



POSITIVE CHANGE

Swedish actor Elli Avram says with time more foreigners are being accepted in Indian films

LEISURE P2



BLACK FUNGUS DEATHS

Maharashtra has recorded a staggering 1,500 mucormycosis infections and 100 deaths till date

TWO STATES P7



MARS ROVER STEPS OUT

China's first Mars rover Saturday drove down from its landing platform to the Martian surface to explore the surface of the red planet

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



My job certificate... has photos of PM, CM, ministers... almost all except the scientists who developed it!

FIH PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR PANDIAN

BHUBANESWAR: Senior Odisha cadre IAS officer and Secretary to the Chief Minister, VK Pandian has been felicitated with the International Hockey Federation (FIH) President's Award, Saturday. FIH announced Pandian as the winner of the prestigious award in a virtual conference on the concluding day of its 47th Congress. Hockey India shared the news via its official Twitter handle. Congratulating the IAS officer, Hockey India said, "A well-deserved acknowledgment for his outstanding contribution and services to hockey in Odisha." Notably, Odisha successfully hosted the Hockey World Cup-2018, Odisha Men's Hockey World League - 2017, FIH Hockey Pro-League 2020 and FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers for Men & Women, 2019. The state will also organise the Men's Hockey World Cup in 2023.



FIREARMS SEIZED IN CITY, ONE ARRESTED

BHUBANESWAR: The Special Task Force (STF) of state Crime Branch Saturday arrested a history-sheeter, Sanjay Kumar Sahoo, a resident of Cuttack district, and seized firearms in his possession of at Acharya Vihar here. Acting on a tip-off that a deal of illegal firearms would be finalised in the City Saturday, the STF with the help of Sahid Nagar police intercepted Sahoo's and recovered one 9mm automatic country-made pistol and magazine, one revolver, two SBML guns and a large number of live ammunitions from his possession. Later, Sahid Nagar police arrested Sahoo and registered a case (214/21) under various Sections of IPC and Arms Act. The STF has seized 31 firearms and 69 live ammunitions during last one year.

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.2°C	35.0°C
MIN	24.6°C	24.2°C
Humidity	80%	85%
Rainfall	Trace	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

Yaas to cross state May 26

A low pressure has formed over the Bay of Bengal which is very likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm

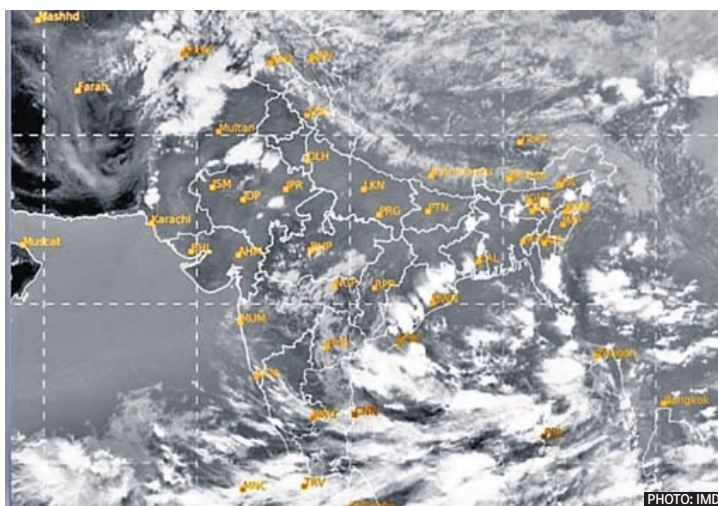
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Saturday said that a low-pressure area has formed over the Bay of Bengal and it will gradually intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm.

Under the influence of the cyclonic circulation over southeast and adjoining Central Bay of Bengal, a low pressure area has formed over east-central Bay of Bengal with associated cyclonic circulation extending up to mid-tropospheric levels, the IMD said.

It is very likely to concentrate into a depression over east-central Bay of Bengal by Sunday and move north-northwestwards. It will intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 24 and further into a very severe cyclonic storm during the next 24 hours.

The cyclone would continue to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach north Bay of Bengal near West Bengal and adjoining north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around May 26 morning. It is very likely to cross West Bengal and adjoining north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around May 26 evening. Director General of IMD Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said, "Very severe cyclone means the wind speed will be around 120-165 kmph with gust-



ing 180 kmph. After the low-pressure intensifies into a deep depression, the exact place of landfall and time can be ascertained. The northern coastal areas of Odisha are likely to receive heavy rainfall due to the impact of the cyclone May 25 onwards, he said.

As per the MeT, heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at some places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda and Mayurbhanj, May 25.

Similarly, heavy to very heavy rainfall would occur at some places of

Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar with extremely heavy rainfall at one or two places over the districts of Mayurbhanj and Balasore on the next day (May 26). Few pockets in Dhenkanal, Angul, Deogarh and Sundergarh may also witness heavy downpour on this day.

CM TAKES STOCK

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the preparedness for the ensuing cyclone Yaas with senior officials, Collectors and SPs.

"For any disaster management, our sole motto is 'All life is precious'. Therefore, under the present circumstances, our most important job is to evacuate people from low-lying areas and unsafe houses," he said. Naveen directed the Collectors and SPs to personally supervise the evacuation operations in their respective area. The Chief Secretary was asked to regularly monitor cyclone preparedness and accordingly advise the district administration.

"Since as per the IMD's prediction Cyclone Yaas is likely to form in the Bay of Bengal in another two days and its path has not been defined, therefore, all our coastal districts and districts adjoining them should remain fully prepared and remain alert for heavy rains and gusty winds," the Chief Minister advised. Patnaik asked the officials to pay special attention to oxygen supply at this time due to the Covid situation. He directed that special measures be taken to ensure that there is no problem in the supply of oxygen within and outside the state during the cyclone period.

The state has kept ready 22 NDRF teams, 66 ODRAF teams, 177 Fire Service teams and tree-cutting staff of the Odisha Forest Development Corporation for deployment at the affected area, Special Relief Commissioner PK Jena said.

Decision on Class XII board exams today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has called a crucial meeting Sunday to decide on pending Class XII board exams that were postponed in view of the second wave of Covid-19, Union minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said.

The meeting will be chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar will be in attendance.

Education Ministers and secretaries of all states and Union Territories have been asked to attend the meeting. Pokhriyal also sought inputs from all the stake-

holders - students, parents, teachers and others - through social media Saturday.

"A high-level virtual meeting will be convened tomorrow (Sunday) with all states and Union Territories' Education Ministers, education secretaries and chairpersons of state examination boards and stakeholders to discuss the proposals for the conduct of exams for Class XII and entrance examinations for professional courses," Nishank said.

"I recently held a meeting with the state education secretaries in this regard. The consultative process will be further strengthened through the high-level meeting. This virtual meeting will take place at 11.30 am," he added.

73 defunct ventilators sent to state

18 ventilators have manufacturing defects; 55 non-functional due to lack of spare parts



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Even as the state has been struggling to meet the demand for medical equipment to treat Covid-19 patients, at least 73 out of 567 ventilators supplied by the Centre to Odisha have remained non-functional in Odisha owing to manufacturing defects or lack of spare parts and other consumable items.

According to the state Health and Family Welfare department, the Union government has so far supplied 447 BEL ventilators (Model - CV 200) and 120 AgVa ventilators to the state government for treatment of Covid patients in critical care. Of the total BE ventilators, 18 were received with manufacturing defects, while another 47 ventilators are not functioning as consumable items are yet to be provided by the manufacturer.

Similarly, eight AgVa ventilators are not functioning as the spare parts from the manufacturer is in transit, the department sources said.

Out of the total non-functional ventilators, 17 are in SCB Medical College - Cuttack, 12 in Aswini Sambalpur; seven in Aditya Aswini - Bhubaneswar; six each in the district headquarter hospitals (DHHs) at Sambalpur and Bolangir medical college and five in JP Hospital at Rourkela.

Similarly, three ventilators are non-functional each at VIMSAR - Burla, Rourkela Government Hospital, Covid-19 Hospital - Jarsuguda, DHH - Gajapati and Covid-19 Hospital at Angul. In addition, two ventilators supplied to Covid-19 Hospital (KIMS) are also remained defunct.

Besides, one ventilator supplied each to KIMS, Bhubaneswar; KIDS, Bhubaneswar and DHH Jharsuguda is also non-functional.

Sources in the state Health department said that 472 ventilators installed in various healthcare facilities across the state are functioning, while 22 (10 BEL & 12 AgVa) ventilators have been kept as reserve for emergency purpose. Earlier in the day, BJP leader Pradip Purohit criticised the state government alleging the latter was not making use of the life-saving ventilators supplied by Centre during the pandemic.



Carpenters busy in chariot construction work at Rath Yard in Puri, Saturday

OP PHOTO

NOW, GET YOUR COVID-19 TEST REPORT ONLINE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Now, people waiting for Covid-19 test reports will not have to worry about running to the test centres to get their reports. They can get it online sitting at home.

The state government Saturday launched a Covid test report website to help people check their Covid test status. One can login on to <https://covid19regd.odisha.gov.in> and know the status of his/her test. The website has been also linked to state Covid-19 Dashboard - <https://statedashboard.odisha.gov.in> for greater convenience.

With the launching of this website, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "Technology has always been a big bulwark during the fight against the pandemic. Hassle free provision of information regarding Covid test to people will not only smoothen the process but also give a huge relief to the people during these trying times."

He said that it has been government's effort to provide free testing-cum-treatment to protect precious lives, especially the vulnerable people. "We have significantly increased our capacity to conduct RT-PCR testing by setting up RT-PCR test centres across most districts where service will be provided to people every day, further strengthening the fight against the pandemic," the CM said.

OSL extends support for smooth O₂ supply

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Odisha Stevedores Limited (OSL) and its staff extended full logistic support in unloading of 29 medical oxygen cylinders of 40-litre capacity each and oxygen regulators-humidifiers brought by MV Anna Maria from Singapore and handled by Paradip Port Trust.

The OSL Group undertook the unloading, coordination with customs for speedy clearance, port clearance and expeditious evacuation of the cylinders from port free of cost on behalf of the state government.

Jagatsinghpur ADM Kanhu Charan Dhir received the cylinders on behalf of the Government of Odisha. Later, the oxygen cylinders were distributed among various state-run hospitals in Jagatsinghpur district.

OSL Group Chairman Mahimananda Mishra said, "We are facing an emergency situation due to the second wave of Covid-19. OSL Group is fully committed to the cause of the state and its people. We feel proud in supporting the government during the pandemic."



Director Charchit Mishra congratulated the staff for the smooth unloading of the oxygen cylinders.

OSL, which has all along supported social cause during last three decades of its existence, initiated a massive mask distribution drive in Odisha, after Chief Minister called upon the people to wear masks. OSL Group distributed one lakh masks among the general public for creating awareness on use of masks during the pandemic.

The OSL Group has taken necessary precautions and strict observance of the Covid-19 guidelines on the office premises.

A Palestine state is only answer: Biden

JOE BIDEN SAID HE HAD TOLD THE ISRAELIS TO STOP "INTER-COMMUNAL FIGHTING" IN THE FLASHPOINT CITY OF JERUSALEM

AGENCIES

Washington, May 22: US President Joe Biden Friday pledged to help organise efforts to rebuild Gaza and said creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the "only answer" to the conflict.

Biden also said he had told the Israelis to stop "inter-communal fighting" in the flashpoint city of Jerusalem. However, he stressed "there is no shift in my commitment, commitment to the security of Israel" and added that until the region "unequivocally" acknowledges Israel's existence "there will be no peace."

The idea of a two-state solution - with a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel and Jerusalem as their shared capital - has been the cornerstone of decades of international



diplomacy aimed at ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

US policy under Donald Trump was criticized as being blatantly pro-Israel and ignoring the Palestinians.

A Mideast peace plan devised by Trump's adviser and son in law Jared Kushner was billed as providing for a two-state solution. But that blue-

print envisioned a Palestinian state with only limited sovereignty and Israel maintaining security over that state. The plan was rejected out of hand by Palestinian leaders.

Biden Friday insisted on a full-blown two state remedy.

"There is no shift in my commitment to the security of Israel, period, no shift, not at all," he said.

"But I tell you what, there is a shift. The shift is that we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer, the only answer," Biden stated.

Meanwhile, a report from Gaza said Egyptian mediators held talks Saturday to firm up an Israel-Hamas cease-fire as Palestinians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip began to assess the damage from 11 days of intense Israeli bombardment. A 130-truck convoy carrying urgently needed aid was

headed to Gaza.

Saturday marked the first full day of a truce that ended the fourth Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade. In the fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes against militant targets in Gaza, while Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Both Israel and Hamas have claimed victory. There was a widespread expectation that the cease-fire would stick for now, but that another round of fighting at some point seems inevitable. Underlying issues remain unresolved, including an Israeli-Egyptian border blockade, now in its 14th year that is choking Gaza's more than 2 million residents and a refusal by the Islamic militant Hamas to disarm.

leisure



KELLY TO BE PART OF ENGLISH ADAPTION OF CALL MY AGENT

Actress Kelly Macdonald will be part of the upcoming English version of the popular French series *Call My Agent*. She will be playing an exaggerated version of herself in the upcoming series.

LIL NAS X NOT AFFECTED BY HATE COMMENTS

Rapper Lil Nas X is rarely affected by online hate because he says the love that comes his way outweighs the hatred. "The love outweighs the hate by like a hundred. So it's rare that it'll actually get to me, where I'm like, 'Oh, that hurts,'" he says.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
A plain Jane day. Work goes on as usual, and there is progress. But as Ganesh says, it's an ordinary day. Hum, whistle, doodle, and sip your green tea. While day dreaming, start planning your dream home. After all, that's where the first plan takes shape.

TAURUS
Feel your imagination run wild as you star-gaze throughout the day wondering about the existence of the extra terrestrial. You will paint the workplace in your flavour of innovation, combined with a drive to work equally hard.

GEMINI
You will be afforded full co-operation by your relatives and friends. You will also be able to provide a solution to their problems by utilising your practical thinking. You will be influenced by your emotions while choosing between multiple alternatives.

CANCER
There is a chance today to benefit from women-folk. Though you are methodical and disciplined in your work, you will feel rudderless. Yet you will et relief from this monotony and feel jovial, says Ganesh.

LEO
You will not be able to reap the rewards of your hard work fully today. You will take all matters very seriously today. You will feel a sense of responsibility and will try to find lasting solutions to problems today.

VIRGO
You better identify your worth in the realms of emotions, feelings and sentiments. You shall warm up to and about everything - from play to colleagues to family. Simultaneously, you may realise where your limitations are. Ganesh predicts that the artist in you will flourish beginning today.

LIBRA
Somebody in a position of power at your workplace may decide to pick on you, just for fun. But your luck is strong, and no one but your own thoughts and misgivings can harm you. You shall find it relatively easy to come out of these troubles; much to the chagrin of those who wish otherwise, predicts Ganesh.

SCORPIO
At work, you would want to change the perspective with which people see you. Your colleagues recognise you as the emerging alpha-lion. Ideas and opinions will impress your bosses. But keep a level head and learn where to stop, even when winning, counsels Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
You may have to make important decisions of life today, says Ganesh. Remember, haste makes waste, so take every decision only after thinking about its long-term consequences or end results. Be patient.

CAPRICORN
Print and electronic media will attract your attention, if you're just planning to begin your career. Your spiritual and philosophical approach give you inner peace, and also inspire you to visit a holy place. Overall, you will have a balanced day, today, says Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You will aim for the bull's eye today. Whatever you'll do today, will be done with your focus set firmly on your target, says Ganesh. You will not waste your resource on something unfruitful, and such an attitude will make your journey smoother and faster.

PISCES
You will find favourable conditions at work as you co-ordinate with your colleagues and seniors to tackle tough problems. You will be able to get the desirable results for all the effort you put in, in the office, says Ganesh.

Zareen on being rejected

New Delhi: Zareen Khan recalls being rejected from a film for looking the way she does. The *Veer* actress says she was bluntly told about the industry perception that pretty girls cannot act. "When I came out with *Veer* I was typecast as pretty girl, a girl next door - just comparisons and everything. I did not get a chance at all after that. (I was called) Fat, and this and that," says Zareen. She says her dance number Character dheela in the Salman Khan-starrer *Ready* somewhat helped in changing perceptions. "People were like, 'she can look like that also. She has lost weight, nice'. Then came *Hate Story* and people said she is so hot," she recalled.

Still, Zareen was rejected when she tried looking for roles that would give her something meaningful to portray. "After that when I tried meeting people for not so 'hot' roles or roles that would need me to play something meaningful or serious, I was rejected and I was out and out told in our industry it's a perception that pretty girls can't act," she said. "What the hell does that even mean? If you find me pretty and you are not going to give me a chance that is so unfair," she added.

The 34-year-old took a break from all things related to being glamorous. In her new release *Hum Bhi Akele Tum Bhi Akele*, Zareen portrays a character she has never done in her career of over a decade. She plays a lesbian in the film, which released digitally a while back. **IAN5**



Maine Pyar Kiya music director 'Raam Laxman' passes away

Nagpur: Celebrated music composer for Hindi and Marathi films Vijay Patil of the famed 'Raam Laxman' duo, passed away following a heart attack here early Saturday, his family members said. He was 79. Patil suffered a heart attack, his son Amar informed, adding that his father had taken the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine recently. As the Raam Laxman duo, Patil, along with his partner Surendra, had composed music for many top notch Hindi films in the past over four decades. They include blockbuster music for films like *Maine Pyar Kiya*, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*, *Hum Saath Saath Hain*, *Agent Vinod*, *Taraana*, *Hum Se Badhkar Kaun*, among others. Top celebs including Lata Mangeshkar, Salman Khan, Kumar Sanu have consoled the demise 'Laxman' of the successful team of which Raam (Surendra) passed away 45 years ago. **IAN5**

Elli glad seeing foreigners doing well in Indian films

Mumbai: Sweden-born actress Elli AvRam says with time more foreigners are being accepted in Indian films and getting better roles. The actress says the film industry has changed a lot since she became part of it. "I'm so glad seeing other foreigners doing so well and getting so much of love and appreciation in the Indian film industry. Bollywood is something so many people around the world love and die for, literally! I'm one of them," says the *Malang* actress. "I always looked for that one foreigner actress who could inspire me and give me hope, since I dreamt so hard of working in Bollywood, despite not being Indian. And I'll never forget when I watched *Love Aaj Kal*, and there was a Brazilian girl who played an Indian character (refers to Giselli Monteiro in the 2009 release). As I walked out of the cinema in Stockholm, I just said to myself, 'if she can do it, then so can I,'" adds Elli. **IAN5**



Gardening, an effective way to beat depression

Nurturing the buds and witnessing gradual growth of plants boost one's self-esteem, leaving no space for stress at all, say experts



While it may sound weird to tell people with depression to go outside and garden, there is a considerable amount of clinical evidence which suggests that spending time with plants improves our mental health, particularly depression. Here are some interesting and the creative way to fight depression and anxiety, suggest experts.

as a natural antidepressant and immune system booster; lack of which is responsible for depression. Now, it can be understood why people prefer to garden without gloves and always enjoy the sensation of getting their hands into the dirt and compost heap.

ture can help people mentally de-stress. When a person directly contributes to the nurturing of the buds and witness the plants grow gradually, his/her happiness and contentment will know no boundaries. This is a small yet a very powerful exercise to even boost one's self-esteem, leaving no space for stress at all.

