



## CONCERN FOR FANS

Actor Sonakshi Sinha, checking in on her fans, asked them not to give up fight against nCoV

LEISURE P2



## ITALY CABLE CAR CRASH

At least 13 people were killed and two children injured Sunday after a cable car plunged into the side of a mountain

INTERNATIONAL P10



## NEGATIVE IMPACT

Sportspersons say the arrest of Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar will have a negative impact

SPORTS P12

# Yaas landfall between Paradip, Sagar

MET DEPARTMENT SAID THAT THE LOW PRESSURE AREA WAS AROUND 590 KMS AWAY FROM THE EAST SOUTHEAST OF PARADIP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** Cyclone Yaas may make a landfall anywhere between Paradip in Odisha and Sagar Islands in West Bengal, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

The MeT department said that the low pressure area was around 590 kms away from the east southeast of Paradip and was likely to move north westwards and intensify into a severe cyclonic storm by May 24. Later, it may intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm by May 25.

"The cyclone will continue to move towards north-westward, intensify further and reach Northwest Bay of Bengal near West Bengal and north Odisha coasts by May 26 morning. It is very likely to cross north Odisha and West Bengal between Paradip and Sagar Islands by the evening of May 26 as a very severe cyclonic storm and make a landfall in between," the department said in its evening bulletin.

The department has issued Distant Cautionary Signal Number 1 to all the ports across the state and advised them to be prepared for the cyclone. The department has issued Yellow Warning for May 24 and May 25 forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall



in the northern coastal parts of Odisha.

The department, however, has issued Red Alert for May 26 forecasting heavy to very heavy rains. "Heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at a few places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj

and Keonjhar districts with extremely heavy rainfall at one or two places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Mayurbhanj districts," the department said in its forecast for May 26.

Meanwhile, the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Jena vis-

ited Balasore and Bhadrak to review the situation and claimed that the vulnerable northern coastal states of Odisha were prepared to counter the cyclone Yaas.

The SRC directed the officials to shift people staying in thatched huts and houses along the coast and makeshift dwellings to the 18 cyclone shelters and 29 schools in Balasore.

The district administration has targeted evacuating 8,540 persons from Bahanaga block alone. Elaborate arrangements have been made to ensure that coronavirus infection does not spread among the evacuees. For this purpose, sufficient number of masks and enough sanitisers have been stocked in the cyclone shelters.

The schools and shelters are being regularly sanitized, while special arrangements have been made to supply dry and cooked food at the cyclone shelters.

The state Panchayati Raj and Urban Development Minister, Pratap Jena also reviewed the situation in the vulnerable districts of Odisha. He asked the urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions to be prepared to handle the emergency situation and plan well in advance for shelter homes and evacuation before and during the cyclone.

## DGP reviews cyclone preparedness

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Director General of Police Abhay Sunday reviewed the preparedness of the police in the coastal districts of the state ahead of the impending cyclone Yaas. The DGP discussed the steps taken by the district police officials in connection with the evacuation process, safety and relief measures to be taken before and after the cyclone through a video conference at the DGP camp office here. The Superintendents of Police (SPs) of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Kendrapada, Ganjam and Berhampur districts along with all the range DIGs participated in the virtual video meeting. The DGP also held discussions with ADGPs of Communication and Marine police. "Preparedness for evacuation and pre-cyclone actions, as well as post-cyclone relief and rescue were reviewed in detail. Sixty formations of ODRAF have been mobilised and equipped with high-end equipment to effectively undertake rescue and recovery work," the state police stated in its press note.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

## Decision on Class XII board exams by June 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** There is a broad consensus among states about conducting Class XII board exams and an "informed, collaborative" decision will be taken by June 1, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said Sunday.

However, states like Maharashtra said at a high-level meeting Sunday that "non-examination route" for Class XII students should be actively examined and Delhi and Kerala governments suggested vaccinating students before the exams. According to sources, the CBSE has proposed conducting exams between July 15 and August

26 and the result to be declared in September. The board also proposed two options: conducting regular exams for 19 major subjects at notified centres or conducting shorter duration exams at respective schools where students are enrolled.

The ministry has sought detailed suggestions from states by May 25. Sources claimed majority states were in favour of the second option, while some wanted a mix of both options. The CBSE has already cancelled Class X board exams and announced an alternative marking policy. The April and May edition of the engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains were also postponed.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Inauguration of job drive was before the shortage of vaccine. This is inauguration of cancellation of the drive

# STATE RECORDS HIGHEST SINGLE-DAY COVID CASES

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** Odisha's Covid-19 tally mounted to 6,92,382 Sunday as the state reported its highest single-day spike of 12,852 new cases, despite undergoing lockdown for more than two weeks, a health department official said.

