motors, noted.

The proactive recall action will be applicable to Meteor, Classic, and Bullet model motorcycles sold in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia between the respective time periods mentioned above, it added.

The company said the defect was discovered during routine internal testing and the issue has been clearly identified and isolated to specific batches of material sourced from its external supplier between December 2020 and April 2021.

While the issue is rare and does not impact all motorcycles manufactured during the above-mentioned period, in keeping with safety regulations and as a precautionary measure, the company has decided to undertake a proactive, company-initiated recall of select motorcycles models.

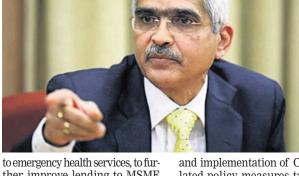
Das asks PSBs to quickly implement RBI directives

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.

nor had announced a slew of measures, including term liquidity facility of ₹50.000 crore to ease access



ther 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.

and implementation of Covid-related policy measures taken by RBI too were discussed. In his opening remarks, the governor 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.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Governors MK Jain, M Rajeswar Rao, Michael D Patra and T Rabi Sankar.

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 lovalty programs that enable merchants to improve

customer experience. President of Digital Bu



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

PPT GETS MEDICAL FB rolls out Covid announcement tool O₂ FROM SINGAPORE

POST NEWS NETWORK Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Paradip Port Trust (PPT) handled 24 medical oxygen cylinders (40litre 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 (PICTPL) also handled 30 medical oxygen cylinders (10-litre capacity each),

service extended



THIS CAN BE USED TO SHARE INFO ABOUT VAX ELIGIBILITY, REGISTRATION, LOGISTICS

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 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.

OOGLE 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.

sent by the shipping line Louis

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".

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 han-

"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"

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 passcode-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

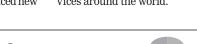
Google is introducing a new "quick delete" option that will help delete the last 15 minutes of search history with a single tap from the Google Account Menu

bums. The feature will be introduced to Google Pixel phones first, and more Android devices through-

out 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 man-

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, thereare 3 billion active Android de-

vices around the world.





Blues hunt down **Foxes**

FANS RETURN TO WITNESS CHELSEA EDGE PAST TOP FOUR RIVAL LEICESTER; BRIGHTON COME FROM BEHIND TO STUN 10-MAN MAN CITY, WHILE MAN UNITED HELD AT HOME BY FULHAM

RIGHT ON THE MONEY: Jorginho (R), after scoring from the spot against Leicester, celebrates with Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta (L) and Christian Pulisic, Tuesday

London, May 19: Even though "Super Frankie Lampard" wasn't completely forgotten in the repertoire of songs, Stamford Bridge was finally able to serenade Thomas Tuchel and found so much to be appreciative of.

Having waited since last year to be allowed back into their home, 8,000 Chelsea fans saw a 2-1 victory that dislodged Leicester from third place heading into the Premier League finale.

They also saw why Chelsea, ruthlessly perhaps, fired Lampard in January and replaced the club legend with Tuchel. "This is a completely different match, football with and without spectators," the German manager said.

It wasn't delivering under Lampard, who left the team five points from the top four. Chelsea will be certain of finishing in one of the four Champions League spots by beating Aston Villa Sunday.

Oh, and there's also still a Champions League final to complete the season May 29 against Manchester City.

What anguish, though, for Leicester. The FA Cup was picked up on Saturday for the first time by beating Chelsea — and Leicester has been in the top four all 36 rounds. But by the time the 37th round ends, Leicester will have dropped to fifth if Liverpool wins at Burnley Wednesday.

While the title has already been sealed by Manchester City, and Manchester United will be runners-up, the tussle for the final two Champions League spots is setting up a thrilling final day.

No wonder tensions were so high in the closing minutes at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea and Leicester players squared up and clashed. with even substitutes getting in-

Perhaps they were fired up by the biggest crowd allowed at the west London stadium since the start of

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 19: England's swash-

buckling batsman Jos Buttler says

Indian greats Rahul Dravid and

the pandemic 14 months ago.

Supporters immediately got back into the rhythm with the familiar abusive songs about VAR and referee Mike Dean. There was a lot to be angry about in the first half as twice Timo Werner put the ball in the net but twice video reviews intervened. "It's not football anymore," Chelsea fans protested.

VAR was favorable, though, in the second half — advising Dean to award a penalty when Werner was brought down by Wesley Fofana, and Jorginho converted from the spot in the 66th minute. By that time, Chelsea was al-

ready in front after Antonio Rudiger used his thigh to divert Ben Chilwell's deflected corner over the line two minutes into the sec-Kelechi Iheanacho pulling one

back for Leicester in the 76th minute set up the type of thrilling climax to a game only enhanced by the return of fans.

But for a second successive season, a Champions League place could be snatched from Leicester on the final day even if it beats Tottenham.

While N'Golo Kante went off for Chelsea with a hamstring injury, Ilkay Gundogan came off with a leg injury in Manchester City's 2-3 loss at Brighton, 11 days before the Champions League final.