Getting Hands Dirty!
Getting hands dirty in the garden boosts one's serotonin levels, according to studies. Serotonin is a happy chemical that also serves

De-stress Therapy
Gardening is an awesome diversion from the increasingly technologically driven lives. Spending time gardening and enjoying na-

Building Creativity
How about simply finding out how to keep those garden pests

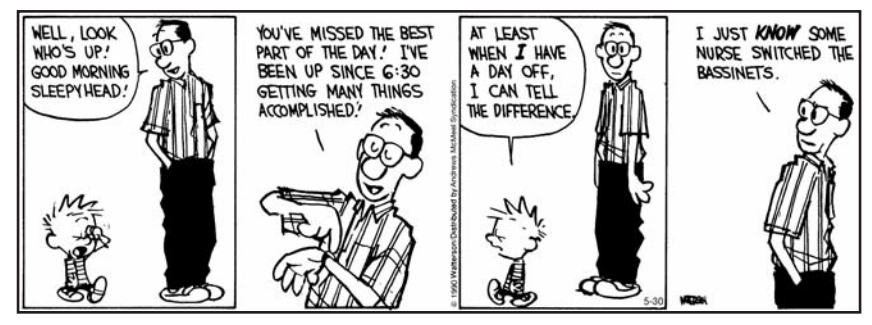
away and improving soil quality to keep the garden healthy? How about deciding what kind and colour of a pot will suit one's favourite plant the best? Get yourself into it once and this green care will take care of your positivity, creativity, mood upliftment, skill building, and ultimately help you fight depression naturally.

Building Strength
Working in the garden improves dexterity and strength. Digging, raking, and mowing are especially calorie-dense activities and the aerobic exercise involved will easily burn the same amount of calories as a gym workout. During gardening, a person gets exposed to nature and sunlight. Sunlight works two ways on the body: reduces blood pressure while also increasing vitamin D levels, and the fruits and vegetables grown have a positive effect on the diet. **AGENCIES**

PEANUTS



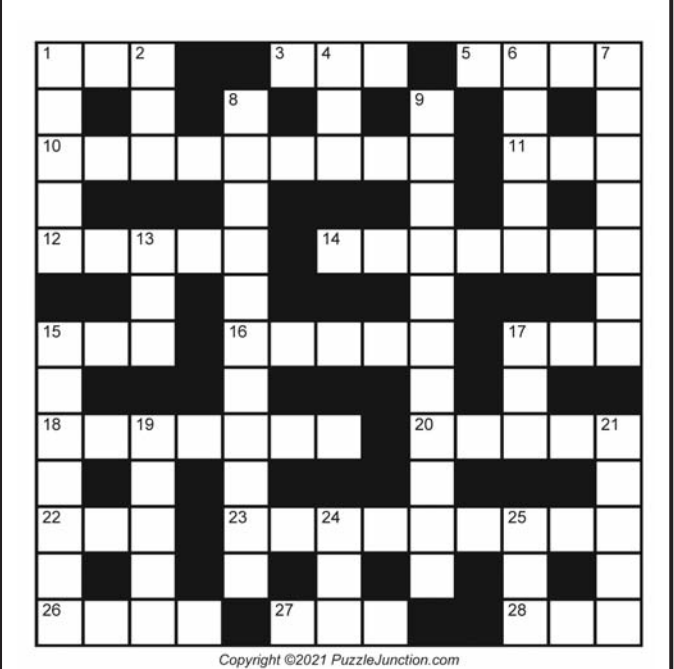
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



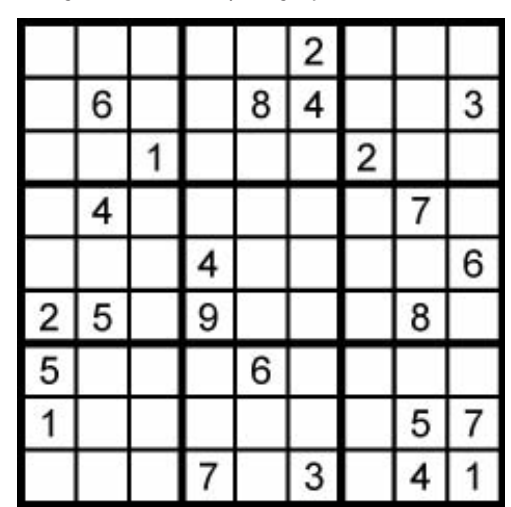
FUN post CROSSWORD



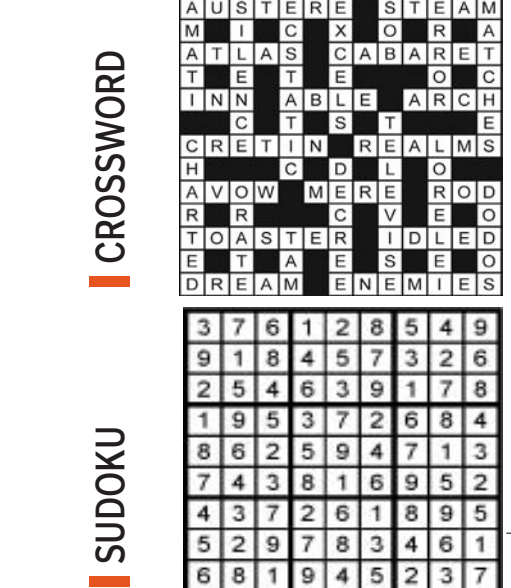
- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Preceded
 - 3 Not many
 - 5 Venus de Milo's lack
 - 10 Like a boastful person
 - 11 Greyhound vehicle
 - 12 Expunge
 - 14 Old master
 - 15 Tie the knot
 - 16 Validation
 - 17 Gibbon, for one
 - 18 Guaranteed
 - 20 Crosswise, on deck
 - 22 Roofing material
 - 23 Good luck pieces in Ireland
 - 26 Sail support
 - 27 Crow's cry
 - 28 Future fish
 - 6 Contradict
 - 7 Part of a heartbeat
 - 8 Ad-lib
 - 9 Bay of Naples attraction (4,2,5)
 - 13 Give a hand
 - 15 Affluent
 - 17 Sailor's assent
 - 19 Submarine detector
 - 21 Billiards shot
 - 24 Literary collection
 - 25 One for the road
- Down**
- 1 Kind of change
 - 2 Lion's home
 - 4 Conceit

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



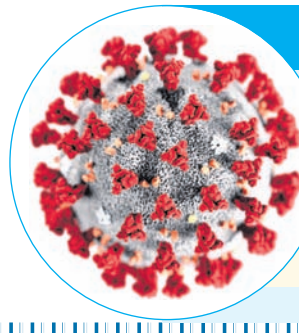
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



SHIELD AGAINST SUN

Girls use umbrellas to save themselves from the scorching sun in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,68,12,600	14,77,24,388	34,63,660
India	2,62,89,290	2,30,70,365	2,95,525
Odisha	6,79,530	5,77,983	2,456

Amphotericin supply from Centre too little for state

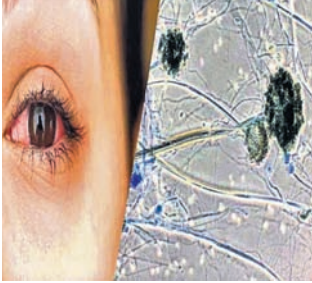
ODISHA HAS A TOTAL OF 15 CASES OF BLACK FUNGUS OR MUCORMYCOSIS, AS PER THE UNION GOVT'S DATA



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Even though the Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers, DV Sadananda Gowda, Saturday said that the ministry has supplied 50 more vials of Amphotericin B injection to Odisha to help it fight mucormycosis or black fungus, the state government said that the supply of the drug is too little as far as its demand is concerned.

The state, which is struggling to get the scarce injection, is not likely to get the drug directly from the manufacturers as the Centre has exclusive control over its supply. According to the office of the State Drug Controller, the state received 50 vials of Amphotericin B injection from the Union government for AIIMS, Bhubaneswar while another 100 vials, which will be used in state-run government hospitals, are in pipeline.



process is likely to be affected. Saturday, I talked to one of the manufacturers and I was told that the procurement from the manufacturers will be made by the Union government and the Centre will provide it to the state," a Health department official told **Orissa POST**, requesting anonymity.

Amidst the apparent dearth of the scarce injection, the mucormycosis patients and their family members are now making frantic appeals to several people on social media to help them with supply of the essential drug for the treatment of mucormycosis

BLACK FUNGUS EPIDEMIC

According to the office of the State Drug Controller, the state has received 50 vials of Amphotericin B injection from the Union government for AIIMS, Bhubaneswar while another 100 vials, which will be used in state-run government hospitals, are in pipeline

The state, which is struggling to get the scarce injection, is not likely to get the drug directly from the manufacturers as the Centre has control over its supply

Amidst the apparent dearth of the injection, the patients and their family members are now making frantic appeals to several people active on social media to help them with supply of the essential drug for the treatment of mucormycosis

Amidst the apparent dearth of the scarce injection, the mucormycosis patients and their family members are now making frantic appeals to several people on social media to help them with supply of the scarce drug.

Notably, Jayant Panda from the Department of Medicine at SCB Medical College and Hospital, in a government sponsored programme last week, claimed that the state has adequate supply of the drug.

HIGH ALERT



Fire brigade personnel readying their equipment to face cyclonic storm Yaas in Puri, Saturday

OP PHOTO

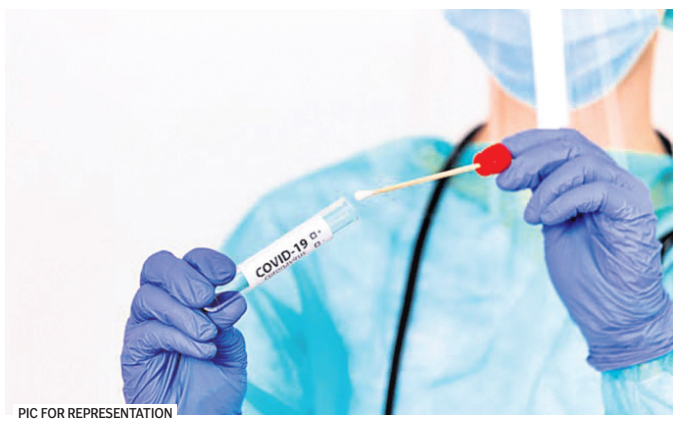
Doorstep testing, vax to differently-abled

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: In its bid to ramp up Covid detection and vaccination, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Saturday said it will provide doorstep testing and vaccination to differently-abled individuals facing difficulties to avail the facilities

Discussing the state of Covid-19 in the Capital city here, BMC Commissioner, Sanjay Singh said there has been a drop in daily case-load. While daily positive cases stood at 1,353 until May 15 it has remained around 1,150 on an average owing to lockdown and shutdown, he said. However, ruling out complacency, Singh said testing will be enhanced.

"We have decided to provide doorstep testing and vaccination to differently-abled individuals. Moreover, we are planning to add more patients under 'A' category such as those who are bed-ridden, pregnant women and senior citizens. Those who seek home testing or vaccination can avail the fa-



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

ilities by calling 1929," Singh said.

The BMC Commissioner also mentioned that the civic authority would now provide mass testing to housing societies to check the spread of virus in urban dwellings. "Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in need of mass testing for their societies can contact their respective Zonal Deputy Commissioners or call 1929," he added.

New slots for drive-in open as state orders restrictions

Despite the state government's instructions to stop drive-in vaccination programmes across Odisha, the BMC Saturday issued fresh slots for drive-ins from May 24 extending the date for drive-in vaccination till May 28.

The civic authority in a tweet Saturday stated that the 45+ age group residents of Bhubaneswar can book slots at any of the five ven-

ues — Esplanade One Mall at Rasulgarh, Utkal Kanika Galleria at Kalpana, Symphony Mall at Rudrapur, KIIT University Cricket Stadium at Patia and DN Regalia Mall at Kalinganagar. While booking for the slots began Saturday, the drive will begin May 24.

It can be mentioned that the state government May 19 had written to District Collectors and municipal commissioners to stop drive-in or door-to-door vaccination programmes. The letter mentioned that the practice should be stopped immediately as the initiatives lack adequate facilities to monitor adverse effects following immunization.

"We have not received any official communication from the government on cancellation of drive-ins. Moreover, cancelling the drive abruptly may create further confusion as the slots have already been allotted to people. We have been following the drive with all precautions along with required infrastructure as per government guidelines," a BMC official said.

Banned gutkha worth ₹33L seized in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 22: Badambadi police Saturday claimed to have seized huge cache of banned gutkha (tobacco products) from a godown at New Kamalpur in Shankarpur area of the city here.

Police arrested Rabintra Pradhan, 43, of Khanagar Brahmana Sahi in connection with the storage of banned gutkha. Another person involved in the illegal act has managed to escape, sources said. The market value of the seized gutkha is said to be around ₹33 lakh.

On a tip-off, a police team led by Badambadi inspector-in-charge Rashmi Ranjan Mahapatra raided the godown and found 136 bags filled with the gutkha sachets, sources said.

On being informed, city health officer Satyabrata Mahapatra reached the spot and collected sam-



ples of the gutkha for testing. "We have registered a case in this regard. Steps are being taken to arrest Pradhan's aide who was involved in the storage of the banned item," said a police officer.

Commissionerate Police had conducted raids at 21 places in the city and its outskirts between September and December, 2020. They also seized adulterated goods. The police had seized adulterated ghee, edible oil, ketchup, turmeric powder, chilli powder, tea powder and honey worth ₹7.36 crore during the raids. Police had also arrested 25 persons in this connection, sources said.

GOVT PANEL FOR ISOLATING INFANTS FROM +VE PARENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The special task force, constituted by the Health department to recommend ways to contain the spread of Covid-19, Saturday laid down a set of measures to ensure safety of kids during the second wave of the pandemic.

One important aspect of the recommendations is to segregate the kids from the infected persons. The panel also said that a neonate, if born to a Covid infected person and found positive against the viral infection, should also be given to the mother only when she becomes non-infectious.

"Children of Covid-19 positive parents need to be isolated as much as possible. In a hospital set-up, sick babies born to Covid positive mothers need to be isolated and kept in Newborn Stabilisation Unit

3RD WAVE SCORE

If a neonate is found positive for the virus and sick, he/she needs to be admitted to a Covid hospital

In case of Covid positive parents in home isolation, the child needs to be separated from the infected parents till they become non-infectious and other members of the family are required to take care of the baby

(NBSU) or Sick Newborn Stabilisation Unit (SNCU) till the mother becomes non-infectious," the panel said.

The task force also said, "Babies born to Covid positive mothers need to be tested on the same day. If a neonate is found positive for the

virus and sick, he/she needs to be admitted to a Covid hospital."

The panel also talked about home care for the kids. "In case of Covid positive parents in home isolation, the baby needs to be separated from the infected parents till they become non-infectious and other members of the family are required to take care of the child."

The panel also said that active surveillance to detect symptomatic kids should be done regularly while Covid appropriate behaviour must be encouraged in them. It also said that kids orphaned by the pandemic should be kept in Child Care Institutions (CCIs).

The task force said that opening of schools should be done keeping in mind the local conditions, effectiveness of remote learning, capacity of schools in terms of safety and other parameters.

BMC gears up to tackle cyclone



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Ahead of the possible very severe cyclonic storm Yaas, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Saturday, held an emergency meeting with different stakeholders and officials to discuss the preparedness for the impending calamity.

With the state capital is expected to experience heavy rain accompanied by strong winds under the influence of the cyclonic storm from May 25, the BMC Commissioner, Sanjay Singh, emphasised on drain cleaning, setting up of temporary shelters and

management of power supply.

"We held a meeting with all zonal deputy commissioners, Energy department officials, sanitation and drainage department officials, police and Fire Services department to ensure that all guidelines issued by the State Relief Commissioner (SRC) are followed," said the BMC Commissioner.

Sources said that while de-silting of drains had already begun in view of upcoming monsoon, the process would be expedited now. Moreover, zonal development councils were informed to set up temporary shelters with adequate food especially for homeless and destitute.

DYING RIVER



Mythological Prachi river is filled with hyacinths at Kakatpur in Puri district. Massive encroachment on the riverbed has threatened the very existence the river

BRACING FOR CYCLONE YAAS

Shift expectant moms to safety: Garg

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The Principal Secretary of Women & Child Development (W&CD) and Mission Shakti, Anu Garg, Saturday held a virtual review meeting with the officers of the department, DSWOs, CDPOs on the preparedness for the impending cyclone 'Yaas'.

Emphasis was laid on preparedness in Bhadrak and Balasore districts while other northern/coastal districts were also asked to remain prepared for any kind of eventuality.

Garg directed the field functionaries of the department to ensure that prior arrangements are made for shifting of pregnant women with early expected dates of delivery (EDDs) to hospitals, preferably through ambulance. She also instructed the



W&CD Principal Secretary Anu Garg at the virtual review meeting

Anganwadi workers to make frequent visits to cyclone centres and relief camps. Health check-up of high-risk pregnant women, expectant mothers and severely underweight/severely acute malnutrition (SAM) children is to be

conducted in coordination with the local ANMs/ASHAs following Covid protocols.

Steps should also be taken to store take home ration (THR), first aid and medicine kits in the cyclone shelters/relief centres/AWCs/NGO-

run institutions such as Child Care Institutions (CCI)/ Swadhar & Ujjwala homes. Provision should be made for advanced supply of THR and eggs to children and pregnant and nursing women in the affected areas.

Distribution of THR should be made before May 25, Garg said. Special care should be taken for children in need of care and protection, single parent child, orphans, destitute women during this period.

State logs 11,108 new Covid cases, 26 deaths

THE FRESH CASES WERE DETECTED FROM 60,759 SAMPLES FRIDAY, TAKING THE DAY'S POSITIVITY RATE TO 18.28 PER CENT

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The state Saturday reported 11,108 fresh Covid-19 cases and 26 more deaths, a Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

The new cases were detected after testing 60,759 samples Friday, taking the day's positive rate to 18.28 per cent.

So far, the state has reported 6,79,530 Covid-19 cases and 2,456 deaths, the official said.

Of the new infections, 6,219 were detected at quarantine centres while the remaining 4,889 were local contact cases.

At present, there are 1,09,639 active cases in the state.

On Friday, 10,881 patients recovered, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,67,382.

Khurda district, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest 1,451 cases, followed by Cuttack (944), Angul (864), Sundargarh (708) and Balasore (509).

Kalahandi (39) is the lone district that reported new cases in double digits.

Of the 26 fresh fatalities, Khurda



A woman takes Covid vaccine in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

KHURDA DISTRICT REPORTED THE HIGHEST 1,451 CASES, FOLLOWED BY CUTTACK (944), ANGUL (864), SUNDARGARH (708) AND BALASORE (509)

OF THE 26 FRESH FATALITIES, KHURDA ALONE ACCOUNTED FOR SIX DEATHS. FOUR PEOPLE DIED IN KALAHANDI, THREE DEATHS EACH HAPPENED IN GANJAM AND PURI DISTRICT, WHILE ANGUL, SUNDARGARH AND BALASORE DISTRICTS REPORTED TWO DEATHS EACH

The Chief Minister said Thursday that the hospital will be helpful in providing better medical care to critical Covid-19 patients of the district and they won't have to search for beds in Bhubaneswar or Cuttack.

The entire operational expenditure of the Covid hospital will be borne by the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), Patnaik announced, adding that all the beds have been connected with oxygen pipeline, and their number will increase, if required.