The state also registered 28 fresh Covid fatalities, the biggest one-day count, which took the toll to 2,484, he said.

Of the new cases, 7,195 were reported from quarantine centres and the remaining 5,657 detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest number of fresh cases at

1,909, followed by Cuttack (1,073), Angul (874), Sundergarh (848), Kalahandi (688), Mayurbhanj (586) and Balasore (508). The remaining cases were registered in several other districts.

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

Five new fatalities were recorded in Khurda, followed by four each in Kalahandi and Sundargarh, three each in Angul and Kendrapara, two each in Puri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada, the official said.

One patient each in Gajapati, Ganjam and Nuapada succumbed to the disease, he said. Fifty-three other coronavirus-positive patients died in

the state due to comorbidities.

The state now has 1,11,862 active cases, while 5,77,983 patients have recovered from the disease.

The state has so far conducted over 1.13 crore sample tests for Covid-19, including 67,156 on Saturday, and the positivity ratio stands at 6.12 per cent.

Meanwhile, the state government has decided to create a designated "Paediatric Covid Wing" in health centres and hospitals where coronavirus patients are being treated.

Health Department Additional Chief Secretary PK Mohapatra wrote to authorities of several medical facilities and asked them to reserve 15 per cent of beds initially in isolation wards, HDUs and ICUs as part of the initiative to meet future challenges.

## ALL ENGULFING INFERNO



Fire engulfs fruit stalls near Madhusudan Park at Pokhaript in Bhubaneswar, Sunday (Story on P3) OP PHOTO

## Make party visible, desperate BJP to workers

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** The BJP has reminded its workers of the need to serve people in their moment of pain and struggle – and the need to be seen doing it. The party, wincing from criticism that its leaders were missing in action, especially during the second wave of the Covid pandemic, is now eyeing course correction.

In a letter to all BJP-ruled states, party chief JP Nadda has said that all functions to mark seven years of the Narendra Modi government be avoided

May 30. "Party workers should dedicate themselves in the service of the society," he recommended instead, saying people must be thanked for giving the BJP a chance to serve for seven years.

Party-ruled states will also launch a scheme on this occasion to help children orphaned during the pandemic, he said, the details of which will be circulated shortly.

"Standing by children who have lost both parents and providing them every support for their safe future is also our social responsibility..The idea is that all BJP-ruled states launch

the programme together when the BJP-led government at the Centre completes seven years," he said.

Its top leadership has also asked workers to arrange medicines, hospital beds, oxygen supplies in government hospitals – the country's medical system has suffered a severe paucity of these resources in recent months.

Nadda has spoken to the party's 317 MPs in the past four days to mobilise activities on this front. His letter today reminded BJP workers of its motto, 'Seva Hi Sangathan' (Service is organisation).

The party has in the recent past faced severe criticism as its leaders were perceived to be missing in helping people hit by the pandemic. This is in contrast with last year when, during the migrant crisis, its workers were seen arranging food packets and other facilities at a mass level.

Party sources said that since it is the world's largest political outfit, its workers must be seen helping those in distress. Several MLAs in Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, have complained about the administration ignoring them, leaving them unable to help the needy

## 12th fuel price hike in 19 days

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** After a day's relief, petrol and diesel prices increased again Sunday. With an increase of 17 paise, the price of petrol price in Delhi has gone up to ₹93.21 per litre. On the other hand, the price of diesel in the national capital went up by 27 paise to ₹84.07 per litre.

However, Sunday's hike is lower than the increase Friday when the price of petrol went up by 19 paise and the price of diesel increased by 29 paise.

The state-run Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have hiked the prices of petrol and diesel 12 times since May 4 with fuel prices reaching a record high May 21. Petrol has become costlier by ₹3.24 per litre while diesel has become more expensive by ₹2.94 per litre this month.

After Sunday's hike, the price of petrol inched closer to ₹100 mark in the financial capital, Mumbai. With petrol retailing at ₹99.49 per litre and diesel trading at ₹91.30 per litre, fuel rates in Mumbai remain the highest among the metro cities.



### CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹93.98 (+0.17)
DIESEL	₹91.66 (+0.30)

Other than that, fuel prices have already breached ₹100 mark in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Last week, Bhopal became the first state capital where people spent more than ₹100 for one litre of petrol, whereas in Jaipur, the price of petrol and diesel stands at ₹99.68 per litre and ₹92.78 per litre respectively. Fuel prices in Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan remain the highest in the country with a litre of petrol available at ₹104.43 and diesel retailing at ₹97.15 per litre.