Gundogan had scored the opener in the second minute before the champions had Joao Cancelo sent off for bringing down Danny

Although Phil Foden doubled City's lead at the start of the second half, goals from Leandro Trossard, Adam Webster and Dan Burn completed the recovery for 15th-place Brighton.

PROTESTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Manchester United's protesting fans were back inside Old Trafford - legally this time — and were treated to a wonder goal by Edinson Cavani in a 1-1 draw against already-relegated Fulham.



HIGH INTENSITY: Chelsea and Leicester players involved in a fight during their match at Stamford Bridge



Man City as the visiting players have something to complain for, Tuesday

Spotting goalkeeper Alphonse Areola was off his line, Cavani helped on by a flick from Bruno Fernandes—chipped the ball from

about 50 yards (meters) into the net. The United fans saw why the team needs more investment to strengthen itself by failing to hold onto the lead when Joe Bryan

headed Fulham level. Placards calling for the removal of the owning Glazer family were held up by some fans as the teams came out for kickoff at the stadium's first game with fans allowed since March 2020.

Around two-and-half weeks ago, some United supporters got into the stadium and onto the field during more fervent protests, causing the postponement of a match against

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS CHHETRI RETURNS AS INDIA LEAVE FOR DOHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 19: Talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri made a return after recovering from COVID-19 infection as a 28-member Indian football squad leaves for Doha Wednesday for the three upcoming matches of the joint 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

The team will have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble in Doha before their first match June 3 against hosts Qatar. After missing the two international friendly matches against Oman and the UAE March 25 and 29, Chhetri is set to feature in the forthcoming

As per the health parameters required to travel to Qatar, all the players and staff will carry with them negative results from the RT-PCR COVID-19 tests conducted in the last 48 hours. Prior to their departure, all of them were serving quarantine in the national capital since May 15.

FC Goa midfielder Glan Martins is the lone face to make it to the India squad for the first time, while the likes of winger Udanta Singh, Brandon Fernandes, Pronoy Halder and Abdul Sahal also made a return to the national team

Midfielders Jeakson Singh, Raynier Fernandes and Halicharan Narzary, who were in the 27-member squad for the international friendlies in March. missed out this time, as did forward Hitesh Sharma.

Defenders Rahul Bheke, Narender Gehlot and Subhashish Bose were back in the squad while Ashutosh Mehta, Mandar Rao Dessai and Mashoor Shereef were

Head coach Igor Stimac opted for



JUNE 3: India vs Qatar JUNE 7: Bangladesh vs India JUNE 15: India vs Afghanistan

three goalkeepers and Subhasish Roy Chowdhury missed out. The Indian team, fourth in Group E with three points, is already out of contention for a World Cup berth but it is still in the reckoning for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

Stimac stated that although it is not the 'ideal situation' ahead of the June Qualifiers, the Blue Tigers will be putting in 'intense' sessions during the camp before their matches get underway.

"It's not an ideal situation as we move ahead to the Qualifiers in June. Due to the pandemic, our national camp which was slated to

Paris, May 19: France coach Didier

Deschamps recalled forward Karim

Benzema after nearly six years out

for his alleged part in a 'sex tape'

scandal, including the Real Madrid

star in his squad for the European

The 33-year-old Benzema played

Championship.

THE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh & Dheeraj Singh; Defenders: Pritam Kotal, Rahul Bheke, Narender Gehlot, Chinglensana Singh, Sandesh Jhingan, Adil Khan, Akash Mishra & Subhashish Bose; Midfielders: Udanta Singh, Brandon Fernandes, Liston Colaco, Rowllin Borges, Glan Martins, Anirudh Thapa, Pronoy Halder, Suresh Singh, Lalengmawia Ralte, Abdul Sahal, Yasir Mohammad, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Bipin Singh & Ashique Kuruniyan; Forwards: Ishan Pandita, Sunil Chhetri & Manvir Singh.

begin in Kolkata at the beginning of May had to get cancelled. The pandemic also robbed us of a friendly match in Dubai," Stimac said.

Asia Cup in SL called off due to rise in cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, May 19: The 2021 Asia Cup, which was shifted from Pakistan to Sri Lanka, was Wednesday called off due to rising COVID-19 cases in the island nation.

The Asia Cup, which was last held in 2018, was scheduled to be held in June but Sri Lanka Cricket CEO Ashley de Silva announced that it will be difficult for them to conduct the tournament.

"Due to the prevailing sit it will not be possible to play the tournament in June this year," De Silva told reporters.

The tournament was supposed to be hosted by Pakistan but since India were unlikely to travel there due to political tension between the two nations, it was shifted to Sri Lanka.

With all the teams planning for their FTPs for the next two years, the continental showpiece might only find a slot after the 2023 50-over the last of his 81 games for Les Bleus in October 2015, scoring twice in a friendly against Armenia to take his international tally to 27 goals. "Why now? I don't have the ca-

Benzema recalled to

France squad for Euro

pacity and no one does, not even Karim, of going back and changing the past," Deschamps said when announcing his squad on national television. "The most important thing is today and the future."

Benzema expressed his relief in a statement on his Twitter account. "So proud of this return to the France team and the trust I've been shown," he wrote. He had been banned from the

national team because of the 'sex tape' scandal in which he was allegedly involved in blackmailing former France teammate Matthieu Valbuena.