Govt orders reserving beds for infected kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The health department Saturday asked all District Collectors and superintendents of government medical colleges and hospitals to reserve beds in Covid hospitals for infected kids.

"Considering the surge in Covid infections among children in different parts of the country, the state government desires to consolidate its preparedness to meet the future challenges in the management of children affected by Covid-19. In this context, it is directed that the officials concerned follow certain guidelines," the instructions from the department said.

As per the letter, all Covid hospitals will create a designated 'Paediatric Covid Wing' within the existing facilities to start with. At least 15 per cent of beds in the isolation ward, oxygen beds, ICUs may be kept reserved for this purpose to support neonates, infants and other paediatric age groups. The facilities can be augmented in future, the letter said.

"Also earmarking of Covid-19 newborn units in the existing SNCU/ NICU may be done with strict isolation and infection prevention and control measures.



Necessary logistics and consumables and other requirements to this effect are to be estimated and kept reserved and indents may be placed to OSMCL," added the letter.

The department also asked the authorities to put in place an updated protocol for management of Covid-19 in the Paediatric Age Group.

One of the parents may be allowed to remain as an attendant. This may be considered on a case to case basis and the caregiver parent shall be adequately counselled on Covid appropriate behaviour including personal hygiene, hand sanitising and use of mask, the instructions said.

The instructions also urged private hospitals and others to come up with such facilities for kids to manage the pandemic. The hospitals dealing with kids have also been asked to start counselling centres.

Trains cancelled for cyclone Yash

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: In view of cyclone Yash, the railways has decided to cancel various trains originating/terminating from and at Bhubaneswar and Puri and trains passing through ECoR from May 25.

These trains include the following: Mumbai-Bhubaneswar-Mumbai Konark Special, Puri-Ajmer-Puri Special, Howrah-Puri-Howrah Jan Shatabdi Special, Howrah-Puri-Howrah Special, LTT-Puri-LTT Special, Puri-Howrah-Puri Purusottam Special, Anand Vihar-Bhubaneswar-Anand Vihar Special, Anand Vihar-Puri-Anand Vihar Special, Bhubaneswar-New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special, New Delhi-Bhubaneswar-New Delhi special, Howrah-Puri-Howrah Special, Ahmedabad-Puri-Ahmedabad Special, Rourkela-Bhubaneswar-Rourkela Special, Puri-Anand Vihar-Puri Special, Bhubaneswar-Secunderabad-Bhubaneswar Visakha Special, Tirupati-Puri-Tirupati Special, Bhubaneswar-Bangalore-Bhubaneswar Prashanti Special, Bhubaneswar-Anand Vihar-Bhubaneswar Odisha Sampark Kranti Special, Puri-Rishikesh-Puri Special, Hatia-Puri-Hatia Tapaswini Special, Puri-Jodhpur Special, and Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Special.

Youth alleges fraudulent marriage, blackmailing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: In an interesting incident, a youth from Puri has alleged a woman of marrying him using fraudulent means. The Badagada police here have started investigation into the matter by registering a case on the basis of the victim's complaint.

The youth, Aniket Mishra, 26, is a resident of Harachandi Sahi in Puri. Mishra, who has a great penchant for music and singing, frequently uploads videos on his YouTube channel. Mishra alleged that the accused lady recently sent a message on facebook account of the victim offering to promote his songs telling him that she had an audio recording studio at Puri.

Following her invitation, Mishra met the lady at her studio and performed a song there November 1,

2020. The accused again contacted Mishra a few days later and asked him to sign some documents in connection with an agreement for the promotion of songs. Mishra did as he was told at the office of the sub-registrar in Bhubaneswar March 9, 2021.

Mishra got a shock March 11, when the lady asked him to take her to his house saying they were legally married now. Upon asking, she revealed that the document signed March 9 was actually related to the registration of their marriage.

Mishra along with his father rushed to the sub registrar's office and accosted the officials about the validity of the marriage registration as both of them are residents of Puri which is out of the jurisdiction of the sub registrar. The officials later informed Mishra that the registration had been cancelled.

2.60cr man-days generated by Odisha under MGNREGA

SUPREME COURT HAD MAY 13 ASKED THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT TO APPRISE THE COURT SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE STEPS TAKEN BY THEM TO RESOLVE THE PLIGHT OF MIGRANT WORKERS, WHO FACED MASS EXODUS IN 2020

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 22: In order to provide employment to the migrant workers returned from various states and others, the state government said that 2.60 crore man-days were generated under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the state till May 17.

The state government, in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, submitted that 2.60 crore man-days were generated till May 17 in fiscal year 2021-22 covering 17.21 lakh individuals. The state government also paid additional wages of ₹101 over and above the wage rate of ₹207 notified under MGNREGA in four migration prone districts. Besides, the state gov-



ernment also provided additional 200 days over and above the stipulated 100 days' work under MGNREGA.

Other than MGNREGA, the state

till May 17 and ₹46.78 crore was paid as wages.

To help the construction workers, the state government said that it distributed ₹276.54 crore to over 18.43 lakh construction workers.

The government also submitted that it has maintained details of 10,07,330 migrant persons district-wise and block-wise. It also contains the details regarding their skills, educational qualification and work experience etc.

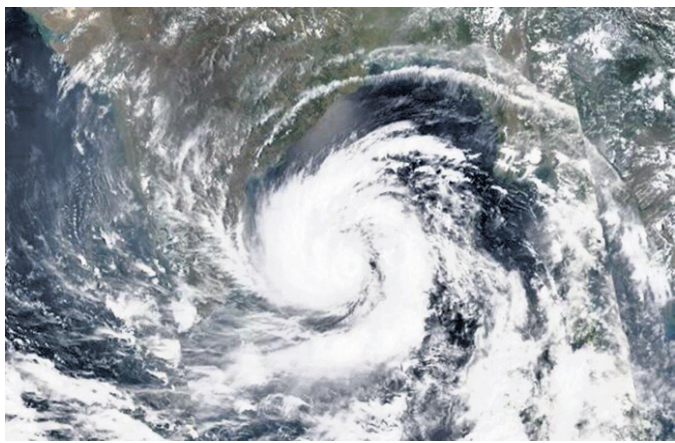
Significantly, the Supreme Court had May 13 asked the Odisha government to apprise the Court specifically about the steps taken by them to resolve the plight of migrant workers, who faced mass exodus in 2020. The apex court had expressed dissatisfaction with state government for not filing its re-

sponse on the issue and had given 10 days time to the state.

Earlier in June and July last year, the apex court had asked all states to maintain records of all migrant workers arrived at different places in the states. The states were directed to maintain details of all migrant workers, nature of their skills and place of their earlier employment in a pro forma at village, block and district level so that necessary help can be extended to the migrants by state authorities and district authorities. The court had also asked the state governments to set up help desks and counselling centres at block as well as district level to provide all information about government schemes and employment to migrant workers.

DMs ASKED TO GEAR UP FOR COVID-19, CYCLONE

Collectors were told that attempts should be made to ensure social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing are promoted in the community during the cyclone and its aftermath to prevent chances of the spread of the disease



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The state health department Saturday issued special instructions to Collectors to take timely action and proper care of Covid patients during cyclone Yaas.

In a communication to the Collectors, the department asked them to take preventive measures and ensure early stocking of essential drugs before the onset of the cyclone in the state.

"Necessary arrangement is to be made for conducting Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) of people before evacuating them to cyclone shelters. Medical care and public health interventions need to be planned for camps housing evacuated populations. Rapid Antigen Tests may be taken up for population in camps followed RT-PCR

testing for symptomatic negative Rapid Antigen Tests," the instruction read.

It also added, "All Covid hospitals/ Covid care centres may be stocked with all essential medicines/oxygen cylinders/ oxygen and other required manpower so as to provide uninterrupted medical support to the patients," the instructions to Collectors said.

The district administration was asked to watch out for outbreak of other diseases and take timely actions. "District surveillance units and public health teams mobilized for Covid management need to be reoriented on possible outbreak of epidemic prone diseases such as influenza, measles, acute diarrhoeal diseases, dysentery, leptospirosis, dengue, malaria and others," he said.

"Senior citizens and those suffering from diabetes, hypertension, liver kidney, respiratory dis-

eases, need to be specifically monitored with Covid prospective as they constitute people under high risk. As communication disruption is also likely to occur at some places, major hospitals in the districts may be provided with satellite phones/HAM radio connections," the health department told Collectors.

It asked Collectors to ensure that despite cyclones, attempts should be made to ensure that social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing are promoted in the community during the cyclone and its aftermath to prevent chances of the spread of the disease in the community.

The instructions also said, "Rapid response movement, ambulance, referral services need to be coordinated at block /district level. Disease surveillance and daily reporting during and after cyclonic/flood like situations should be done."

Cong questions licence fee waiver for liquor traders

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjana Patnaik Saturday questioned the decision of the state Cabinet to exempt the liquor traders from licence fees while keeping the taxes intact on small and medium traders in the state.

"How come a state Cabinet took a decision to protect financially the rich business group? I fail to understand the wisdom of collecting licence fees from hundreds of poor, small and marginal business houses who are unable to earn properly during the last 15 months of lockdowns and shutdowns while allowing sops for the liquor traders," he said.

He also added, "What prompted the Chief Minister to take such a decision which is anti-people? It hints at the cordial relationship of the liquor traders with the state government. At the same time, the prices of essential commodities have gone up. What the government has done to counter that?"

Patnaik also raked up the issue of spiralling prices of petrol and diesel in the state and urged the state government to reduce value added tax (VAT) on the fuel to give relief to the middle class. "Let the state government exempt the licence fee of all small and marginal business houses that are unable to earn well during the pandemic. The government should also convene an all-party meeting and prepare a concrete strategy for wider inoculation of the people of the state in a time-bound manner," he said.

SHUTDOWN EFFECT



Rasulgarh overbridge in Bhubaneswar and Jobra anicut bridge in Cuttack (bottom) look empty as the urban areas of Odisha were put under weekend shutdown to tackle the second wave of Covid-19

OP PHOTOS

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Yaas: People in coastal pockets on edge

312 MULTI-PURPOSE CYCLONE SHELTERS UNSAFE IN KENDRAPARA; MANY WEAK EMBANKMENTS ARE STILL AWAITING REPAIR; 10 ALERT CENTRES DON'T WORK PROPERLY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 22: As the cyclonic storm 'Yaas' is likely to cross West Bengal, adjoining north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around May 26 evening, people in most coastal parts of Kendrapara were panicked. The cyclone is feared to strike them at a time when they have been battling against the deadly Covid-19 virus.

Since large-scale devastation was wreaked by the 1999 Super Cyclone, people in this coastal district remain by and large panicky ahead of the actual strike of cyclones. They are worried about the severity of the disaster. They had also faced the fury of Amphan in 2020, losing lives and properties.

On the other hand, cyclone shelters, which had been built after the Super Cyclone in the district, are a great asset for the people for temporary accommodation.

But the problem is that 312 cyclone shelters have been declared as unsafe by the district administration. In such situation, questions remain that how people can have safe accommodation at the time of this cyclone.

Moreover, there are 20 alert centres in the fringe areas in the coastal district, but 10 are not in a position to sound siren in case of emergency. It was alleged that though the coastal district has been facing the fury of cyclones almost every year, authorities have failed to maintain cyclone shelters and warning systems routinely.

The tidal surge during the cyclone is another cause of worry for the people living in areas close



Fishermen returning in their boats from the sea in Bhograi area OP PHOTO

to the coast. Conscious citizens observed that though the district natural disaster management committee has been holding meetings, no step has been taken to repair the weak embankments whose strengthening matters most for deterring the surge.

People from different walks of life – intellectual Sibasish Mohanty, environmentalists Hemanta Kumar Rout, Srikanth Nayak, social activists Pratik Chandra Tripathy and Prakash Chandra Das – lamented that people have been suffering a lot due to cyclones and floods. Political leaders and the administration have failed to redress the issues through infrastructure development and their maintenance.

If the cyclone becomes severe, many areas in the district are likely to face deluge. "The authorities of the district water resources division, Mahanadi Division, Chitropala division and the drainage division should have taken proactive measures every year well before the monsoon. By May, all weak embankments should have been re-

paired. But many embankments are weak and can't stand against strong surge of floodwater. Even at the slightest floods, they may crumble," they pointed out.

Coastal erosion still goes on as usual. There has been no concrete plan for massive plantation and regeneration of mangroves to stem the problem. The mangrove forests along the coast have already suffered massive damage due to Titli in 2018, Fani in 2019 and Amphan in 2020. On the other hand, encroachment of forest land and mushrooming growth of prawn gherries on the forest land have been other major factors quickening the coastal erosion process.

During Amphan, 11 alert centres in Rajnagar area and nine in Mahkalpara block could not sound siren for people living in coastal villages.

People in Ratapanga, Narasinghpur, Jambu, Tantiapal, Endulapur, Kaitha, Chinchiri, Pentha, Brahmasasan and Kandarapatia have been living in fear. 312 cyclone shelters have been in bad shape that may not work.

PANIC IN BHOGRAI

Bhograi: As cyclonic storm Yaas has intensified into a severe cyclonic storm over the east-central Bay of Bengal, the Balasore district administration is prepared to meet any eventuality. However, people in coastal pockets like Bhograi and Jaleswar are panicked. A high alert has been sounded along the coast of Odisha and West Bengal.

Collector K Sudarshan Chakraborty has directed the block administration of Bhograi to remain alert and ready.

Meanwhile, 160 schools and 20 cyclone shelters have been sanitized for shifting of people. Food, drinking water and electricity have been provided to these facilities.

A 24x7 control room was opened. An NDRF team has reached Digha. More NDRF teams from Gujarat are reaching the coastal areas in Balasore. Thousands of fishermen along with boats returned from the sea ahead of the cyclone.

As for the cyclone, Collector Amrit Raturaj said the district administration is ready to face possible cyclone.

Multi-purpose cyclone shelters are being monitored while measures are being taken for evacuation, communication and healthcare, he added.

Under the influence of the cyclonic circulation, a low pressure area has formed over east-central Bay of Bengal. It will intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 24 and further into a very severe cyclonic storm.

19-YEAR OLD FOREST GUARD SHOT DOWN



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 22: A forest guard was shot dead late Friday night by two armed miscreants while he was patrolling at Karamtala forest under Saintala range in the district.

According to police, the deceased was identified as 19-year old Jogeswar Budek. He was on duty at night along with one of his colleagues when Budek saw armed miscreants venturing into the forest.

Swinging into action, Budek chased the miscreants. All of a sudden, the miscreants opened fire at the two. However, Budek sustained bullet injuries in his stomach. On being informed, senior forest officials rescued Budek and immediately rushed to Saintala community health centre where doctors declared him 'brought dead'.

"The assailants fled from the spot soon after committing the crime. Two miscreants armed with country-made guns were heading towards the forest, our guards tried to nab them. They suddenly fired at Budek. He succumbed to injuries on his way to the hospital," Saintala ranger Rajkishore Harpal said. Saintala police registered a case and launched a probe. Two suspects were detained.

Illegal stone crushing units back in biz despite sealing



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, May 22: The district administration had sealed some of the illegal stone crushing units in Dharmasala and Darpan tehsils in Jajpur in February this year. Hardly have a few days gone, the crusher units are back into operations, a report said.

According to the report, the crusher units allegedly violated environment protection norms and location criteria. They have no documents conforming to rules.

A number of such stone crushing units have been operating along NH-53 from Chandikhole Inspection Bungalow to Chadeidhara. They are mostly run at Ranibandh, Bhadanga, Aruha, Padkhara, Barada and Baulamala.

In the past, the district administration had carried out raids on these crusher units in the past and seized them. But they are back in operation after a few days.

It was June 20, 2015 when there was a notification for stern action against the stone crushing units in Darpan, Dharmasala and Danagadi tehsils. As per a directive of the High Court linked to the case (WPC9101/2009) and the directive of the National Human Rights Commission linked to the case (134-18/5/0708), it was decided to close all these stone crushing units.

Acting on the directive of the HC and NHRC, 147, these units were sealed while electricity connections to them were snatched.

But mega crushing units such as Aruni, RKD, Simplex, Madhab, Garuda, ARSS, Nagarjun, Rocksand, Joda, Tapti, Godagaon, Konark, Jain, Amit and South East had been spared. The owners of these sealed unit expressed their displeasure over it.

As thousands of people depend on these units, the district administration assured them to consider relocating these units at suitable places. The process to identify land for rehab of these units has been initiated.

As per the location criteria, no stone crushing unit will be allowed to operate within 500 meters from an educational institution, human settlements, health centres and offices. Besides, no stone crushers will be set up within 200-meter distance from state or national highways. Violating all such norms, stone crushing units were carrying out their operations.

After Chakraborty Singh Rathore joined as Collector, he started demolishing son units in February. A few days after this drive, several units have started functioning.

The Collector recently visited some crusher units and fined two for illegally piling up stones.

Ex-MLA Nabin Nanda's son passes away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, May 22: Dhenkanal's former MLA Nabin Nanda Saturday lost his eldest son Sambit Nanda to lungs infection. He breathed his last while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Cuttack. He was 45.

A few hours before his son's demise, Nabin had pleaded for his son's life in Twitter post. Tagging Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and many others, he mentioned that his son is in need of extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) treatment. And the facility is not available in Cuttack. "ECMO treatment is not available here. Please help him save his life," reads his tweet.

Police foil trafficking bid of migrant workers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, May 22: With lockdown restrictions in place, migrant workers from Koraput district were allegedly on their way to work at a textile factory in Tamil Nadu. They had received job offers from its owner and the trafficking bid was foiled by town police Saturday.

According to sources, 18 migrant workers were detained by B

Singhpur police while boarding a private bus from Nuaguda village of Katharagada panchayat in the district in order to travel to Trichur area in the southern-state. Officials of the district labour department and Borigumma SDPO immediately reached the spot. Police have launched a probe into the incident, an official said.

The migrant workers were being trafficked without any valid licence and Covid negative reports. However, they would be released after verification of their documents and after RT-PCR testing, DLO Prasanna Kumar Panigrahi informed. Koraput is one of the migration-hit districts in the state.



Panicked over the threat of impending cyclone, farmers at a village in Muniguda block of Rayagada district hurriedly collect mangoes ahead of the calamity. The forced harvest of the summer fruit may create condition for its distress sale OP PHOTO

83 inmates at Padampur sub-jail test Covid positive

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, May 22: As many as 83 under trial prisoners (UTPs) have tested positive for Covid-19 Saturday at Padampur sub-jail in Bargarh district.

According to jail sources, swab samples of 132 people including 124 inmates and eight employees of the sub-jail were collected and sent for RT-PCR testing Friday. However, 83 were found positive for the virus, a jail official said.

Out of 83 infected prisoners, five have been shifted to the Covid care centre set up on the jail premises. An inmate, whose health condition became critical at a later stage, has been put on ventilator support. The sub-jail has been thoroughly sanitised, the official added.



A special team of doctors has been monitoring the health condition of the infected. If required, they will be shifted to Covid facilities.

As many as 96 undertrial prisoners had tested positive for Covid-19 at Jharpada Special Jail in Bhubaneswar.

Covid +ve groom lifted from marriage pandal

Pattapur: A groom had to go straight from the marriage pandal to a quarantine centre as he had tested Covid positive. The incident occurred at Daseipur village under Pattapur police limits in Ganjam district Friday.

The groom had tested positive for Covid. However, his family members kept it a secret even at the time of marriage.