## US considered nuclear strike on China over Taiwan in 1958

Former military analyst Ellsberg posted online the classified portion of a top-secret document on the crisis that had been partially declassified in 1975

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Washington, May 23:** US military planners pushed for nuclear strikes on mainland China in 1958 to protect Taiwan from an invasion by Communist forces, classified documents posted online by Daniel Ellsberg of "Pentagon Papers" fame show.

US planners also assumed that the Soviet Union would aid China and retaliate with nuclear weapons – a price they deemed worth paying to protect Taiwan, according to the document, first reported by the New York Times.

Former military analyst Ellsberg posted online the classified portion of a top-secret document on the crisis that had been only partially declassified in 1975.

Ellsberg, now 90, is famous for his 1971 leak to US media of a top-secret Pentagon study on the Vietnam War known as the Pentagon Papers.

Ellsberg told the Times that he copied the top-secret Taiwan crisis study in the early 1970s, and is releasing it as tensions mount between the United States and China over Taiwan.

Had an invasion taken place, General Nathan Twining, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, "made it clear that the United States would have used nuclear weapons against Chinese air bases to prevent a successful air interdiction campaign," the document's authors wrote.

If this did not stop an invasion, then there was "no alternative but to conduct nuclear strikes deep into



China as far north as Shanghai," the document said, paraphrasing Twining.

In the event, US President Dwight D Eisenhower decided to rely initially on conventional weapons. The 1958 crisis ended when Communist forces halted artillery strikes on islands controlled by Taiwan, leaving the area under the control of Nationalist

forces under Chiang Kai-shek.

China considers Taiwan to be a rebel province that will one day return to the mainland's fold, by force if necessary.

Washington has recognised Beijing since 1979, but maintains relations with Taipei and is its most important military ally.

### Tensions remain high

In recent months the Chinese air force has increased incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone. The United States also frequently conducts what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations in the flash-point Taiwan Strait waterway.

US President Joe Biden is expected to announce his strategy toward China soon, and calls are growing for him to make a clear public commitment to defend Taiwan militarily. A US law requires Washington to help the island defend itself in the event of a conflict, but the United States has pursued a policy of "strategic ambiguity" for decades, refraining from clearly stating what circumstances would lead it to intervene militarily on Taiwan's behalf.



# leisure



## FRIENDS: THE REUNION TO STREAM IN INDIA TOO

The much-awaited *Friends: The Reunion*, which is set to drop May 27, in the US, has been confirmed for streaming in India, too. The one-hour special episode debuts on HBO Max in the US, marking the one-year anniversary of the platform. In India, the special will drop on Zee5.

## MATT SMITH DATING MILLIE BRADY'S SISTER

Actor Matt Smith is reportedly in a relationship with Caroline Brady, an investment banker. Caroline is actress Millie Brady's sister. A source was quoted in *The Mail On Sunday's* *Talk Of The Town* column as saying: "Last month, Millie's friends were saying excitedly that her sister is seeing Matt Smith."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you may set out to please your beloved, and maybe even woo him/her all over again. There may be a bit of dissatisfaction regarding friends and relatives, but you can look forward to partying and new friendships this evening, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Today, Ganesh sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting.

**GEMINI**  
If you have children, they will be a pampered lot today, says Ganesh. Your affection, however, may not have its desired impact. Children are known to be unpredictable, but keep an eye on their activities, especially today. You may entertain your loved ones with a sumptuous dinner tonight.

**CANCER**  
At work, your ability to forge great partnerships will see to the success of one of your ambitious projects. However, you need to be careful before signing the contract. It's always important to go through the finer details of a deal before closing it.

**LEO**  
Friendships are supposed to last forever. But it all depends on whether or not the friend is around when most needed. Today, your pals may turn to you for help, and sure enough, you will be there to extend all the support you can, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Achievement and accomplishment will be the highlights of the day, notes Ganesh. You will be recognised for your devotion to work and determination to succeed at your workplace. Much awaited promotions may come and financial arrears may also reach your hands.

**LIBRA**  
Call it two sides of the same coin, but today, you shall have the uncanny desire to be your own master and servant. But this day is all set to be animated and eventful and full of life.

**SCORPIO**  
You go on a shopping spree and that too with your beloved. This may be quite therapeutic for you for your relationship. You may be just happy to use your bargaining skills to the optimum. Spending lavishly, first on shopping and then on sumptuous dinner to treat your taste buds. What more one wants in life!