Benzema faced a deluge of criticism, and then-Prime Minister Manuel Valls said the forward had no place in the national team.

Benzema, who is of Algerian descent, had a good relationship with Deschamps. But in an interview,

he had accused Deschamps of giving in to pressure from racists when the coach decided not to include him in the squad for Euro 2016.

Deschamps, whose family home was tagged with offensive graffiti after Benzema's interview, said he had spoken directly with Benzema to clear the air.

"Obviously to come to this decision there were important steps to take, one of which was very important. We met each other, we spoke for a long time," Deschamps said. "That was the most important step, after which I obviously had a very long think about many things and to reach this decision now."

Deschamps made clear that any lingering grudges seem to have been firmly buried. "I won't tell you a single word about the discussion between us, it concerns only us two. But he needed it and I needed it," Deschamps said.

"I think the France team is above everything else. It doesn't belong to me, even though I'm aware of the important responsibility I have.'

All eyes will be on Benzema if he's selected against Germany June 15 — seven years after playing in a losing side against the Germans in the World Cup quarterfinals in Brazil.

A strong performance at Euro 2020 could also push his cause to become France's first winner of the prestigious Ballon d'Or award since Zidane in '98.

India wait for playing conditions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 19: What happens if next month's World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand ends in a draw? Or a tie? Or worse, a washout?

The Indian cricket team are eagerly awaiting a response to this and other questions concerning the 'Playing Conditions' for the marquee clash in Southampton from June 18 to 22. The International Cricket Council (ICC) is expected to release the 'Playing Conditions' in the 'coming days'.

eral series Test match, we need to know about the playing conditions. There are three basic pointers that we need to know," a senior BCCI official privy to the Indian team's requirements told this agency on

tie or an eventual wash-out without at least one innings of both teams not being completed," he

The Indian team, after reaching London, early next month is expected to leave immediately for Southampton where it will be in quarantine during the England versus New Zealand Test match



at the Ageas Bowl.

Yes, India will be in Southampton only when New Zealand and England play the first of their two Tests. We expect ICC to give an idea of the duration of hard or soft quarantine in the next few days. Since it's an ICC event, the final notification needs to come from them," the source said.

Agarwal, Ravichandran Ashwin, Wednesday arrived in Mumbai on all be boarding from Hyderabad.

ter Jemimah Rodrigues. Even KL Rahul, who is recovering from an appendicitis operation is in Mumbai and expected to join the bubble May 24.

BCCI has deployed three charter flights - from Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai - for both male and female cricketers. All those who are not in these three metro cities are supposed to take a private car and reach the destinations for their

A few who wanted to fly commercial with their negative reports have been allowed. "Also the rule for boarding a charter flight is that even the driver of the private car needs to quarantine three days before the journey and have a negative RT-PCR report.

'There was no reason for this clarification but when former players, who have played at the highest level, amplify rumours on social media, you are left with no choice,' a senior official said. "Each and every member of the men's and women's team are aware of travel details," he added.

Sourav Ganguly's big hundreds in the 1999 World Cup match against Sri Lanka had an "incredible impact" on him. The duo of Ganguly and Dravid had stitched together a mammoth partnership of 318 runs for the second wicket to set up an easy victory for India. That was long before the T20 revolution took the game by storm ing their partnership against Sri Lanka in a 1999 World Cup game in Taunton

RECALLING 1999 WORLD CUP GAME

Dada, Dravid tons had

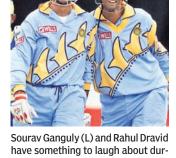
an 'impact' on Buttler

but, on that day in Taunton, sixes and fours rained down from the blades of the two Indian batsmen, something the destructive Buttler often does these days. "Those were my formative years and watching that game with

Ganguly and Dravid scoring big

hundreds had an incredible im-

pact," Buttler told 'Cricbuzz'. He was surprised by the massive Indian presence in the crowd for a match in England. "India versus Sri Lanka in 1999 World Cup was my first experience of seeing Indian crowds and that ignites the fire of how passionate people are about the



game and how cool it would be to play in a World Cup," added Buttler.

Buttler looked in good form for Rajasthan Royals in the now-suspended IPL-14, including scoring a scintillating 64-ball 124 against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Considered one of England's finest limited overs batsman, Buttler was instrumental in guiding them to the 2019 World Cup victory at home, and is expected to play a crucial role in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

"Since this is not another bilat-

conditions of anonymity. "What happens in case of a draw,

"The ICC will be publishing the Playing Conditions in coming days. We can't put a date but I believe they will send it soon.

The Indian team are hoping to train during their soft quarantine but negotiations are still on with regards to duration of quarantine. While the likes of Mayank

bowling coach Bharat Arun a charter flight from Chennai, Mohammed Siraj, men's team fielding coach R Sridhar, women's Test and ODI captain Mithali Rai will

However, all those living in Mumbai, Pune and adjoining areas can join the team bubble May 24 like men's team skipper Virat Kohli, his respective red and white ball deputies Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma, and women's team bat-

respective flights.

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