BDO Gayatridatta Nayak, tehsildar Srinivas Behera and Pattapur IIC Sabyasachi Mallick reached the wedding venue, leaving the bride side in shock. The groom was asked to isolate himself from others.

Nayagarh villagers detain medical team, tehsildar

Nayagarh/Ranpur: Irrate villagers detained a medical team and a tehsildar after nearly 20 persons tested positive for Covid-19 despite them testing negative in a Rapid Antigen Test. The incident was reported from a micro-containment zone in Mayurjhalla village under Ranpur block in Nayagarh district, Saturday.

On being informed, Ranpur tehsildar rushed to the spot and tried to placate the irate villagers. However, the villagers refused to listen and instead detained him.

They squatted on the road and staged an agitation questioning the transparency of the Covid tests. The villagers released the team and the tehsildar at 4pm after

ANTIGEN TEST REPORTS OF COVID POSITIVES TURN OUT TO BE NEGATIVE

Chandpur police reached the spot and held talks with villagers.

Mayurjhalla was declared a micro-containment zone by Ranpur tehsildar from 10 am, May 20 till indefinite period after 20 persons in the village tested positive in an RTPCR test.

However, the villagers being asymptomatic suspected foul play and underwent a Rapid Antigen Test at Ranpur Hospital, Saturday that came out negative.

Med team provides care in remote Malkangiri village

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, May 22: With the second wave of Covid-19 spreading rapidly, providing medical assistance to people in remote and inaccessible areas has become difficult. However, a medical team has managed to reach out to them in Malkangiri.

They ensured that no one is denied proper healthcare during the pandemic. A 12-member medical team negotiated their way through a hilly terrain to reach a remote village in the tribal-dominated district for health checkup of the residents.

The team from Mathili Government Hospital, led by Dr Amiya Kumar Swain has set up a



camp at Khatuapadar under Mathili police limits. The medical team is visiting the remote villages to check up health of people as well as conduct their Covid-19 tests. All the Covid-19 test reports came out negative while two were found to be affected by malaria.

The team is providing free medicines to people and creating awareness among people about the deadly virus.

Rapper Dule Rock in the soup for sexist recording

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, May 22: Migrant worker-turned rapper Dulleshwar Tandi, who is popularly known as Rapper Dule Rock, is in the soup for a music video.

Three complaints have been registered against the 28-year-old singer for the video song which he posted on social media May 19. The song promotes vulgarity and hampers women's dignity, it was alleged.

The rapper courted criticism from various quarters since the video went viral. The first complaint against the singer was lodged at Bhawanipatna town police station by Abinash Thakur, president of Kalahandi Youth and Students' Council.

In his complaint, he requested



the police to act against the singer as per law. He also said the singer has apologized for his misconduct through a Facebook post. The second complaint was filed by Sunil Kumar Munda, a resident of Kalimandir Pada here at Bhawanipatna police station. Kalahandi Kosal Sena also lodged the third one against the singer at Koksara police station.

Kalahandi SP Saravan Vivek, said they have received the complaints and after investigation action would be taken as per law.

Fortified rice-producing plants in W Odisha soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 22: The state government has approved a proposal for setting up of two plants for producing vitamin-laced rice (fortified rice kernels) in western Odisha. They would be the first-ever such plants in the state, an official said Saturday.

Sources said the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCS) has informed this to Sambalpur Civil Supply Officer (DSO) vide its letter (No-6965, dtd.-13.05.2021).

The IP Rice Industry at Mundoghat in Sambalpur and Lalita Rice Mill at Sonepur in Subarnapur district have been given permission for establishment of the plants, the official said.

The district civil supply officers have been asked to take necessary steps for establishment of these



District civil supply officers of Sambalpur and Subarnapur have been asked to take necessary steps for establishment of these plants which will have a capacity to produce 500kg of vitamin-laced rice per hour

plants. These plants will have a capacity to produce 500kg of vitamin laced rice per hour.

Sources said the nutritional value in the food item has declined due to climate change and appli-

cation of chemical fertilisers. Hence, the government has planned to add vitamins to agricultural produce so as to increase the nutritional value.

As part of this move, the state

government has given permission for establishment of these two plants in the first phase. In these two plants, broken rice will be first crushed into powder.

Later, the powder will be mixed

with nutrients and then shaped into rice like kernels using an extrusion process. This fortified rice will be then mixed with normal rice in 1:100 ratios and then distributed.

"Italian technology will be adopted for establishment of these two plants. The proposed plants have been targeted for commissioning within four to six months," Sambalpur CSO Ramachandra Tudu said. The vitamin-laced rice will be sealed into packets and supplied to every mill where other millers will mix it with their rice and supply it to the state government.

Tudu said the state government plans to supply vitamin-laced rice (fortified rice) to people for which every miller has to mix one kg of vitamin-laced rice with one quintal of rice which has been made mandatory.

Death is but changing of our robes to wait in wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.
SRI AUROBINDO



Averse To Criticism

Twitter has marked tweets by Bharatiya Janata Party figures including its spokesman Sambit Patra as "manipulated media". The BJP publicised what it said was a Congress toolkit to defame India. But the fact checking website Altnews showed that this content the BJP was showing was fake. The BJP said that on its letterhead the All India Congress Committee had distributed instructions to Congress workers, volunteers and supporters to use the term 'super spreader Kumbh', 'not comment on Eid gatherings', 'use dramatic pictures of funerals and dead bodies which is already being done by foreign media'. This turned out to be bogus and even the letterhead was forged, as Altnews quickly showed.

Twitter believed the fact-checking website, which is based in Ahmedabad, more than it did the government of India and branded the content fake. The BJP is upset and has sent another threatening note to Twitter saying it should remove the "manipulated media" tag because the government was investigating the matter. The problem of course is that the government first defamed the Congress, then it got caught peddling a lie and now it claims it is checking its own claim — amplified by all its ministers through their official accounts — to see if it is true. That is why a small news operation has more credibility today than the government of the republic of India.

Twitter has a transparency centre where it puts up the data on takedown and information requests. These are legal notices from the government of India asking Twitter to either block an account, take down some content the government does not like or reveal the identity of a user.

From January 2012 to June 2014 it rarely received requests from the Indian government except for one or two. In the second half of 2016 it received 151 requests. This doubled to 306 between January and June 2018. It doubled again to 662 between July and December 2019. Between January and June 2020, the latest period for which data is available, the Modi government sent 2,367 requests including those to reveal identities, those it wanted blocked and those whose content it did not like and wanted taken down.

The question is why is the government now sending thousands of 'requests' to Twitter to comply? The answer is that social media is reflecting a reality that the BJP does not want communicated. More people are saying things on social media that are upsetting the government. One way to deal with this would be to ignore it, which is what the governments of India did in the past which is why the number of takedown notices Twitter received were few. But if a government is sensitive to what is said about it, and sensitive to such an extent that it finds criticism intolerable then it will do what is going on in India's social media today.

Twitter is slightly different from Facebook, and pretends to have more independence and pretends to be a guardian of free speech. Facebook is just a cut-throat corporate company that will go to bed with authoritarian governments and do whatever they want in terms of blocking users and content and promoting the government's material even if it incites violence. Twitter says it stands for freedom of its users, that it is "committed to the open exchange of information" and that it is why it publishes this transparency report from which the data above has been taken.

India is not the only democracy which makes such requests of Twitter. In the United States the Secret Service which protects the president is obliged to assess every threat made against the president even if it is made casually. But this is not censorship of views. What is happening in India is that criticism of the government is not being allowed. And the deliberate vilification of the Opposition by the government is being pushed, and when it is caught it resists accountability.

India is going the way of China, where social media has to be in full compliance with the government's desire to control the messaging and to carry out mass surveillance. It is nobody's case and certainly not mine that India was ever some haven of free speech before the Modi government. It was not. Few democracies have the full force of government backing the blocking of free speech of citizens as is the case in India. We have jail terms for free speech under laws like sedition, criminal defamation, criminal contempt and laws which criminalise things communicated in words or even without words. This has always been the case.

But the criticism of the government was not intolerable as it has become now. This government insists on only one narrative, and is willing and enthusiastic about stopping the other side from expressing itself. And it is also, as the toolkit fiasco shows, willing to fabricate material to invalidate what anyone else says. This is what the Emergency must have been like, and those who lived through it might not be feeling very different today.

WISDOM CORNER

- Challenging the meaning of life is the truest expression of the state of being human. **VIKTOR E. FRANKL**
- Rough diamonds may sometimes be mistaken for worthless pebbles. **THOMAS BROWNE**
- There is no influence like the influence of habit. **GILBERT PARKER**

WORDSWORTH

Navy

From about 1660 onwards in Britain, many artificial waterways were built to make rivers navigable by ships and boats. These became known as navigations, a term first recorded early in the eighteenth century. The word was later applied to the cross-country canals linking river to river that were one of the engineering triumphs of the second half of that century and the early part of the next. The labourers who built these navigations — entirely by hand using pick, shovel and barrow — came to be called navigators, an obvious enough association of ideas. The term was transferred to their successors, the often unruly gangs of itinerant workmen who built the railways across Britain from the 1830s onwards. It's only then that the abbreviated form began to appear in print, and it's attached in particular to these men and to the era of railway building in Britain. Later in the century it became the usual term for any labourer working on construction projects. It was so firmly attached to the idea of excavation that when the first mechanical digger came into service in the 1870s it was called a steam navy.

LOL

Avoiding a big object

Driving to work, a gentleman had to swerve to avoid a box that fell out of a truck in front of him. Seconds later, a policeman pulled him over for reckless driving. Fortunately, another officer had seen the carton in the road. The policemen stopped traffic and recovered the box. It was found to

contain large upholstery tacks. "I'm sorry sir," the first policeman told the driver, "but I am still going to have to write you a ticket." Amazed, the driver asked for what. The policeman replied, "Tacks evasion."

THE LANGUAGE OF TRAGEDY

FOCUS GLOBAL CRISES

"How terrible it is to know when, in the end, knowing gains you nothing," laments the blind prophet Tiresias in Sophocles' Oedipus the King. Oedipus had summoned him to reveal the source of the pestilence and ecological disaster ravaging Thebes. But Tiresias knew that the king would reject the truth. Today's climate scientists and epidemiologists can relate.

Like Tiresias, modern-day scientists know where the planet is headed and why. They found out not through prophecies, but through countless double-blind experiments, randomised trials, and rigorous peer review. Their evidence is unimpeachable, and the consensus among them is overwhelming. But their secular augury cannot seem to overcome the willful indifference of politicians or the public. Knowing gains them nothing, because so few are listening.

If there is a way for scientists to get through to people and their leaders, the key will be to change not what they say, but how they say it. The language of science is dispassionate by design. By contrast, the manifold crises our planet faces are urgent and intense, and the individual and collective decisions that are fueling those crises have high emotional and ethical stakes. A virulent pandemic has taken the lives of three million people. The Earth is in the throes of a sixth mass extinction. And the problems are set to escalate.

We need a language to convey the gravity and complexity of the global tragedy that is unfolding, and the ancient Greeks supply it. Their tragedies are stories of people learning too late (usually by millennia) of their characters doggedly pursue what they believe to be right, barely comprehending the forces they face — chance, fate, habits, governments, gods, the weather. By the time they do, the characters have un-



Scientists may believe that anything other than qualified statements made in careful, measured tones would undermine the legitimacy of their findings. But humans are emotional beings confronting an existential crisis. The language of tragedy is our best and possibly last chance to open the world's eyes before it is too late

wittingly made an irreversible — and devastating — mistake.

For centuries, Greek tragedies have been viewed as pessimistic expressions of a fatalistic society, which depict the futility of fighting destiny. But, for the Greeks, the effect of these stories may have been counterintuitive. By showing people just how narrow and fleeting their power to determine their own future was, the tragedies discouraged apathy. Highlighting how devastating self-delusion can be encouraged awareness. And providing the language for describing difficult experiences enhanced agency.

Oedipus the King is believed to have premiered in the spring of 429 BC — that is, between the first and second waves of a plague that killed nearly one-third of the Athenian population. For a community that was both processing shared trauma and questioning the extent to which the losses were inevitable, a story of arrogant leadership and willful blindness would likely have struck a chord.

But it is not only ancient Athenians who were inspired by Greek tragedies. Over the last decade, I have directed more than 1,000 performances of plays by Sophocles and his contemporaries in seemingly unlikely places, such as homeless shelters, hospitals, prisons, military bases, halfway houses, senior centers, and public parks all over the world.

In the post-performance discussions, audience members were newly able to express the challenges they had endured and the sacrifices they had made. For example, after presenting an audience of 400 US Marines with scenes from Sophocles' Ajax and Philoctetes — two ancient tragedies that take place during the Trojan War — typically stoic modern-day warriors were able to open up about their moral, emotional, and spiritual struggles following their return from war.

Saying aloud what was once unspeakable can be unburdening in itself. But naming a problem is also the first step in confronting

it. Many audience members later informed me that they had gone on to exercise agency in their own lives, such as by entering a drug-rehabilitation programme.

Just as the language of tragedy can help bring about personal change, so, too, can it spur systemic change. "People are suffering," Greta Thunberg told world leaders, her voice thick with emotion, at the United Nations 2019 Climate Action Summit. "People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

It could have been a speech in a Greek tragedy, a warning from a desperate and angry prophet — someone who knows, as we all know, that disaster is coming, and that we have precious little time to avert it.

Thunberg and many of her fellow climate activists know that the language of tragedy is the only way to express the cataclysm we are facing. But, as Thunberg knows firsthand, young people can easily be dismissed as overly sensitive and melodramatic. That is why the adults — especially scientists and world leaders — must urgently join the chorus of young people and speak in the language of tragedy.

Scientists may believe that anything other than qualified statements made in careful, measured tones would undermine the legitimacy of their findings. But humans are emotional beings confronting an existential crisis. The language of tragedy is our best — and possibly last — chance to open the world's eyes before it is too late.

The writer is Artistic Director of Theater of War Productions and the author of The Theater of War: What Ancient Greek Tragedies Can Teach Us Today.
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Bryan Doerries

SAYING ALOUD WHAT WAS ONCE UNSPEAKABLE CAN BE UNBURDENING IN ITSELF. BUT NAMING A PROBLEM IS ALSO THE FIRST STEP IN CONFRONTING IT



Aakar Patel

This government insists on only one narrative, and is willing and enthusiastic about stopping the other side from expressing itself

SPECTRUM TRADITIONAL HEALING

Time to tap Odisha's Ayurveda potential

Plants have been a source to cure, heal, and alleviate diseases. Since prehistoric times various plants are used for traditional medical practices. These medicinal plants are of great interests due to their pharmaceutical, cosmetic and nutritional values. The demand for medicinal plants is continuously increasing worldwide for many reasons: these are natural products with fewer or even no side effects, their easy accessibility, and are cost-effective.

Ayurveda has documented about medicinal plants, methods of preparation of extracts, and utilisation of medications for treating humans as well as animals. Awareness about medicinal plants' usage among Indians is a result of experiences gained from decades of practices. Our forefathers learned, documented, and practiced vigorously to use barks, seeds, fruits, and other plant materials as drugs. Charaka and Sushruta performed many life-saving experiments using medicinal plants. Charaka Sa hit and Sushruta Sa hit documented details of Ayurvedic medicine and surgery. Shri Laxmana Mishra from Odisha has documented properties of several plants in his book "Anubhuta Jogamala ba Sahaja Chikitsa."

Most of the plants have an ability to produce aromatic substances. Plant-derived medicines contain natural products, antioxidants, and phenols among others.

Contemporary scientific research has already acknowledged the effects of plant-based drugs on humans and animals. Pharmaceutical capabilities of several plant-derived molecules are not known yet and need further investigation. Along this line, there is a branch of science called "natural products chemistry" which deals with identification, characterisation, and utilisation of plant derived chemicals.

Odisha is blessed with huge natural resources; especially, with medicinal plants. The Gandhamardan hills located in Bargarh and Bolangir districts is a reservoir of many known and unknown medicinal plants. However, due to lack of preservation and imbalance in the ecosystem many plant species have disappeared. A BBC report by Helen Briggs says that worldwide nearly 600 plant species have been lost from the wild in the last 250 years; moreover, at present plant extinction is happening up to 500 times faster than it would have happened naturally. In this regard, establishing a National Institute of Ayurveda in the Gandhamardan area will be beneficial for the preservation of biodiversity and medicinal plants. Furthermore, it will boost scientific research and higher education in western Odisha. In addition, this place can become a leader in the areas of natural products, life science and traditional medicine

research. Eventually, it will attract R&D companies like Dabur, Ayur, Patanjali and others to set-up labs/manufacturing units in the region.

In February 2020, Shashi Tharoor, MP from Kerala, asked the government of India to set-up a National Institute of Ayurveda (Institution of National Importance) at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. It is worth noting that, the government of India has already merged three Ayurvedic colleges under Gujarat Ayurveda University, Jamnagar and approved conferring on it Institution of National Importance status. Along this line, Odisha should ask the government of India to set-up a National Institute of Ayurveda near Gandhamardan hills.

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has taken several initiatives to develop an 800-km network of roads in the state as 'herbal belt' by planting medicinal and herbal plants along both sides of roadways. Such a project is necessary in Odisha and needs to be implemented on a priority basis. Both sides of state and national highways close to Mahanadi river and other water bodies can be planted with Peepal, Neem, Brahma, Ashwagandha and other medicinal plants to intensify herbal and medicinal plant cultivation. In western Odisha, the National Institute of Ayurveda can implement these projects in collaboration with the

Ministry of AYUSH.

Chinese scientist Tu Youyou worked extensively on traditional Chinese medicine. She extracted artemisinin from Artemisia annua (sweet wormwood) - an herb used in Chinese traditional medicine. Artemisinin is used in the treatment of malaria. For the discovery of artemisinin and dihydroartemisinin Tu Youyou shared the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. China is investing heavily on the R&D of Chinese traditional medicine; so that, it can earn its rightful place in the world. There are many lessons here for the AYUSH ministry to learn. In India, R&D on Ayurveda is still limited and governments must push for integrating research on Ayurvedic medicine with mainstream drug discovery. Moreover, in a post-Covid-19 world immunity boosting will become very important. Ayurvedic medicines will be used extensively as immunity booster. Implementation of such projects in western Odisha, where plenty of water is available will reduce drugery, increase economic growth, and can stop migration of labourers to a large extent. Hopefully, both state and central governments will look into this matter and work together to establish a National Institute of Ayurveda in Odisha.

The writer is a scientist and an alumnus of IIT Madras.



Sanjib Kumar Karmee

MEDICINAL PLANTS ARE OF GREAT INTERESTS DUE TO THEIR PHARMACEUTICAL, COSMETIC AND NUTRITIONAL VALUES

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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What can I do?

Sir, Needless to say there are far too many that need our help and attention in these difficult times. While it is fine for the middleclass to tell people, "Stay home, stay safe," for too many that interprets into a job loss and suspension of income. It's as tragic as that! And no, I am not against the lockdown because it is the only safety valve we have at the moment. We need to cut the infection rate and the death rates. We don't need to be told just how fragile our healthcare system and our own state are. The greatest fear of those who run the government is that this fragile system might collapse due to the sheer weight which is far beyond its carrying capacity. Social media — our only mode of connecting with friends and relatives near and far has become an obituary page with someone losing a family member or friend or colleague. People spent years critiquing governments for their acts of omission and commission. In fact, for most of us, the government is the only bashing board. We swear at politicians and bureaucrats because we look up to them as a cure to every ailment. We continue to do so even now and social media is rife with names of politicians and government officials. But now is the time to stop bashing people on social media for their own failure to rise to the occasion. The politicians we take for granted and go hammer and tongs at are also as frightened and worried as all of us are. They are as affected by deaths and infection rates. At this juncture citizens too have a responsibility to put their shoulders to the wheel. This is a time to think beyond the self and to ask, "What can I do to help?"