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Someone from the opposite sex is likely to get attracted towards you. Enjoy being in the lime-light. Today, your main activity becomes hanging around with friends and cherishing their company.

**CAPRICORN**  
Pain and fun, both are the two sides of a coin and today, you will experience both of them in equal amount. You may have to slog yourself to earn money, but be careful and don't drain yourself out, advises Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will receive some good news today. Whatever has been in the pipe line may come out in the open and you'll see the desired output, feels Ganesh. Courageous and patient, you can deal with the toughest of challenges with an ease and Ganesh gives a pat on your back for that.

**PISCES**  
A day filled with socialising awaits you, says Ganesh. You will likely make contact with near and dear ones you haven't met in a while. New associations and friendships could also occur. It is a pleasant and joyous day, so make the most of it.

## Sonakshi asks fans to 'hang in there'

**Mumbai:** Actress Sonakshi Sinha motivated her fans to not give up through a post on Instagram Sunday.

The actress looked stunning in a picture that she posted of herself wearing a black ensemble. She teamed this up with open hair. She wrote about how she was checking in on her fans and encouraged them to 'hang in there'.

"Just checking in... you got this, hang in there," she posted.

Meanwhile, the actor had also taken to Instagram a few days back to inform her fans that she had received a jab against Covid-19.

On the work front, Sonakshi will be seen in *Bulbul Tarang*, which will have a digital release.

She also has the film *Bhuj: The Pride Of India* lined up where she will be seen alongside actors Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi.

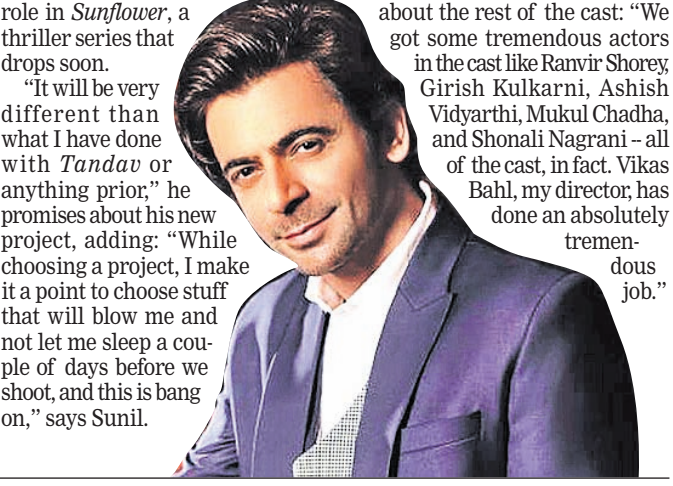


## Sunil sheds 8 kilos for Sunflower

**Mumbai:** Actor Sunil Grover shed almost 8.1 kilos for his role in *Sunflower*, a thriller series that drops soon.

"It will be very different than what I have done with *Tandav* or anything prior," he promises about his new project, adding: "While choosing a project, I make it a point to choose stuff that will blow me and not let me sleep a couple of days before we shoot, and this is bang on," says Sunil.

Describing his character Sonu as 'exciting', the *Bharat* actor said about the rest of the cast: "We got some tremendous actors in the cast like Ramvir Shorey, Girish Kulkarni, Ashish Vidyarthi, Mukul Chadha, and Shonali Nagrani - all of the cast, in fact. Vikas Bahl, my director, has done an absolutely tremendous job."



## Piya wants to play her age

**Mumbai:** Actress Piya Valecha, who has been seen in shows such as *Bahu Hamari Rajni Kant* and *Dilli Wali Thakur Gurls*, says she would love to return to work, but is looking for characters that suit her age.

She says that actors are often typecast on the small screen and she wants to be very particular of the

roles she takes up. "I do not wish to play roles that require me to age on screen. I want to play characters who are as old as me. I understand that as an actor, all roles can be challenging. But in our TV industry, there exists a culture of typecasting. So, if once I age on screen, then it will be difficult to get roles of my actual age," she says.



### MAKING THE MOST OF LOCKDOWN

## Keep kids engaged with virtual activities



Online projects not only develop new interest in a meaningful way in kids, they also keep their growth and learning on course, say experts.

**Vedic Math by Q75signatures**  
This camp will make it easier for children to solve simple numeric problems such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. It will gear the kids for fast calculations and help them overcome their phobia of numbers. Vedic Math reduces the burden of memorising to a great extent.