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Adieu green-warrior

Sir, In the death of noted environmentalist and Gandhian Sunderlal Bahuguna the country has lost a green-warrior. Bahuguna was the driving force behind the legendary Chipko movement in the 1970s to save Himalayan forests. He took it to different parts of Uttarakhand and forced the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to impose a 15-year-ban on tree-cutting in the state. In 1981 he had refused to accept the Padma Shri over the government's refusal to cancel the Tehri Dam project despite his protests. His unbridled passion and pride in his work and love for the environment remained strong till his last days. RIP!
NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

'Faster than the virus': Mumbai gears up for 3rd wave

REUTERS

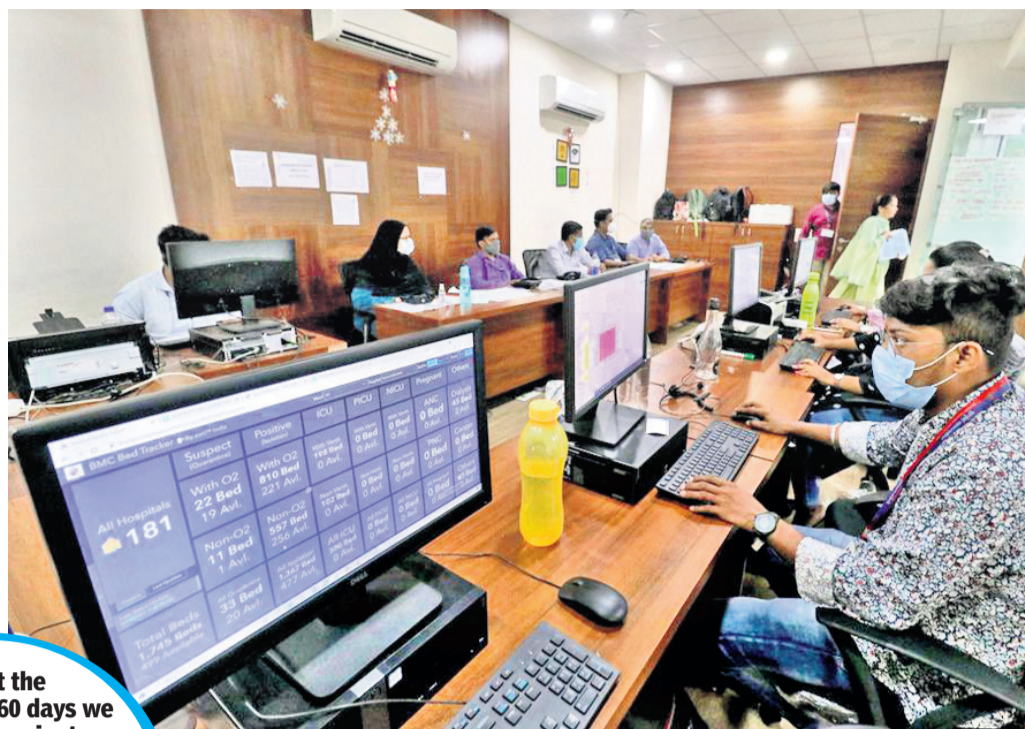
Mumbai, May 22: India's crowded financial hub Mumbai won plaudits this year for tackling the second wave of the pandemic better than any other metropolis in the country - and it is gearing up to get ahead of a potential third wave that experts fear could affect children.

Mumbai is building four mammoth centres across the city with units for children infected with Covid-19 and it is working closely with a special task force that includes some of India's top paediatricians, the city's civic chief said.

"If a 2-year-old child becomes highly symptomatic, how can you admit the child in hospital without the mother?" Mumbai's Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal told Reuters. "We have already started preparing for that. ... One should be faster than the virus."

Mumbai, in India's richest state, Maharashtra, struggled initially with one of the highest caseloads in the country but reined in the virus with strict lockdowns, widespread testing and a decentralised Covid management system.

Chahal, widely credited for suc-



Volunteers work inside a 'war room' set up by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to monitor the availability of beds in COVID-19 hospitals across the city and assign the beds to people with severe symptoms in Mumbai

If we get the vaccines, in 60 days we can fully vaccinate Mumbai and negate the threat of a third wave. That's my biggest challenge and we are on it now

IQBAL SINGH CHAHAL | MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER

cessfully managing the surge there, said the four Covid care centres with paediatric units, as good as hospitals, will be able to house more than a thousand children along with a parent. The fa-

ilities, which will also have ICUs, will be ready by next month, well before experts predict the third wave will hit, said Chahal, adding that there is ample funding from the state, companies and even Bollywood celebrities.

The city is spending tens of millions of dollars to build the paediatric units and is already procuring ventilators, monitors and other medical equipment, Chahal said. Apart from these units, the government is also in talks with hospitals to increase the number of

paediatric beds and ICUs.

The paediatric task force, led by Dr Suhas Prabhu, plans to train about 660 paediatricians on how to handle children affected by Covid-19, and then broaden the training to more staff.

The third wave might not end up affecting children greatly, but cities like Mumbai cannot afford to be caught off guard, Prabhu said.

The Mumbai Model

Chahal was handpicked by Maharashtra's Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in May last year to lead the city's response when the virus hit.

Chahal, the son of an army officer, set up local Covid 'war rooms' in 24 zones in the city to decentralise the pressure and hasten the response. Even as other cities in Maharashtra continue to report high numbers, Mumbai's cases have plunged, says Prince Surana, a doctor who runs three hospitals in the city. But Chahal says Mumbai is not out of the woods. The city, like the rest of India, is still grappling with an acute shortage of vaccines. The city has floated a global tender to acquire 10 million doses from private companies, Chahal said. "If we get the vaccines, in 60 days we can fully vaccinate Mumbai and negate the threat of a third wave," he said. "That's my biggest challenge and we are on it now."

Maharashtra leads in black fungus deaths

The state has recorded a staggering 1,500 Mucormycosis infections and 100 deaths till date



Dr. Yogesh Narkhede, NMCC Nodal Officer, checks a patient for black fungus at NMCC Hospital, Vashi, Saturday.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 22: As with the Covid-19 scourge, Maharashtra leads in the number of deaths and cases of the dreaded dark cousin of Coronavirus - Mucormycosis, or commonly known as 'black fungus'.

After the first case was detected in third week of April, the state has now recorded a staggering 1,500 Mucormycosis infections till date, said Health Minister Rajesh Tope. "Of the 1,500 cases, there have been 100 deaths till now May 21, we declared it as a Notifiable Disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, making it compulsory to report each case of the black fungus to the state health department," Tope told IANS.

Besides Maharashtra, other

states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana, Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana have also proclaimed it as a Notifiable Disease, as black fungus cases have been found in at least 22 Indian states.

Several states, including Maharashtra have reported a shortage of the drug Liposomal Amphotericin-B used to treat the drug, though last week Tope announced that the black fungus would also be treated free by the government as with Covid-19.

Maharashtra currently has notched a whopping 86,618 Covid fatalities and recorded 55,27,092 cases - just below France which has 55,81,351, ranking No. 4 in the world, besides 367,121 'active cases' being treated on date in the state.

Taking stock on ground, not in helicopter: Uddhav's jibe at PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 22: Amid Opposition BJP's criticism over the duration of his visit to cyclone-hit Konkan region of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has said that he was at least taking stock of the situation on the ground and not conducting an aerial survey in a helicopter.

His remarks were apparently aimed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who recently conducted an aerial survey in Gujarat, where cyclone Tauktae wreaked havoc earlier this week.

Thackeray Friday visited Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts in Konkan to know the ground situation in the aftermath of the cyclone, and directed the authorities to complete the crop loss assessment within two days.

However, BJP leaders in the state targeted him over the duration of

his visit. While former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said he was surprised to know that Thackeray was making political comments during his "merely three-hour long" tour of Konkan, Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council Pravin Darekar sought to know how the CM could understand in just three hours the extent of damage caused by the cyclone.

When asked about the BJP's criticism, Thackeray said on Friday, "It's okay if my tour lasted four hours. At least I am on the ground taking stock of the situation and not in a helicopter for a photo session...I am a photographer myself." "I have not come here to respond to Opposition's criticism," he said at Malvan in Sindhudurg.

Cyclone Tautkae, which made landfall in Gujarat Monday night, also affected several other states along the west coast, including Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Guj Governor okays Bill against forced conversions by marriage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 22: Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat has given his assent to an amendment Bill, which provides for a prison sentence of up to ten years for fraudulent or forcible conversion by marriage, a state minister said Saturday.

The Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was passed by the state Legislative Assembly April 1 this year, has been approved by the governor along with seven other Bills, state Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said in a statement.

With this, the Governor has approved all the 15 bills that were passed during the budget session of the Assembly as he had earlier cleared seven other bills, he added. As per the amended Freedom of Religion Bill, a forcible "conversion by marriage, or by getting a person married, or by aiding a person to get married" shall invite imprisonment of three to five years and a fine of up to Rs 2 lakh.

If the victim is a minor, woman, Dalit or tribal, the offender may be punished with a jail term of four to seven years and a fine of not less



than Rs 3 lakh. If an organisation violates the law, the person in charge can be sentenced to minimum of three years and maximum of ten years in jail.

During a poll rally in Vadodra February 14 this year, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani had said his government would bring a strict law against 'love jihad' in the state.

"We are going to bring a law

against love jihad in the Assembly. Such activities being done in the name of love jihad will not be tolerated...The BJP government will bring strict laws against love jihad in the coming days," he had announced.

Before Gujarat, BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had also enacted similar laws banning "fraudulent" conversions through marriage.

Congress slams Fadnavis on Guj, Maha vax numbers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 22: The Congress Friday took a swipe at BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and asked him how come Gujarat's 'strike rate' in getting COVID-19 vaccines from the Centre was better than that of Maharashtra.

State Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said Gujarat had got 1.63 crore vaccines for a population of 6.50 crore, while Maharashtra had to make do with just two crore vaccines for a population of 13 crore, and slammed Fadnavis for claiming Prime Minister Narendra Modi had helped the MVA-ruled state amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Quoting COVID-19 data, as on May 19, released by the Union health department, Sawant said the number of active cases in Maharashtra was 4,04,229, while Gujarat had 92,617 active cases.

The caseload in Maharashtra and Gujarat were 49,78,337 and 6,69,490 respectively, and the toll



stood at 84,371 in Maharashtra and 9,340 in Gujarat, he said.

"Since Fadnavis is fond of the word strike rate he must answer how Gujarat's strike rate can be higher than Maharashtra's in getting vaccines. In fact, Fadnavis should try to get more vaccines for Maharashtra, but instead it is unfortunate he is supporting the inadequate supply of vaccines by the Centre," Sawant said.

Sawant said Maharashtra had so far vaccinated two crore people by keeping wastage to the minimum and had the capacity to cover one million beneficiaries a day if the Centre made adequate stocks available to the state.

Lioness, blackbucks drown, but not due to Tauktae, says official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 22: A lioness and four blackbucks were found dead near a dam at Visavadar in Gir forest division of Gujarat's Junagadh district, an official said Saturday.

These wild animals apparently died due to drowning, and there does not seem to be any connection with cyclone Tauktae, which ravaged the state earlier this week, he said.

"The carcasses were found on the banks of a dam in Vekariya village of Visavadar range forest in Gir West forest division on Friday, and the cause of the death is being ascertained," chief conservator of forest (wildlife), Junagadh, Dushyant Vasavada said.

Gir forest in Junagadh, one of the worst cyclone-affected districts in Gujarat, has a sizable population of Asiatic lions.

"The lioness, aged around five to nine years old, appears to have died due to drowning. However, the incident doesn't seem to have any connection with the cyclone. The lioness might have gotten trapped while chasing the blackbucks," the official said.

In another development, a leopard died at an animal care centre



at Vadai in Bhavnagar district on Saturday, a few days after being rescued and brought here, the forest department said.

The animal, aged between five and

nine years, was brought to the centre on May 16 after it attacked and injured a child, an official said, adding that the predator was sick and was found dead in the morning.

Parsi body seeks nod for Dokhmenashini

The plea in Gujarat High Court seeks to protect the fundamental right to perform the last rites of community members who died of COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 22: The Gujarat High Court has issued a notice to the Central and state governments as well as local authorities in Surat over a Parsi Panchayat body's plea seeking its direction to permit the community to perform last rites of its members who died of COVID-19, as per the Zoroastrian tradition.

The court of Justice Nirzar Desai Friday issued a notice to the respondents, returnable May 27.

According to Dr Homi Doodhwala, a petitioner in the matter, at least 180 members of the Parsi community have died due to COVID-19 in the country so far.

In its plea, the Surat Parsi Panchayat Board and its trustee Dr Doodhwala, said it seeks to protect the fundamental right to perform the last rites of community members who died of COVID-19 as per its tradition of Dokhmenashini.

In Dokhmenashini tradition, the body is kept at a height in a structure referred to as a well or tower of silence, to be eaten by vultures, and the remains are left to decompose under the sun, it was stated. Speaking to PTI, Dr



Doodhwala said a total of 180 Parsis have died of COVID-19 so far in the country.

As per information gathered from local sources, 105 deaths have been reported in Mumbai, 26 in Surat, 22 in Navsari, seven each in Ahmedabad and Pune, four in Delhi, three in Nagpur, and two each in Kolkata and Hyderabad, etc, he said.

The plea stated that in the absence of specific guidelines for the disposal of bodies of Parsis who suc-

cumbed to coronavirus, the authorities have compelled relatives of deceased patients to opt for cremation.

The petition, moved by lawyer Asim Pandya, said the community has been compelled by the authorities to opt for either cremation or burial of the deceased members "as against their religious practice and sentiments".

"Since the government's COVID-19 guidelines do not recognise other modes of disposal of bodies

of deceased COVID-19 patients, respondents (state, Surat municipal corporation and Surat collector) do not allow the Parsi community to follow its religious and customary mandate for last rites," it said.

No guideline prohibits such religious customary practices, and it is the interpretation of the local authorities that is causing problems, resulting in violation of the fundamental rights of Parsis, the plea stated.

national



I understand that Liposomal Amphotericin-B is absolutely essential for the treatment of Mucormycosis. However, there are reports of its acute scarcity in the market
SONIA GANDHI | CONGRESS CHIEF

DALAI LAMA CONDOLES DEMISE OF ENVIRONMENTALIST BAHUGUNA

Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama Saturday expressed condolences on the demise of noted environmentalist and his "good friend" Sunderlal Bahuguna. "I offer my condolences to his family, as well as his many admirers and friends, and I will offer prayers for him," his Holiness wrote



of the day quote

Except the four hours relaxation period, lock down should be implemented for the rest 20 hours. Only people having the emergency passes and essential services should be exempted

K CHANDRASEKHAR RAO | CHIEF MINISTER, TELANGANA

Assembly elections are scheduled to happen in March 2022. We will speak to (CM) Pramod Sawant for two seats in Goa. If we do not get the two seats, we will contest in four to five seats

RAMDAS ATHAVALE | PRESIDENT, REPUBLICAN PARTY OF INDIA

I have never asked anyone for any post till date. All I seek is Punjab's prosperity!! Was invited & offered Cabinet berths many times but I did not accept. Now, Our Esteemed High Command has intervened, Will wait...

NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU | MINISTER OF TOURISM & CULTURAL AFFAIRS, PUNJAB

SHORT TAKES

Arms cache recovered

Jammu: A huge cache of arms and ammunition was recovered in a joint operation by the police and the army from an underground terrorist hideout in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said Saturday. Police said that arms and ammunition from an old hideout of terrorists was recovered after a joint search operation was launched by the Special Operation Group (SOG) Poonch in association with the local army unit in the Qasba village of Poonch near the LoC.

Black fungus notifiable disease

Dehradun: With black fungus cases rising in Uttarakhand, it was declared a notifiable disease in the state under the Epidemic Act, 1897 Saturday. So far, 64 people have been infected with black fungus in the state and of them, four have died. Black fungus or mucormycosis has been declared a notifiable disease for its co-ordinated treatment as a growing number of people are contracting the infection post COVID-19, Health Secretary Pankaj Kumar Pandey said. The state government also issued an SOP Saturday for the judicious distribution of Amphotericin B.

1 held in central station blast case

Chennai: A suspect wanted in connection with the May 2014 bomb blast at the Central railway station here that left one dead, has been arrested, police said Saturday. Police arrested two persons including the suspect, identified as Rabi, while probing a robbery case and are on the lookout for three more persons in connection with the May 5 incident where they waylaid a jeweller. The duo, according to police, robbed the jewellery shop owner in "a planned" incident.

Lockdown extended

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government Saturday announced extending the ongoing covid-induced lockdown, slated to end May 24, by another week. Chief Minister M K Stalin announced the government's decision after holding discussions with a medical panel and a legislature committee comprising of members from all parties Saturday, besides with officials.

Novel complication diagnosed in Covid patients in Delhi

MUCORMYCOSIS MOST COMMONLY INVOLVES RHINO-ORBITAL-CEREBRAL SYSTEM OR THE LUNGS. INTESTINAL OR GI MUCORMYCOSIS IS A VERY RARE DISEASE AND MOST COMMONLY INVOLVES THE STOMACH OR THE LARGE INTESTINE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: A novel complication of mucormycosis or black fungus has been detected in a city hospital here in which the fungal infection infected the lower intestine of two patients, including a 56-year-old who lost three family members, including his wife, due to Covid.

Both the patients, including one aged 68 years, are being treated at Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital for more than a week. It is observed for the first time that the black fungus infected the lower intestine and even made a hole in it, said Ganga Ram Hospital authorities.

Kumar (name changed on request), a resident of Delhi, had barely completed the last rites of his wife when he experienced pain in his abdomen. He had been tested positive for Covid along with his wife and had been experiencing mild covid symptoms initially.

The patient's abdominal pain was considered gastritis or stress-related and self-medication for acidity was taken which delayed proper treatment by three days, said authorities at the



Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. Gastroenterology and Liver Transplantation. Kumar was evaluated in Covid emergency of Ganga Ram Hospital by Dr Ushast Dhir, senior consultant in department of Surgical

had worsened by now requiring ventilator support. The patient was admitted and taken up urgently for surgery.

According to Dr Dhir, Ulceration of Jejunum (first part of small intestine) in the patient raised my suspicion of fungal disease and patient was immediately started on anti-fungal treatment. We sent the portion of removed intestine for biopsy.

Another patient, Ijaz's family was relieved to know that their father had recovered from Covid. But he started having mild abdominal pain. Ijaz (name changed

on request) was a diabetic and had received steroids for treatment of Covid. The patient had no associated fever and pain was very mild.

His clinical examination also did not show any signs of intestinal perforation. Still, acting on suspicion, Dr Piyush Ranjan, senior consultant of Medical Gastroenterology at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, instructed for an urgent CT to be conducted for the patient. The CT scan revealed small intestinal perforation similar to the first patient, the hospital authorities said.

MEA's vax diplomacy flunks, China profits

Domestically, the Opposition parties criticised External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar for giving away the vaccine to foreign countries when it was severely required at home

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: India's much-hyped 'vaccine diplomacy' has fallen apart after the country failed to send the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to many of the beneficiary countries which had received the first dose.

The Ministry of External Affairs which initiated the programme 'vaccine maitri' to showcase India's humanitarian approach even as it is an aspirational power, has lost face since the virulent second wave of the coronavirus pandemic hit the country.

The government had to suspend the programme as it grappled with shortage of vaccines at home amidst rising Covid-19 cases and related fatalities. As a result, India has been forced to seek foreign medical aid from the US, EU, UAE, Singapore and even the Chinese Red Cross.

The CPM leader Sitaram Yechury, whose young son Ashish died due to Covid-19 complications, attributed the rise in Covid-19 related deaths and shortage of the vaccines. "In a country where we had successful mass vaccination drives, 'vaccine diplomacy' and refusal to place timely purchase orders landed us in this gigantic human tragedy," he tweeted.



We patriotic Indians are sad that our country regarded as World's largest manufacturer of vaccines, and claimant for being Atmanirbhar Bharat nation, has fallen due to hubris, to sending External Affairs Minister on mission to the US and EU to plead for vaccines!!

JAIRAM RAMESH | RAJYA SABHA CHIEF WHIP, CONGRESS

Congress Rajya Sabha chief whip Jairam Ramesh, while questioning the government's vaccine diplomacy, put up a poster on the issue outside his residence. Even within the ruling party BJP, parliamentary Subramanian Swamy in a scathing attack tweeted, "We patriotic Indians are sad that our

country regarded as World's largest manufacturer of vaccines, and claimant for being Atmanirbhar Bharat nation, has fallen due to hubris, to sending External Affairs Minister on mission to the US and EU to plead for vaccines!!"

In its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia where India is seen as the top most leader, it had to cede space to the Asian giant China which saw an opportunity to do vaccine politics and assert its hegemonic influence. The CCP regime Tuesday convened a virtual meeting of foreign ministers from five South Asian countries assuring them that it will help them with Covid-19 vaccines.

There are also reports that China is targeting over 20 countries with vaccine diplomacy to get their support for its position on Taiwan. A US Congressional advisory panel Thursday was told that China's distribution of its own vaccine in Latin America has helped it earn strong influence in the region.

The Bhutanese king has already conveyed that though India is a reliable friend but it won't pressure India over the vaccine and would instead approach other countries for the second dose of AstraZeneca. According to media reports, Bangladesh foreign minister Abdul Momen has called Jaishankar and reminded him that Dhaka did not get Covishield vaccines from Serum Institute of India despite placing orders. "Similar problems are reported from Nepal, Sri Lanka and African countries promised vaccine from SII," as per a media report.

Govt wants social media posts on 'Indian variant' removed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The government has asked social media companies to immediately remove any content that names, refers to, or implies 'Indian variant' of coronavirus, in a bid to curb spread of misinformation around Covid-19.

Digital platforms said they have received the latest advisory.

Friday, the IT ministry wrote to all social media platforms emphasising that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has not associated the term Indian Variant with the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus in any of its reports.

A notice issued in this regard by the IT ministry states that a false statement is being circulated online that implies that an 'Indian variant' of coronavirus is spreading across the countries. The IT ministry said the matter has already been clarified

by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare May 12, 2021 through a press statement.

The social media platforms have been asked to remove all the content that names, refers to, or implies 'Indian variant' of corona virus from your platform immediately.

Previously, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had issued advisories regarding curbing of false news, misinformation concerning coronavirus on social media platforms.

India is one of the biggest markets for digital platforms like Google, Facebook, and Twitter.

As per data cited by the government, recently, the country has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 44.8 crore YouTube users, 41 crore Facebook users, while 21 crore use Instagram and 1.75 crore are on Twitter.

Earlier this year, the government had introduced guidelines to curb the misuse of social media platforms.

DESERT SILHOUETTE



A camel herder with his camels during Covid-induced lockdown in Pushkar

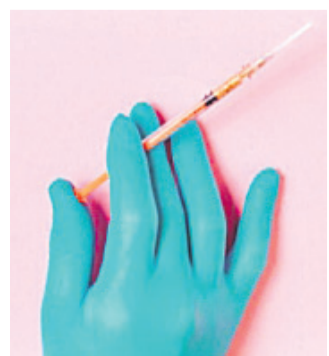
Commonwealth health ministers seek equal access to vaccines

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: Commonwealth health ministers, led by India, have called for swift and equal access to Covid-19 vaccines for everyone around the world.

In a joint statement Friday on behalf of the 54 Commonwealth member countries, they expressed deep concern over the stark gaps in access and delivery of doses, especially in poor countries, and called for fair and transparent pricing for the vaccine.

Speaking at the meeting, Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland said the science is clear, vaccination works and is the clear and only sustainable route out of this pandemic for the whole world.



We must talk with each other to move away from some stockpiling vaccines, while many low-middle income countries still do not have access to the much-needed vaccines supplies for the vulnerable populations in their countries.

So, cooperation to develop a global immunisation plan to deliver equal access to vaccines must be a top priority.

Health ministers appreciated the global vaccine equity initiative 'COVAX' and encouraged all partners to support government efforts on boosting vaccine confidence and immunisation drives.

Recognising the acute gaps in research and development of new tests, vaccines and therapies in the Commonwealth, they stressed enhanced collaboration with scientists, academics and business leaders.

In his guest address, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "Vaccines are reducing severe disease and death

in countries that are fortunate enough to have them in sufficient quantities, and early results suggest that vaccines might also drive down transmission."

"The shocking global disparity in access to vaccines remains one of the biggest risks to ending the pandemic. We seek the support of the Commonwealth in solving the global vaccine crisis by funding the ACT Accelerator, advocating for greater sharing of technology, know-how and intellectual property, and sharing doses with COVAX."

Ministers further backed a potential treaty on the fight against pandemics and a Commonwealth mechanism to share and distribute extra medical supplies such as ventilators and medicines.

They called on Heads of

Government to allocate resources for strengthening health systems, especially through primary healthcare, towards attaining universal health coverage.

Chairing the meeting, India's Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said, "Accelerating coordinated action for ensuring equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines and building resilient global healthcare systems is the need of the hour."

In our closely interlinked world, we need greater transparency to quickly identify and contain emerging health threats. Sharing best practices, strategies and solutions shall ensure preparedness against all future challenges.

The meeting, hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat, took place May 20 and 21.

O2 CONCENTRATORS CASE

ED searches 13 locations linked to Kalra, Duggal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday carried out searches at 13 premises belonging to businessman Navneet Kalra and Gagan Duggal in Delhi and Haryana's Gurugram in connection with the alleged oxygen concentrator black marketing case.

According to informed sources in the ED, the duo had imported more than 7,000 oxygen concentrators from China in the past one month and sold them to the public at exorbitant prices by claiming that the concentrators were made with German technology.

The source said, "The forensic examination of the concentrators has revealed that they are very low quality equipment. Their import price per unit is Rs 15,000 and the same have been sold for Rs 69,999 per unit."

The source said that Kalra and Duggal took advantage of a raging pandemic and made huge profits by cheating the public.

During searches, ED officials also found more than 150 foreign brand liquor bottles at Kalra's house on Mandi Road in South



Delhi's Mehrauli. Several incriminating documents and digital devices have also been seized by ED officials, the source said.

The source said the locations included the residences of Kalra and Duggal on Mandi Road and Kalra's restaurants - Khan Chacha, Nege and ju, Town Hall, and Dayal Optical in upscale Khan market.

The source said that the bank lockers of Kalra were also searched by the ED officials.

The ED action comes after it registered a case of money laundering against Kalra and others Tuesday.

The Delhi Police seized over 500 oxygen concentrators May 6 and 7 from the three restaurants and a farmhouse in south Delhi.

DLF BRIBERY CASE

Lalu gets clean chit from CBI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: In relief to Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) founder Lalu Prasad, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has given him a clean chit in connection with a bribery case involving DLF.

According to CBI sources, the central probe agency had initiated a preliminary enquiry for corruption against Lalu Prasad and the real estate developer DLF group in January 2018. The CBI PE was to probe over the allegations if the DLF Group, eyeing rail land lease project in Mumbai's Bandra and upgradation of New Delhi Railway Station, had bribed Lalu Prasad, a former railway minister with a property in an upscale South Delhi's New Friend Colony.

The source said that it was alleged that AB Exports, an alleged shell company, had bought a property in New Friends Colony for nearly Rs 5 crore in December 2007 while its actual circle rate was Rs 30 crore at that time. The transaction for buying the property was allegedly funded by DLF Home Developers and routed through Lexis Infotech and a few other shell companies.

However, in 2011, Tejashwi Yadav, and Lalu Prasad's daughters - Chanda Yadav and Ragini - allegedly bought over AB Exports for a mere Rs 4 lakh by transfer of shares. Thus, the property of New Friends Colony was transferred to them. The source said that the CBI had also probed the role of Praveen Jain and Amit Katyal, who executed the transactions between the DLF Group and RJD leader. The CBI source said that the "PE has been closed as no case has been made out of the allegations".

According to sources, the clean chit to the RJD leader was given by Rishi Kumar Shukla before his retirement from the top post.

national

of the day

YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | CHIEF MINISTER, AP
 Making available various options to the public to get vaccinated, in both government and private hospitals, would be a good idea only if there is a surplus supply and availability of vaccines

JAGDISH MUKHI | GOVERNOR, ASSAM
 I am happy to inform you that my government plans to introduce the Cow Protection Bill in the next assembly session. The proposed bill envisages imposition of complete ban on transport of cattle outside the state

RADHA DEBBARMA | DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE, TRIPURA
 After one person was found to be infected with 'black fungus' Friday, the state government has made all necessary arrangements for treating black fungus infected patients in Agartala Government Medical College and Tripura Medical College

SHORT TAKES

Sonali Guha wants to rejoin TMC
Kolkata: Former TMC MLA Sonali Guha, who switched over to the BJP ahead of the elections, Saturday wrote to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, apologising to her for leaving the party and urging her to take her back. In the letter, which was shared by Guha on social media, she said that she left the party after being emotional. "I am writing this with a broken heart that I took the wrong decision of joining another party after being emotional. I could not get accustomed there," she said.

Soldier kills self inside IAF station
Srinagar: A soldier committed suicide Saturday by handing himself inside the Air Force station in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar district. Police sources said the soldier belonged. He handed himself in his room inside the air force station. "A case has been registered in this incident and investigation has been started to ascertain the reasons which could have led the soldier to take the extreme step," sources said.

Migrants reach Indo-Nepal border
Ranchi: Twenty-six Jharkhand migrant workers stuck in Nepal due to Covid-19 induced lockdown there Saturday reached India-Nepal border and boarded a bus for their home in Dumka, a top official said. These migrant workers from Jharkhand, engaged in a project in Nepal by Larsen & Toubro, had been stranded due to lockdown in the Himalayan country to rein in coronavirus surge and had been sending SOS messages including video messages to the Jharkhand government for rescue.

Minor raped, two arrested
Agra: A 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped by three men at a village here, police said Saturday. Police have arrested two of the accused while the third is on the run. The girl was taken to an abandoned "ashram" by one of the accused where she was raped by all three, police said. She was alone at the home when one of the accused turned up there, police said, adding that her parents had gone to attend a marriage function. The girl told her parents about the incident when they returned home Friday.



With this speed of 8 lakh doses per month, it will take 30 months to vaccinate all the adults alone. By then, no one knows how many waves will arrive and how many deaths will occur
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

AT 20.66L INDIA SETS RECORD COVID TESTING IN 24 HOURS

With more than 20.66 lakh tests conducted in the last 24 hours, India has again set a new record of highest tests conducted in a day. Cumulatively, 20,66,285 tests were conducted in the country in past one-day duration, said Union Health Ministry



India reports 8,848 mucormycosis cases

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, May 22: India has so far reported approximately 8,848 cases of mucormycosis or black fungus, one of the rapidly spreading infections observed in those recovering from Covid-19. Taking note of the increasing numbers, the Central government has emphasised upon expediting the allocation of vials of Amphotericin-B, a key drug to treat raging mucormycosis. In this direction, the Union minister of chemicals and fertilisers DV Sadananda Gowda has announced an allocation of 23,680 additional vials of Amphotericin-B. The minister also informed that the allocation has been made based on total number of patients which is approximately 8,848 across the country. Gujarat (5,800) and Maharashtra (5,090) have been allocated the maximum number of the additional Amphotericin-B vials followed by Andhra Pradesh (2,310), Madhya Pradesh (1,830), Rajasthan (1,780), Karnataka (1,270). Gujarat has reported maximum of 2,281 mucormycosis cases followed by Maharashtra (2,000), Andhra Pradesh (910), Madhya Pradesh (720) Rajasthan (700),



Karnataka (5,00), Haryana (250), Delhi (197), Punjab (95), Chhattisgarh (87), Bihar (56), Tamil Nadu (40), Kerala (36), Jharkhand (27), Odisha (15), Goa (12) and Chandigarh (8). Mucormycosis is a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes that has been developing in Covid-19 patients. The fungal disease is commonly being observed in patients who were given steroids for a long time, who have been hospitalised for a long time, were on oxygen support or ventilator; faced poor hospital hygiene or those who have been taking medication for other illnesses such as diabetes. If not treated on time, the black fungus infection can turn fatal. The Covid medications can leave the body weak and low on immunity. They can also escalate the blood sugar levels in both diabetics and non-diabetic Covid-19 patients.

Wearing a mask for 2-3 weeks could lead to black fungus: Doc

The black fungus infection, which is being reported in Covid patients, is not new but it has never happened in epidemic proportions before. Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS Dr P Sarat Chandra said. Explaining possible reasons for mucormycosis infection, Dr Chandra said, "Using a mask for 2-3 weeks could be a setting for the development of black fungus."

Bengal reports first black fungus death

A 32-year-old woman died of mucormycosis, commonly known as black fungus infection, becoming the first death due to the disease in West Bengal, a state health department official said Saturday. Shampa Chakraborty, a resident of the southern part of the city's Haridevpur area, was admitted to the Sambhunath Pandit Hospital with Covid-19. She was later diagnosed with mucormycosis, he said. The patient, who was highly diabetic and was on insulin, died Friday. Besides constituting an expert committee to deal with black fungus cases, the state health department has formulated an advisory, titled 'Mucormycosis - if uncared for - may turn fatal', for the common people.

Barge toll climbs to 66, divers search for missing

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai, May 22: The Indian Navy has recovered six more bodies from the Arabian Sea as it launched rescue efforts with diving teams and specialised vessels to search for the remaining missing persons after the tragedy that befell Barge Pappaa-305 last Monday, officials said here Saturday. With this, the toll has shot up to 66 and another around 10 are still reported missing, while 188 persons have been rescued safely so far. Saturday morning, the INS Makar and INS Tarasa set out for the Bombay High Fields, around 175 km off Mumbai, to make an underwater search for the wreckage of Barge Pappaa-305 and an anchor-handling tugboat, Varapra, using experts and special equipment. INS Makar is a lead ship of the Makar-class of Catamarans used for hydrographic surveys by the Navy for producing navigational charts and is capable of collecting marine environmental information by conducting limited oceanographic surveys. INS Tarasa is a Navy patrol vessel of the Car Nicobar-class in the series of four Water Jet Fast Attack



Craft. Besides, a p81 long-range multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft conducted reconnaissance missions over the designated areas along with helicopters like ALH, Seaking and Chetak, besides ships such as INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, INS Betwa and INS Beas that are still in the vicinity to trace more bodies. "To augment the ongoing SAR operations for the crew of Barge Pappaa-305 and Tug Varapra, the specialised diving teams on-board INS Makar (with sonar) and INS Tarasa sailed out early morning today from Mumbai for carrying out an underwater search," an Indian Navy spokesperson said.

ULFA-I frees abducted 3rd ONGC official after 31 days



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
Guwahati, May 22: After 31 days, ULFA-I Saturday released ONGC's third technical staff Ritul Saikia in Nagaland, Assam Police officials confirmed and said he is likely to reach home in eastern Assam's Jorhat by Saturday evening. An Assam police official said in Guwahati that Saikia reached Longwa in Nagaland's Mon district near the India-Myanmar border early Saturday morning. "Saikia would be handed over to the Assam police officials by the Assam Rifles. He would also be tested for Covid-19. Immediately after his release, Saikia talked to his aged mother over phone," the official said. The Army, along with Assam Rifles troops, rescued two hostages - Mohini Mohan Gogoi, 35, and Alakesh Saikia, 28, - from the militants' custody following a fierce gun battle April 23 night, but Ritul Saikia, 33, was remained in the captivity of the banned outfit. The outlawed outfit ULFA-I May 15 announced a unilateral ceasefire for three months with immediate effect. ULFA-I, in a statement, had said that in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the outfit has "unilaterally suspended all kinds of military operations in Assam for three months from May 15". The

ULFA-I, April 21, had kidnapped three technical persons of the state owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation from a drilling site at Lakwa in eastern Assam's Sivasagar district

statement, in Assamese language, also alleged that the security forces had hatched a clandestine plan to malign the ULFA-I. After 2006, this is the second time the banned outfit has announced a unilateral ceasefire in the state. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, after taking oath as 15th Chief Minister of Assam May 10, urged the ULFA-I supremo Paresh Baruah, and other militant groups to shun the path of violence and join the mainstream. The anti-talk outlawed ULFA-I had recently released radio operator Ram Kumar, a resident of Bihar, and drilling superintendent Pranab Kumar Gogoi of Sivasagar district, after more than 100 days after the two employees of Delhi-based private oil and gas exploration company Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Ltd were abducted from Arunachal Pradesh December 21 last year.

'ISRO to transfer tech for O2 concentrator soon'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
Chennai, May 22: The Indian space agency will soon transfer the technology for making the 'Shwaas', the oxygen concentrator developed by it at a cost of about Rs 60,000 to industries, said a top official of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). Friday officials of VSSC had a video meeting of interested companies and explained about 'Shwaas' and its systems. It was a first round meeting and about 50 industries participated. I had interacted with them. My team and I answered their queries, S Somanath, Director, VSSC told IANS. We are entering into an agree-

ment with each of them who are meeting the criteria on technical capability. The technology sharing transfer will take place in the next two days. The technology transfer will be free, Somanath added. According to him, medical equipment, space equipment, electronics and product manufacturing companies are selected now and more could be based on their credentials. Somanath said VSSC spent about Rs 60,000 to build its prototype. The cost can go down by 30 per cent if production is done on a large basis. All the components are currently available in India. Some items are imported by Indian companies but they can also be



made here, Somanath remarked. Couple of days back, ISRO had announced its decision to transfer the technology to make portable medical oxygen concentrators developed by VSSC. The medical oxygen concentrator 'Shwaas', can deliver an en-

riched level (over 95 per cent) of oxygen than in air to support patients with respiratory illness or who are on oxygen therapy. The device enhances the oxygen content by selectively separating the nitrogen gas from ambient air through Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA), ISRO said. 'Shwaas' is capable of supplying enriched oxygen continuously at 10 litres per minute (LPM) adequate for two patients at a time. According to the ISRO, the 600 W device operates at a voltage of 220 V 50 Hz, has a controllable oxygen flow of 0.5-10 LPM, has two oxygen outlets, oxygen concentration of 82 per cent and 95 per cent normal at a pressure of 50-80 kPa.