With the second wave of Covid-19 infection gripping the country, children continue to be restricted to their homes. Deprived of the usual exposure so crucial to childhood and growing up, it is imperative to enable substitute activities that help them socialise and learn valuable life skills. Here are some activities a child can participate this summer:

**Reading for Life Prog by the British Council**  
Reading for Life programme brings a completely new collection of books and workshops that will challenge children to read at least one book per week from their curated online collection of e-books, audiobooks and comics. This programme will promote the love for reading among children and strengthen their reading and listening skills and help them grow as motivated and confident readers.

**British Council's Online Summer School 2021**  
Summer School at the British Council is a unique two-week online course where children can improve their language, communication, and critical thinking skills to prepare them for future challenges. This is an exciting opportunity to learn about and celebrate the diversity of Indian culture.

**Codathon by EMPLIHI**  
This online course covers computer programming, 3D modelling, mobile and web app development. The course mainly addresses the STEM learning needs of children from the age of nine onwards. Children are introduced to the magic of STEM and will be able to sustain the excitement through successive course modules.

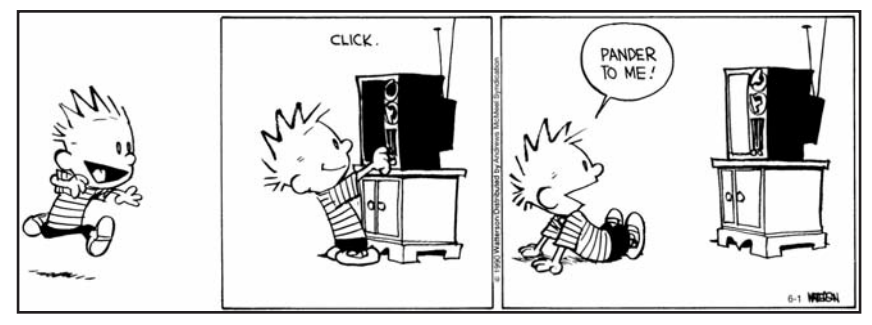
**Astro Space Camp by SSERD**  
If a child is interested in Aeronautics, Space Technology, Astronomy, Astrophysics, Astronautics, and things related to Space, Science, and Technology, then this is a to-do camp. This camp will help elevate and foster new attributes in young minds like creativity and critical thinking through an innovative and exciting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) model.



### PEANUTS



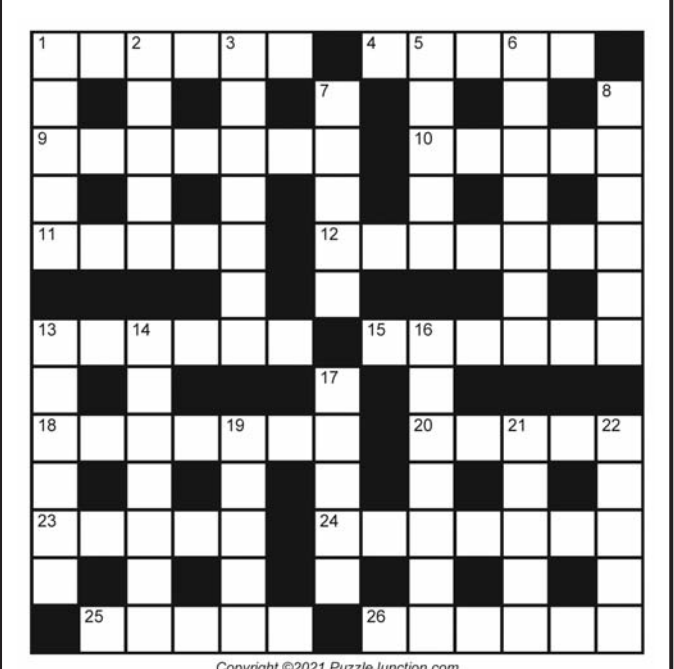
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