STREET STORIES



A woman walks with her kid during Covid-induced lockdown on a deserted street near Jama Masjid in New Delhi

Centre accords VIP security to Adhikari's father, brother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, May 22: West Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's father and brother, both members of Parliament, have been accorded 'Y+' central security cover by the Union home ministry, official sources said Saturday. Suvendu Adhikari's father Sisir Kumar Adhikari and brother Dibyendu Adhikari have been provided the cover by the ministry on the basis of a threat perception report prepared by central security agencies, they said.



'8L migrants left Delhi in first 4 weeks of lockdown'

THE REPORT ALSO MENTIONED THAT TRAIN TRAVEL WAS A PREFERRED MODE BY MIGRANTS IN THE CURRENT LOCKDOWN AS TRAINS WERE OPERATIONAL UNLIKE THE LAST YEAR'S CORONAVIRUS-INDUCED LOCKDOWN IN MARCH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, May 22: Over eight lakh migrant workers left the national capital in the first four weeks of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report from the Delhi Transport Department. Between April 19 and May 14, a total of 8,07,032 migrant workers left Delhi for their home states in buses, out of which 3,79,604 left during the first week of the lockdown itself. The number started declining from thereon, 2,12,448 left in the second week, 1,22,490 in the third week and 92,490 in the fourth week. The timely coordination with



transport authorities of neighbouring states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand by the Government of NCT of Delhi has helped about eight lakhs migrant workers to reach their destination without any difficulty, read the report. There were 21,879 interstate bus trips during the four weeks of the lockdown, it added. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had first imposed a lockdown April 19 which was later extended multiple times, lastly May 16. Learning from the past experience of the first surge of pandemic in March 2020 when the city experienced heavy movement of migrant workers to their native places,

the state Transport Department this time had deputed an adequate number of buses to facilitate migrant workers to reach their destination. Transport department, Govt. Of NCT of Delhi prepared a plan for deployment of 500 cluster buses on interstate routes under emergency. There was no complaint of overcharging as the interstate buses were owned and operated by state governments, the report said. It also mentioned that train travel was a preferred mode by migrants in the current lockdown as trains were operational unlike the last year's coronavirus-induced lockdown in March.

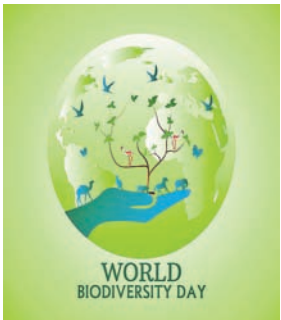
While Sisir Kumar Adhikari is a MP from the Kanthi Lok Sabha seat, Dibyendu Adhikari is a Trinamool Congress MP from Tamuk in the state. The report, the sources said, recommended cover to the two leaders in view of physical security threats they face. They are being provided 'Y+' central security cover in the state of West Bengal and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has been entrusted with the task, the sources said. About four to five armed commandos each will be provided to them every time they move in the state, they said. The CRPF also provides a 'Z' category cover to Suvendu Adhikari, who is the Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly. Suvendu Adhikari had severed ties with the TMC and joined the BJP. He contested the 2021 assembly elections against Chief Minister and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee from the Nandigram seat and won the contest.



We need to build a system of disease surveillance fit for the 21st century. A Global Pandemic Radar will ensure that we are vigilant to new variants and emerging pathogens
BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK

'WE'RE PART OF SOLUTION'

To celebrate natural diversity and spread awareness, May 22 is marked as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) globally. Earlier, December 29 was designated as the IDB but in 2000, the UNGA chose May 22 to mark the day



of the day quote

Culture is what endures, what survives. Think of the monuments, heritage sites, traditions, and stories that stand the test of time, passed down by communities across generations, beyond any one person's life

VOLKAN BOZKUR
PRESIDENT, 75TH SESSION OF THE UNGA

Since the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, everyone has discovered that only with party leadership can Tibet continue on this road of prosperous development

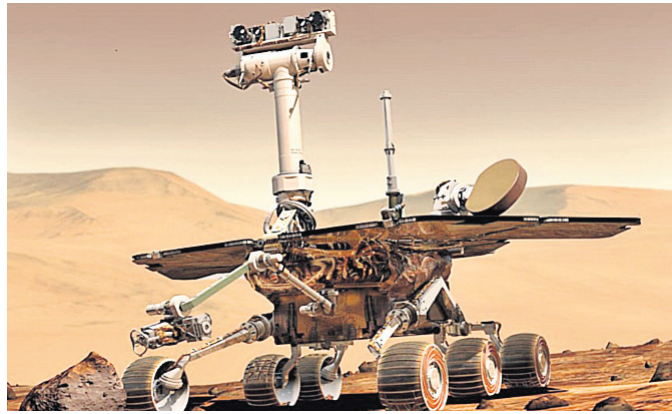
WU YINGJIE | CHIEF, TIBET COMMUNIST PARTY

I will say that eradicating poverty is just like winning a big battle, and it did not happen in one day. I believe that Pakistan can learn how to lift its people from poverty

IMRAN KHAN | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

China's 1st Mars rover steps out to explore red planet

Chinese spacecraft landed on Mars three months after the successful landing of the US space agency NASA's Perseverance rover which is busy exploring the red planet's surface with a helicopter hovering around



The lander carrying the rover touched down in the southern part of Utopia Planitia, a vast plain on the northern hemisphere of Mars, May 15. Chinese spacecraft landed on Mars three months after the successful landing of the US space agency NASA's Perseverance rover

which is busy exploring the red planet's surface with a helicopter hovering around. With an expected lifespan of at least 90 Martian days (about three months on the Earth), Zhurong will record the Martian landscape with high-resolution three-dimensional images, analyse the material composition of the planet's surface, detect its subsurface structure and magnetic field, search for traces of water, ice and observe the surrounding meteorological environment, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. It carries various scientific instruments, including terrain camera, multi-spectral camera, subsurface exploration radar, surface-composition detector, magnetic-field detector and meteorology monitor. The orbiter, with a design life of one Martian year (about 687

days on the Earth), will relay communications for the rover while conducting its own scientific detection operations.

Compared with China's lunar rover Yutu (Jade Rabbit), Zhurong has a similar speed of about 200 meters per hour; but the height of the obstacles it can surmount increased from 20 cm to 30 cm. It can climb slopes up to 20 degrees. Zhurong's six wheels are independently driven, according to its designers. The US has deployed five rovers on Mars, besides a helicopter. The active suspension system of the rover could help it to get out of trouble by moving like an inchworm on the complicated Martian surface with both loose sandy soil and densely distributed rocks, said Jia Yang, deputy chief designer of the Tianwen-1 probe from the China Academy of Space Technology.

London, May 22: Animal rights protesters Saturday blockaded four British distribution centres for fast-food chain McDonald's, demanding they become fully plant-based by 2025.

The Animal Rebellion group said they intended to block the distribution sites in Hemel Hempstead, Basingstoke, Coventry and Greater Manchester - all in England - for at least 24 hours. "We are in the middle of a climate and ecological emergency and we are still consuming huge quantities of meat on a scale that is just not sustainable for our planet," a protester in Coventry said in a video posted on Twitter. McDonald's confirmed that its distribution centres were currently facing disruption. "We are assessing the impact on deliveries to our restaurants and to menu items. We apologise to our customers for any disappointment caused," said a spokesperson. Coventry police said they "recognise the right to a peaceful protest, however there are safety concerns as the sole entrance and exit point to the distribution site has been blocked and this is causing significant disruption to businesses, which we are taking seriously."

Activists in UK block McDonald's distribution centers



AGENCIES

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G20 leaders commit to coordinate against Covid-19 pandemic



AGENCIES

Rome, May 22: The G20 leaders have issued a joint declaration at the close of the Global Health Summit aimed at coordinating worldwide efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic. The Rome Declaration is made up of 16 "mutually reinforcing principles" that "reconfirm our commitment to global solidarity, equity, and multilateral cooperation" and to promoting "sustained financing for global health", said the G20 leaders.

"We affirm our support for efforts to strengthen supply chains and boost and diversify global vaccine-manufacturing capacity, including for the materials needed to produce vaccines, including by sharing risks, and welcome the vaccines technology transfer hub launched by the WHO," the declaration read.

During a joint press conference at the close of the summit, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed their satisfaction with the outcome of the event, which was organised by the Italian G20 Presidency in partnership with the European Commission.

"I am very pleased with this summit because of the strength of the commitments that were undertaken, and the absolute conviction and sincerity with which they were made," Draghi told reporters.

The Rome Declaration is "groundbreaking and historical because for the first time you have the G20 (members) all committing to basic principles", von der Leyen said.

According to the declaration, the G20 leaders affirmed their support for efforts to strengthen supply chains and boost global vaccine-manufacturing capacity and welcome the vaccines technology transfer hub launched by the WHO

The most important of those principles, she said, is multilateralism, which runs like a golden thread through the Declaration.

"This is a very clear 'no' to health nationalism, to export bans, to bottlenecks," von der Leyen explained.

"Supply chains have to be open. All the G20 members have agreed on that."

Draghi followed up by saying that "the involvement of multilateral organizations such as the WTO and the WHO will be the forums where countries will agree on the removal of export bans, the removal of property rights, and ensuring the continuous flow of the supply chains."

"We have discovered that a complete openness of boundaries is essential to produce vaccines in huge quantities and to make sure they are distributed to everybody," the Prime Minister said.

Von der Leyen stressed that the three leading Western manufacturers of Covid vaccines have made major pledges going forward.

Egyptian mediators hold talks to firm up Israel-Hamas truce

AGENCIES

Gaza City, May 22: Egyptian mediators held talks Saturday to firm up an Israel-Hamas ceasefire as Palestinians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip began to assess the damage from 11 days of intense Israeli bombardment. A 130-truck convoy carrying urgently needed aid was headed to Gaza.

Saturday marked the first full day of a truce that ended the fourth Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade. In the fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes against militant targets in Gaza, while Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Gaza City's busiest commercial area, Omar al-Mukhtar Street, was covered in debris, smashed cars and twisted metal after a 13-floor building in its center was flattened in an Israeli airstrike. Merchandise was covered in soot and strewn inside smashed stores and on the pavement. Municipal workers removed broken glass and twisted metal from streets and sidewalks.

"We really didn't expect this amount of damage," said Ashour Subeih, who sells baby clothes. "We



thought the strike was a bit further from us. But as you can see not an area of the shop is intact." Having been in business for one year, Subeih estimated his losses were double what he has made so far.

Both Israel and Hamas have claimed victory. There was a widespread expectation that the ceasefire would stick for now, but that another round of fighting at some point seems inevitable. Underlying issues remain unresolved, including an Israeli-Egyptian border blockade, now in its 14th year that is choking Gaza's more than 2 million residents and a refusal by the Islamic militant Hamas to disarm.

The fighting began May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-

range rockets toward Jerusalem. The barrage came after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Heavy-handed police tactics at the compound and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

The war has further sidelined Hamas' main political rival, the internationally backed Palestinian Authority, which oversees autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

It appeared that Hamas increasingly positioned itself as a defender of Jerusalem in Palestinian public opinion.

SHORT TAKES

Nepal President dissolves Parl

Kathmandu: Nepal plunged into fresh political turmoil Saturday as President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved parliament and fixed general elections in November amid a worsening Covid-19 outbreak. The surprise announcement comes after a presidential statement said neither the caretaker Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli nor opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba were able to demonstrate a majority to form a new government by the Friday deadline set by Bhandari.

China: 3 killed, 27 injured in quakes

Beijing: At least 3 people were killed and 27 others injured after a series of earthquakes jolted southwest China's Yunnan Province, officials said Saturday. The quake was felt in all 12 counties and cities of the prefecture, with Yangbi Yi Autonomous County being the worst hit, Yang Guozong, Party chief of the prefecture said, Xinhua news agency reported. Two deaths were reported in Yangbi and one in Yongping County. Three people were severely injured and 24 others had minor injuries.

California to fully reopen June 15

San Francisco: California, the most populous US state, has announced plans to fully reopen its economy June 15 amid dropping Covid-19 cases and vaccine eligibility expansion. Almost all industry and business sectors may return to usual operations with no capacity limits or physical distancing requirements, according to the updated guidelines unveiled by the California Department of Public Health Saturday. There are still limited exceptions for "mega events", characterised by large crowds greater than 5,000 attendees at indoor venues, reports Xinhua news agency.

SL halts trains to curb virus

Colombo: Sri Lanka halted passenger trains and buses for four days as authorities imposed a fresh travel ban across the country, in its latest efforts to curb the escalating number of Covid-19 infections and deaths. The ban is effective from Friday night until Tuesday morning. However, it will not apply to those engaged in essential services like health, food and power sectors, and those seeking medical treatment. Sri Lanka has already banned public gatherings, weddings and closed schools and universities.

CANINE TO THE RESCUE



A dog that has been trained to sniff out the coronavirus screens a sweat sample at Chulalongkorn University, in Bangkok, Thailand

White House partners with 'dating apps' to boost vax

AGENCIES

Washington D.C., May 22: The White House has partnered with popular online dating platforms such as Match, Tinder and Bumble to encourage more Americans to get vaccinated against the virus that has killed hundreds of thousands of people in the United States alone.

With restrictions loosening across the country as coronavirus cases, hospitalisations and deaths decline, people are increasingly getting back to some semblance of normalcy in their lives, including dating.

President Joe Biden's administration has set a goal of getting at least one vaccine shot into at least 70% of US adults by the July 4

Independence Day holiday. The partnership with dating sites is meant to attract young people otherwise reluctant to get vaccinated.

"Social distancing and dating were always a bit of a challenging combination," White House coronavirus adviser Andy Slavitt told reporters Friday. He said OkCupid, one of the dating sites, reported that people who display their vaccination status were 14 percent more likely to get a match. "We have finally found the one thing that makes us all more attractive: a vaccination," Slavitt said.

The dating platforms, which cater to more than 50 million people in the United States, will offer badges showing vaccination status, free access to "premium content



like boosts, super likes, and super swipes" for vaccinated individuals, and filters to potential hook-ups based on people's vaccination sta-

tus, the White House said. Match Group Inc confirmed the participation of its top US brands including Tinder, Match, OkCupid, Hinge,

We are honoured to work with the White House on increasing vaccinations across America, which will allow people to once again meet in person and engage in meaningful ways. This will make dating safer for everyone, everywhere

SHAR DUBEY | CEO, MATCH GROUP

Plenty of Fish, BLK and Chispa. Promotional campaigns will launch in coming

weeks and run until July 4.

Shar Dubeey, CEO of Match Group, said, "We are honoured to work with the White House on increasing vaccinations across America, which will allow people to once again meet in person and engage in meaningful ways. This will make dating safer for everyone, everywhere." To meet the 70% target as demand slows for vaccines, the White House this month announced partnerships with ride-hailing services Uber and Lyft.

As of Thursday, the United States has administered about 279.4 million doses, with 48.2% of its people receiving at least one shot, according to the latest data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

business

of the day quote

Wheels India is planning a capital expenditure of ₹100 crore that will go into the wind segment where we will be setting up a new plant near Chennai

All the product groups other than 'ships, boats and floating structures' recorded positive growth during this period. The growth momentum has continued for the past few months despite Covid shadow

We urge the state government to waive fixed charges on power levied by state-run distributors on all industrial and commercial establishments, which are reeling under the Covid-induced lockdown that has been extended till June 7

SHORT TAKES

Minda Industries' takeover gets nod

New Delhi: Minda Industries Saturday said its board has approved acquisition of 27.55% stake in CSE Dakshina Solar Pvt Ltd for ₹27 lakh. "The board approved the acquisition of 33,750 equity shares of CSE Dakshina Solar Pvt Ltd of face value of ₹10 each at a premium of ₹70 i.e. ₹80 per share, aggregating to ₹27,00,000," Minda said. With the acquisition, the company will hold 27.55% of total paid-up share capital of CSE Dakshina.

Bharat Parenterals gets DCGI nod

New Delhi: Drug firm Bharat Parenterals Saturday said it has received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for favipiravir oral suspension, to be used for treatment of Covid-19 patients. The company has received licence and authorisation from DCGI to manufacture and market favipiravir oral suspension 100mg/ml, Bharat Parenterals said in a regulatory filing. Favipiravir, an antiviral drug, was approved in Japan in 2014 for the treatment of novel or re-emerging influenza virus infections.

PSB reports Q4 profit of ₹161 cr

Mumbai: State-run Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB) turned profitable in the fourth quarter of FY21 after eight consecutive quarters of losses, posting a profit after tax of ₹161 crore on the back of improvement in recoveries and decline in bad loans. The lender had registered a net loss of ₹236.3 crore in the year-ago period. However, for the full year, its loss widened to ₹2,732.9 crore as against ₹990.8 crore in FY20.

M&M extends service period

Mumbai: Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) Saturday said it has extended the warranty and service period on its entire range of vehicles till July 31 due to lockdown in several states in the wake of the pandemic. This will be applicable for those customers whose warranty is due to expire between April 1 and May 31, it said. "Amid the second wave and subsequent lockdowns, M&M has extended the warranty and service period on its entire range of vehicles till 31st July," M&M said.



In crypto talk, when retail investors capitulate, people say it shakes out all of the weak hands and the people...who may have invested because they saw it on the news
ETHAN LOU | AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST

OIL IMPORTS REMAINS FLAT IN APRIL

Hit by demand slowdown in wake of Covid-19 induced mobility restrictions in various parts of the country, India's import of crude has plateaued in April, 2021



IMF proposes \$50bn to fight Covid-19 pandemic

AGENCIES

Washington, May 22: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has proposed \$50 billion to speed up vaccinations, boost testing and tracing, and maintain adequate stocks of therapeutics, urging coordinated global action to end the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite stepped-up global efforts, more than a year into the global crisis, "new cases worldwide are higher than ever", IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, chief economist Gita Gopinath and economist Ruchir Agarwal, wrote in a joint blog published on Friday.

"Urgent action is needed to arrest the rising human toll and economic strain," they said.

"Ending the pandemic is a solvable problem but requires further coordinated global action."

Noting that economic recoveries are diverging dangerously, Georgieva and her colleagues said that as of the end of April 2021, less than 2 per cent of Africa's population had been vaccinated.

By contrast, over 40 per cent of the population in the US and over 20 per cent in Europe had received at least one dose of the vaccine.

The \$50 billion proposal aims to vaccinate at least 40 per cent of the population in all countries by the end of 2021 and at least 60 per cent by the first half of 2022, according to the blog.

It also aims to track and insure

According to a blog, the \$50bn proposal aims to vaccinate at least 40% of the population in all countries by the end of 2021 and 60% by H1 2022



coverage is low. Georgieva and her colleagues noted that the G20 governments have already indicated their willingness to address the \$22 billion grant funding gap noted by the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator, a global collaboration platform launched by the World Health Organization and its partners.

India's consumer confidence worsens in May amid Covid crisis

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 22: The consumer confidence in India has further weakened in May amid the severe Covid crisis and the resultant lockdowns across states. The monthly Refinitiv-Ipsos Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI) for India, in May, has shown a sharp drop of 6.3 percentage points, over April 2021, amid Covid-19 fears.

The monthly PCSI, which is driven by the aggregation of the four weighted sub-indices, has plunged across all sub-indices. The PCSI Employment Confidence Sub-Index is down by 4.7 percentage points, the PCSI Current Personal Financial Conditions Sub-Index has steeply fallen by 9.0 percentage points.

Further, the PCSI Investment Climate Sub-Index has sharply declined by 8.4 percentage points and the PCSI Economic Expectations Sub-Index, has decreased by 4.4 percentage points.

Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India, said, "The second wave has been far greater in intensity as compared to the first wave and we are seeing its



terrible impact not only on our healthcare infrastructure, which is stressed due to the steep surge in cases, but also on consumer sentiment, which has plummeted across the four sub-indices. Especially for personal finances, for day to day running of household expenses and savings and investments for the future."

Confidence around jobs and the economy too have taken a hit and right now, the government's focus is to contain the virus and save lives. And that is why we are seeing lockdowns and restrictions

The monthly PCSI, which is driven by the aggregation of the four weighted sub-indices, has plunged across all sub-indices

Confidence around jobs and the economy have taken a hit and right now, the government's focus is to contain the virus and save lives

being imposed. But then it is also impacting livelihoods and earnings, he said.

"It is a tough dilemma but saving lives will take precedence over everything else and then of course expediting the vaccination drive, with now Sputnik V too making the India debut.

We will have to closely watch the Covid trajectory over the next 3-4 weeks and gauge if restrictions are being lifted from June onwards. If it does not happen and vaccination drive does not pick up pace, we are looking at a very slow rebound."

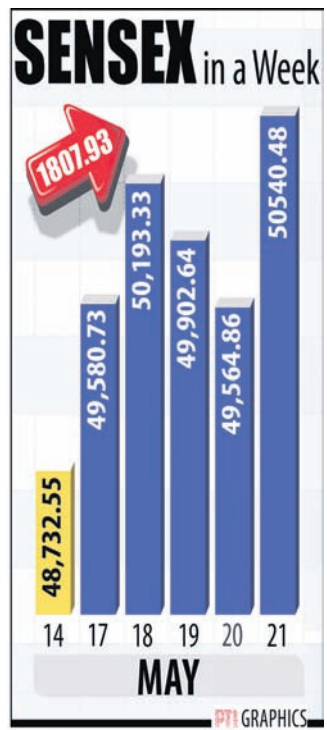
AMAZON TO SHUT DOWN PRIME NOW

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 22: Amazon has announced to shut down its standalone Prime Now delivery app, and the two-hour delivery options will now be available on its main app and website.

The company said that in India, Japan and Singapore, it has already moved the Prime Now experience onto Amazon and retired the Prime Now app and website.

"In the US, we began making two-hour delivery from Amazon Fresh and Whole Foods Market available on Amazon in 2019. Globally, we'll move our third-party partners and local stores to the Amazon shopping experience before the Prime Now app and website are retired later this year," informed Stephenie Landry, vice president of grocery at Amazon. Prime Now was launched back in 2014.



BIZ BUZZ

Sonalika committed to help channel partners

Bhubaneswar: Tractor brand Sonalika has ensured its company's workforce that they are being safeguarded from any unforeseen events that may lead to physical or monetary losses. Sonalika has pledged extensive support to its employees by covering the medical expenses related to Covid-19 treatment. The company offers ₹25,000 to cover the medical expenses incurred by a dealership employee due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is, in addition to other schemes that are already in force to cover kids of dealer's employees for medical assistance and educational support of up to ₹50,000 annually. In case of demise of a dealer associate or employee, a financial assistance of ₹2 lakh for the family member(s) is assured.

JK Lakshmi Cement's net profit soars 25%

Bhubaneswar: JK Lakshmi Cement, one of the leading cement companies, recorded a jump of 25% in its turnover at ₹1,321.99 crore in the quarter Jan-Mar, 2021 against turnover of ₹1061.19 crore in the corresponding quarter Jan-Mar 2020. According to a report, the company's EBITDA stood higher at ₹295.20 crore in Jan-Mar 2021 from ₹224.52 crore in Jan-Mar, 2020, an increase of 31%. After providing for interest and depreciation, PBT moved up by nearly 66% to ₹217.45 crore in Jan-Mar 2021 from ₹131.09 crore in Jan-Mar, 2020. After providing for exceptional item, taxes and other comprehensive income, JK Lakshmi Cement's profit rose to ₹138.27 crore in Jan-Mar 2021 from ₹101.21 crore recorded in the corresponding quarter a jump of 37%. During April 2020 to March 2021, sales increased by 8% to ₹4,384.71 crore (Rs 4,043.50 crore).



Startup biz to deliver necessities at the doorstep

'PICK UP AND DROP FACILITY' HAS BECOME AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE FOR CONSUMERS ALL ACROSS INDIA. IT ALLOWS ONE TO DELIVER/RECEIVE ANYTHING, BE IT LUNCH BOXES, DOCUMENTS, LAUNDRY, SHOES, STATIONERY AND OTHER MATERIALS FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER FROM ANYWHERE IN THEIR CITY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, May 22: Covid-19 has brought several businesses to its knees. But it has also given small opportunities to hungry entrepreneurs, keen to display their social conscience. With companies declaring a work-from-home model and the novel coronavirus pandemic spreading its tentacles, BA graduate Hemlata Kushwaha from Kolkata has taken up the opportunity to provide 'pick up and drop service' to take the necessities at the doorstep of the people of the city.

'Pick up and drop facility' has become an essential service for consumers all across the country. The service allows one to deliver or receive anything, be it lunch boxes,

documents, laundry, items for repair; shoes, stationery and other materials from one location to another from anywhere in their city. It also allows one to buy stuff from beetle shops, supermarkets, pharmacies and home-cooked means making the daily errands easier. Those running a business can also opt for deliveries of office documents as well.

Kolkata based start-up 'Delivery Pigeon' - a self-funded startup - provides 'same day pick and drop services' to working professionals, small businesses and senior citizens at their doorsteps within city limits.

Functioning from March 2021, "the start-up currently gets 200 orders per day. The number is steadily increasing due to an increase in



Covid cases. We currently operate with more than 180 provider partners

all over the city," said 45-year-old Kushwaha. "Keeping in mind our customers' concerns for safety, the parcels are verified twice by provider partners at the pickup and drop points. We also offer easy payment options - both online and offline mode as well as the flexibility of making payment at either point. The app also allows users to schedule their orders 24 hours in advance," she added.

Initially started to help family members suffering from the deadly virus, the start-up is now a full-fledged automated, app-based service. Like its competitors in other cities, it aims to make local pick and drop services quick, easy and accessible for all through a user-friendly and hassle-free app. Efforts are on to make Delivery Pigeon a

key player in the hyperlocal delivery space in Kolkata.

Elaborating on India's logistics-tech industry, Kushwaha said, "The potential for small, medium and big companies is huge. Following the advent of Covid-19, people are looking for contactless deliveries more than ever now."

In addition to industry biggies like food-tech unicorn Swiggy and ride-hailing giant Uber, the country witnessed emergence of several logistics tech startups including Bangalore-based Dunzo, Delhi-based Jhutupat, Delhi-NCR focused start-up Meretask, Chandigarh-based Jugnoo offering same-day pickup and drop services to individuals and corporates for charges based on the kilometre run.

Hero MotoCorp to resume production at all mfg plants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: Two-wheeler market leader Hero MotoCorp Saturday said it will resume production at all its manufacturing plants in India from coming Monday after temporarily shutting operations due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In the beginning of this week, the



company had resumed partial operations at its three plants at Gurugram and Dharuhera in Haryana and Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

It had halted operations temporarily at all of its six plants in India in a staggered manner for four days from April 22 to May 2, which was then extended till May 16.

Hero MotoCorp is "gearing up towards a gradual resumption of operations by starting production at all its manufacturing plants in India from Monday, May 24", the company said in a statement.

"The other plants of Hero MotoCorp in India - Neemrana in Rajasthan, Halol in Gujarat and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, will also start single shift operations from May 24," it added.

Production in single shift had already commenced at three of its plants Gurugram and Dharuhera in Haryana and at Haridwar, Uttarakhand from May 17.

'Startups engaged with EVs to get necessary support'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The startups, engaged in manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs), will be provided necessary support to boost the industry, said Satyabrata Sahu, principal secretary in the MSME department.

During an interactive session with entrepreneurs, Sahu said, "Allotment of land to entrepreneurs, banking loan facilities, registrations will be offered to them, who are engaged in the manufacturing of EVs". He also said that the department may amend policy, if there is a requirement, for boosting the sector.

The Principal Secretary interacted with nine entrepreneurs and discussed the problems related to their work.

According to the report, these entrepreneurs are planning to manufacture EVs in Odisha. Several participants urged the MSME department to allot land and also requested for financial assistance from them. Sahu assured the industry representatives of solving all the problems and that their department will take every possible steps to resolve it.

'I don't need to change just because people criticise my batting,' says wicketkeeper-batsman

SAHA NOT WARY OF CRITICISM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 22: It's a circle of life that has put Wriddhiman Saha in the same position that he was a decade back when he came to England in 2011 as skipper MS Dhoni's understudy.

The script was repeated in 2014 with Saha seen dutifully carrying the bats, towels and drinks for his teammates and in 2021, he is again expected to watch Rishabh Pant's pyrotechnics from the dressing room, something that has solely missed from his style of batsmanship despite being decent at his craft.

"Obviously, there would be criticism when you don't do well. I always try to deliver the way I've learnt over the years," Saha told PTI in an interview, ahead of joining the team's bio-bubble in Mumbai on Monday.

Despite being steady with the bat, somehow Saha's willow wielding hasn't exactly inspired the highest confidence and the question raised doesn't amuse him one bit.

"If people are saying my batting is not up there, maybe that's the case... But, I don't think I need to change anything - mental approach or technique. I just try to keep my focus and work hard," the reticent Bengal stumper said.

He accepts that post Dhoni's retirement and his spate of injuries during the whole 2018 season, it was Pant, who had best utilised the chances that came along.

"Parthiv (Patel), DK (Dinesh Karthik) and Rishabh got chances after I got sidelined due to injury. But it was Rishabh, who made full use of the opportunity and cemented his place in the side. Maybe I played

some matches here and there..."

India will be playing six Test matches in England over the next three months and while Pant starting during the World Test Championship is a no-brainer, Saha might fancy that some chance will come along his way with five games against England starting August.

"I think representing India itself is a big motivation, and it will be much bigger if an opportunity comes my way," Saha, who has played 38 Tests, scoring 1,251 runs and accounting for 103 dismissals, said.

"Ultimately, everyone faces this kind of a challenge in a small or bigger way. But being with the team and representing your nation from 1.4 billion is far bigger."

A teammate to the core, Saha believes that despite his 11 years of stop-start Test career, he has never had any bitter feelings of being left out in the cold at times.

"I always approach my game with this mindset. For me, the team always comes first and I will always want my team to win. It has never affected my personal relations with anyone," he said.

Looking ahead to the WTC final, Saha said the onus would be on the batsmen. "Looking into the English conditions, batsmen will face the maximum challenge. Pace bowlers always get the advantage there. So the batsmen will hold the key. The team who bats better will be ahead," he said.

Asked to compare Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson, his Sunrisers Hyderabad captain in the IPL, Saha said: "Kane is always cool-headed and goes about his job in a calm and composed manner. But it's about the challenges on-the-field rather than the off-the-field talks."



Indian boxers reach Dubai for Asian meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Indian boxing team, featuring the likes of M C Mary Kom (51kg) and Amit Panghal (52kg), reached Dubai to compete in the Asian Boxing Championships aboard an "air-bubble" flight, which had to stay mid-air longer than scheduled as administrative paperwork delayed its landing.

The tournament starts on Monday with the draws lined up for Sunday. It is the only major competition that the boxers will get before the July-August Olympics given the COVID-19 restrictions in place around the globe.

The team reached Dubai Saturday after their flight was held up mid-air for over two hours because of a delay in the clearance of paperwork which approved the team's arrival in Dubai.

"There was some confusion regarding the approval letter for the trip which was eventually sorted thanks to the intervention of the Indian Embassy in the UAE. The flight took a while to land but the boxers have now reached their hotel," a source close to the team told this agency.

The approval was required as the UAE has imposed a ban on flights from India in view of the heavy COVID-19 caseload here.

The Boxing Federation of India issued a statement, thanking the Indian ambassador to the UAE for his assistance but did not get into details of what caused the delay in the flight's landing.

"Indian contingent has landed in Dubai and reached the hotel. Two rounds of RT-PCR test have been conducted - one at the airport and the other at the hotel. Indian team flew on SpiceJet flight under the air bubble agreement with all necessary and relevant permissions," the statement read.

"Boxing Federation of India is grateful to the Indian Embassy and Ambassador Mr Pavan Kapoor for his help in ensuring the contingent's participation at the 2021 ASBC Asian Championships. We are also thankful to the Asian Boxing Confederation and the UAE government," it added.



The 10-strong women's team is being led by MC Mary Kom (51kg) along with three other Olympic-bound boxers - Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and Pooja Rani (75kg)

The 10-strong women's team is being led by the redoubtable Mary Kom (51kg) along with three other Olympic-bound boxers - Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and Pooja Rani (75kg).

Two Olympic-bound names missing from the men's team are Manish Kaushik (63kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg), both of whom are currently recovering from COVID-19. A total of five men have qualified for the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Apart from India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, and Uzbekistan are among the prominent countries which will compete at the continental showpiece.

India had delivered its best ever Asian Championship performance in the 2019 edition in Thailand, claiming 13 medals, including two gold, four silver and seven bronze.

Indian team begin training in Doha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: All the players and support staff of the Indian football team have tested negative for COVID-19 after arrival in Qatar and have also started training ahead of the joint Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup next month.

The team, which arrived in Doha Wednesday evening, was under compulsory quarantine and waiting for the results of their RT-PCR tests before starting their preparatory camp.

"Yes, all the 23 players and support staff tested negative in the tests done after their arrival," All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das told this agency.

The team, bolstered by the return of Sunil Chhetri, will have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble here before their first match June 3 against hosts Qatar. The other two matches are against Bangladesh (June 7) and Afghanistan (June 15).

Through the good offices of Qatar



Head coach Igor Stimac talks to players during India's practice session in Doha as the players listen with focus

Football Association, a 10-day hard quarantine was waived off for the

Indians and they began training as soon as they got the COVID-19 neg-

ative results.

"Gearing-up for the challenges ahead. The #BlueTigers had their training first training session in Doha, Qatar last night," the AIFF said in a tweet, along with pictures of training of players under head coach Igor Stimac.

The matches are being played in Doha in view of the COVID-19 pandemic which doesn't allow the original format of home and away matches.

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

The Indian players were to have a national camp in Kolkata from May 2 onwards but the raging pandemic in the country led to its cancellation.

The players and the support had left the country Wednesday after undergoing RT-PCR tests prior to flying off to Doha from New Delhi. They had arrived in New Delhi May 15 with mandatory negative RT-PCR test results.

148 SPORTSPERSONS GET COVID VACCINE 1ST DOSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: As many as 148 athletes across all sports, including those who have qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Games, have already received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccination, according to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

Out of these 148 athletes, 17 have got both the doses and 131 have received their first shot, IOA president Narinder Batra said. These 148 include potential athletes who can make it to the Tokyo Olympics which is opening July 23.

Besides this, 13 Tokyo Paralympic-bound athletes have got their first vaccine shot while two have received both doses. The Tokyo Paralympics opens August 24. The total number of athletes (including para-athletes), who have got at least their first dose till May 20, is 163.

Giving the 'vaccination status of Tokyo-bound Indian athletes and officials in the long list as on May 20', Batra said 87 officials have got



A hand holding a COVID-19 vaccine vial.

single dose of COVID-19 vaccine while 23 are fully vaccinated.

More than 90 Indian athletes across sports have so far qualified for the Tokyo Olympics which was postponed from last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Olympic-bound shooters who are currently training in Croatia will be vaccinated there as they are expected to directly fly to Tokyo from there, the NRAI has said. Some of them have already got their first jabs in India before departing for Croatia and they will get their second dose in that country.

Batra re-elected as FIH president for second term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: Incumbent Narinder Batra of India was Saturday re-elected as the International Hockey Federation (FIH) President for a second term after beating Marc Coudron of Belgium by a slender margin of just two votes during the world body's virtual 47th Congress.

Considered the favourite from the beginning, Batra, who is also the President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, barely managed to pip Coudron, who is the chief of Belgium Hockey Federation and sits on the country's Olympic panel.

Batra secured 63 votes as against his rival's 61 to emerge winner during the online voting process, in which 124 member associations participated. The FIH Congress was held virtually due to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of the ongoing pandemic.



Narinder Batra speaking at a podium during the FIH Congress.

The closeness of the contest can be gauged from the fact that 63 votes were needed by a candidate to secure victory and Batra managed to prevail over his opponent in the battle.

The Indian will hold the office until 2024 as the FIH has reduced the term from four to three years due to deferment of the Congress last year. The 47th Congress was to be held last year in New Delhi but was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Batra became the first non-European president of the FIH in 2016 after he was elected to the top post by an overwhelming margin during the world body's 45th Congress.

The veteran Indian sports administrator, who was the chief of Hockey India then, remains the only Asian to grab the top post in the world body's 92-year-old history.

Cricket gear donation brings joy to migrants stuck in Bosnia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina), May 22: Joyful cheers echoed through an asylum-seekers camp in Bosnia this week as dozens of teenagers and young men put their daily struggles aside for a game of cricket.

Players absorbed in the match ran over an improvised pitch clutching wooden bats or throwing balls. Others supported the teams by clapping from the side, their faces radiant. "It was a good game!" Sifet, an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, said. "Tomorrow we have the final tournament!" Mohammad Jahanzeb, who is from Pakistan, chimed in.

The opportunity for relaxation and fun at the Blazuj camp in Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, was made possible by a Rome-based humanitarian group which brought in donated cricket gear for refugees and migrants in the Balkan country.

Andrea Costa, president of the



Baobab Experience association, told the Associated Press that activists got the idea from the asylum-seekers themselves, particularly those coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh or India, where cricket is a national sport.

Thousands of people fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East, Africa or Asia have been stranded for months, if not years, in Bosnia while waiting for a chance to move

toward Western Europe. From Bosnia, migrants try first to cross to neighboring European Union nation Croatia, before continuing on toward wealthier EU countries.

"Speaking with many young people... It came naturally to ask them what they were missing the most, what would they want," Costa said. "Exactly as an Italian boy would ask for a football, to play



some football, they say they are missing cricket."

Costa and his team drove to Bosnia after collecting donations from the U.K., Indian and Pakistani embassies in Rome and those countries' communities in Italy, Costa said. Along with Sarajevo, gear was delivered to the central Bosnian town of Tuzla. "Our next step with the cricket will be going back to Italy, going back to Europe, and saying

that the migrants were very happy," Costa said.

Among those who waited eagerly for the packages to arrive was Ali Cheema, who said he started playing cricket when he was 7 and used to play for several clubs in his native Pakistan.

Now 24, Cheema has been in Bosnia for two years. As the car carrying the cricket equipment pulled over in Tuzla, he was there to open

the bags filled with bats, poles, gloves, jerseys and caps.

"We are going to play a cricket match as soon as possible," he said, explaining that previously "we cut some wood" to make bats.

A day later, Cheema and his friends could be seen practicing on a playground in Tuzla. "I decided to go from Pakistan to follow my dreams," Cheema said.

"I would like to go to England and continue to play cricket, because I was a cricket player in Pakistan and I didn't get enough opportunity."

Costa said his organization plans to do more to help the young foreigners in Bosnia migrants get engaged in sports and "pass the day with the things that they like."

"First of all, we believe it is their right to reach their goal, that it is their right to reach Europe," Costa said. "And second of all, our organization thinks that since while they are transiting these countries, every effort has to be done to help them feel welcome and stay in good condition."