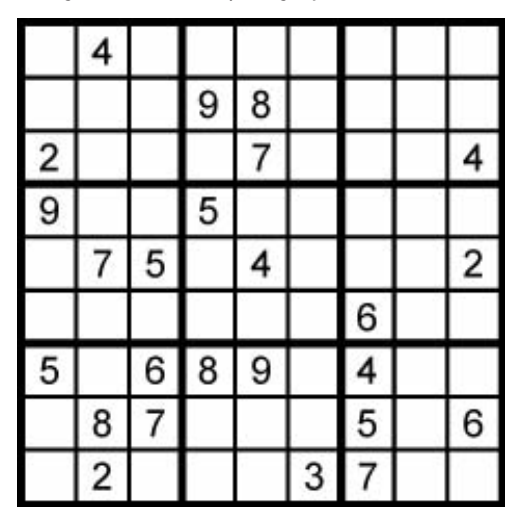
### FUN post CROSSWORD



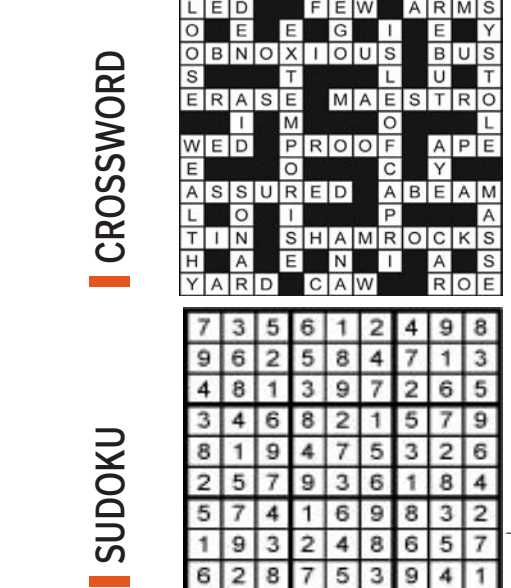
- Across**
- 1 Drop the ball
  - 4 Trondheim, for one
  - 9 Llama relatives
  - 10 Apian Way locale
  - 11 Part of an act
  - 12 Turkish dynasty
  - 13 Fencing move
  - 15 Kind of beetle
  - 18 Zinfandel, e.g. (3,4)
  - 20 Fiends
  - 23 Hawaiian veranda
  - 24 It's used to prying
  - 25 "All kidding ..."
  - 26 Princess loved by Cupid
  - 5 Floor support
  - 6 Driver's aid (4,3)
  - 7 Fancy tie
  - 8 Young swan
  - 13 Tickle pink
  - 14 Marmots and jerboas
  - 16 Passionate
  - 17 Instruct
  - 19 Trojan War epic
  - 21 Renaissance fiddle
  - 22 Tennis starter

### 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



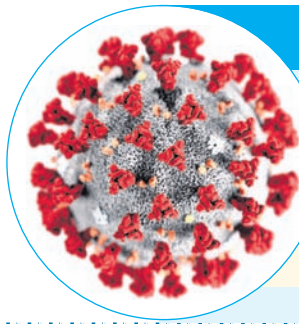
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW





**SAFETY FIRST**

Fishermen rerun ashore in Puri as part of the preparedness to deal with cyclone Yaas



**COVID-19 TRACKER**

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,73,20,476	14,83,21,597	34,73,951
India	2,65,30,132	2,34,25,467	2,99,266
Odisha	6,92,382	5,89,610	2,484

**CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS**

**Ensure timely evacuation of vulnerable: Jena**



Fire brigade personnel readying equipment in Bhubaneswar to face cyclone Yaas

**Cuttack admin rolls up sleeves to face 'Yaas'**

**Cuttack:** Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani Sunday reviewed the preparedness of the Cuttack district administration to deal with cyclonic storm 'Yaas'.

Holding the review meeting in virtual mode, the collector asked officials to take all possible steps to protect the vulnerable people.

The administration has made all arrangements to evacuate vulnerable people to 25 cyclone shelters and 103 school buildings to save precious lives. The collector asked officials to conduct Covid tests on people before evacuating them to the shelter houses.

He asked officials to arrange food, drinking water and other basic facilities at the cyclone shelters. The collector put emphasis on

the protection of pregnant women, children, elderly people and differently-abled people during the natural calamity. He asked various departments to work in proper coordination to manage the situation.

Participating in the meeting, senior officials informed the collector that the administration has adequate stocks of essential drugs, food and power generators to meet the eventuality.

The officials claimed that they have electric cutters, boats and other equipment to carry out the rescue and rehabilitation work.

The collector asked the officials to create awareness among the people to follow the Covid-19 protocols at the cyclone centres.

**READY TO FACE THE CALAMITY**



Drains being cleared at Laxmisagar in Bhubaneswar to avoid waterlogging during the cyclonic storm

**Mishra for steady power supply to hospitals**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra Sunday asked the officials of the department to make all arrangements to face impending cyclone Yaas.

The minister put emphasis on steady power supply to hospitals and oxygen plants during the cyclone and its immediate aftermath. He asked the officials to arrange adequate manpower and equipment to restore power supply in the aftermath of the cyclone.

Mishra stressed on the use of equipment like pole master, crane, power saw and hydraulic trolley in the restoration work. He advocated for minimum use of manpower to check the spread of Covid-19.

"Equipment should be stationed at strategic positions to carry out the restoration work," said the minister.

He also directed the CEOs of DISCOMs and OPTCL to position adequate stocks of materials at tactical points for prompt mobilisation of the same for the restoration work.



"Full-proof preparedness must be made at all levels of the DISCOMs and OPTCL. The leaves of employees and officials can be canceled to meet the situation," the minister said.

The minister asked officials to ensure safety of the employees during the restoration work. There must not be any casualty during the restoration work, the minister said.

"Establishments that provide essential services must not face power disruption. The officials can take the local public representatives in to confidence and seek their support during post-cyclone crisis management," he added.

Energy department principal secretary Nikunja Bihari Dhal was present in the meeting.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, and Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena Sunday directed officials to identify and motivate the vulnerable households and ensure their timely evacuation ahead of cyclone 'Yaas' that is expected to make a landfall on the eastern coast May 26.

While reviewing the cyclone preparedness of the departments through videoconference, Jena asked the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayati Raj institutions to have alternative shelters and evacuation plans along with provision of adequate food stuff for the affected.

The Minister directed the municipal commissioners and executive officers to remain alert so as to mitigate the effects of the tropical cyclone as well as subsequent heavy rain-induced flood-like situation.

The Minister directed the officials to ensure that supply of power and drinking water are not affected in the ULBs, especially in 56 ULBs including Cuttack Municipal Corporation and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation of 12 coastal districts. This apart, special care to elderly, differently-abled, children, pregnant as well as lactating mothers in the localities are also to be ensured, Jena asked the officials.

"Power generator sets are needed to be kept ready for street lighting and water supply during power failures," Jena said.

He directed the officials to keep shelter-level equipment like lights and DG sets ready apart from ensuring round-the-clock functioning of control rooms.

Jena emphasised road clearance

THE H&UD MINISTER DIRECTED THE OFFICIALS TO ENSURE SUPPLY OF POWER AND DRINKING WATER ARE NOT AFFECTED IN THE ULBs

SPECIAL CARE TO ELDERLY, DIFFERENTLY-ABLED, CHILDREN, PREGNANT AS WELL AS LACTATING MOTHERS IN THE LOCALITIES ARE ALSO TO BE ENSURED

OFFICIALS WERE ASKED TO KEEP SHELTER-LEVEL EQUIPMENT LIKE LIGHTS AND DG SETS READY APART FROM ENSURING ROUND-THE-CLOCK FUNCTIONING OF CONTROL ROOMS

JENA EMPHASISED ROAD CLEARANCE AND DEWATERING OF LOW-LYING AREAS THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE CYCLONE

and dewatering of low-lying areas likely to be affected by the cyclone. "Make sure that tree cutters with skilled men, high capacity diesel pump sets, water tankers and other equipment reach the areas in time," Jena said, asking the officials to en-

sure Covid protocols are complied with during the rescue and rehabilitation operations.

Issues like road clearance, storage of foodstuff and dry ration were also prioritised in the review meeting.



ODRAF personnel getting ready in Cuttack to deal with the cyclone

**Planning board by chief reviews situation in Puri**

**Puri:** Deputy Chairman of State Planning Board, Sanjay Das Burma, Sunday reviewed preparedness of Puri district administration to face impending cyclonic storm 'Yaas'.

Das Burma put emphasis on proper planning to manage the natural calamity and ensure zero casualty in the district. The cyclonic storm is expected to cross the Odisha and West Bengal coasts May 26, sources said.

The planning board deputy chief asked the officials concerned to maintain high alert at all paddy procurement centres in Puri. He also asked the officials to suspend paddy procurement from May 24 to May 28 and arrange adequate polythene sheets for the safe storage of paddy.

Das Burma put emphasis on proper awareness among the farmers to protect their harvested paddy from the cyclonic storm. He asked the officials of Fisheries department to disseminate in-



formation on the cyclonic storm to fishermen and advise them not to venture into the sea and Chilika lake for next few days.

Das Burma directed the officials to take all possible steps to avoid any damage to the fishing boats in Chilika and other places. He also emphasised on proper infrastructure at all cyclone shelters in Puri district.

Participating in the meeting, Collector Samarth Verma claimed

DAS BURMA PUT EMPHASIS ON PROPER AWARENESS AMONG THE FARMERS TO PROTECT THEIR HARVESTED PADDY FROM THE CYCLONIC STORM

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF STATE PLANNING BOARD DIRECTED THE OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO AVOID ANY DAMAGE TO THE FISHING BOATS IN CHILIKA AND OTHER PLACES

government departments including police, fire brigade, health and water supply have been put on high alert to face the situation.

Among others, Puri additional collector Pradip Kumar Sahu, district emergency officer Jitendra Kumar Patra, district agriculture officer Anil Kumar Dash and district civil supply officer Amarendra Mahapatra were present in the meeting.

**POLITICKLE by MANJUL**



**8 shops gutted in fire mishap**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** As many as eight fruit and vegetable shops were gutted in a major fire at Pokhariput under Airfield police limits in the city here.

However, no casualties have been reported in the accident.

According to sources, one of the shops in the vending zones suddenly caught fire when some locals and vendors were busy in cooking for a feast Sunday morning.

The fire soon engulfed other shops in the vending zone. The fire services personnel

along with two fire tenders rushed to the spot after getting information at around 11am.

The officials took around 2 hours to douse the flames completely.

Sources claimed that properties worth over lakhs were destroyed in the mishap.

**Utkal Hosp conducts rare knee surgery**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** A team of orthopaedic doctors and others at Utkal Hospital, specialising in sports injuries and rehabilitation, performed a rare knee dislocation surgery.

The 18-year-old male patient from Puri was of short stature and had been suffering from dislocation of his knee bone for the last five years. Dr Dibya Singh, orthopaedic surgeon at Utkal Hospital and his team performed the surgery successfully.

"The patient came to us in a stressful condition where his knee bone was found to be dislocated. We conducted the MRI scanning and other tests and came to know that the ligament supporting his knee bone and the areas around the bone needed some reconstructing and interventions," said Dr Singh.

According to the medical team, implantation of graft and some surgeries in the knee area were done to handle the ligament tear and other issues which were creating hurdles for the knee bone of the patient.

The hospital said that the surgeries were done through minimal invasive techniques. The patient was able to walk with support from the next day and his knee bending abilities improved manifolds after the surgery.

**NO COVID VACCINATION IN BALASORE TODAY**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** The State Health department Sunday said that there would be no Covid-19 vaccination drive in Balasore which is now under the looming threat of cyclone Yaas in the days to come. The district administration is busy preparing the area to face the natural disaster.

The State Health department Sunday was able to vaccinate only a total of 13,806 persons through 39 active sites out of which three were sites where Covaxin was given. Meanwhile, the total vaccination coverage in the state crossed 70,000 Sunday with the total persons inoculated till now touching 70,20,353. Sunday the highest vaccination was given to people above 45 years where a total of 8321 persons in the segment received their first dose of the vaccine.

Meanwhile, a total of 5231 persons between 18 years to 44 years got their first dose of the vaccination Sunday. The department meanwhile has planned 799 sessions for vaccination Monday. The department said that till Sunday evening it was left with a total of 2,33,830 doses of Covishield and 3,37,560 doses of Covaxin, procured from the Union government for inocu-



lating persons against Covid-19.

The department meanwhile Sunday had planned sessions only in Balasore, Puri, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Sundargarh.

The government said that out of the 3,34,929 registered health care workers, a total of 3,28,426 (98 percent) health care workers have received their first dose of their vaccination. It also said that while earlier a total of 2,24,220 persons were identified to be vaccinated, a total of 2,77,285 persons identified as frontline workers received their first dose of the vaccination.

The department also said that

The H&FW department said that while earlier a total of 2,24,220 persons were identified for inoculation, a total of 2,77,285 frontline workers received their first dose

while not a single person in the age group of 18 years to 44 years received their second dose till now, the total numbers of persons who received their first dose in the group stood at 2,99,232.



# Covid positivity rate constant: Govt

# BMC to continue feeding stray animals in lockdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** The state Health department Sunday said that the positivity rate of Covid-19 in Odisha remained stagnant and there had been no major hike of the same in the past few days.

Health Services Director Bijay Mohapatra said that the state government had recently increased the intensity of testing for the pandemic which had pushed the number of cases in the coastal state. The government official also tried to allay fear among the people on the issue.

He said, "Covid cases seem to be rising as we are conducting more tests these days. The Odisha government has now increased the number of testing everyday done to screen Covid positive persons from the coastal state. On Sunday, the positivity rate was 20. It was 19 Saturday."

He added, "It has been around that level now. The number of cases is proportional to the hiked number of testing done in the state. The positivity rate in the state has not increased and it has been more or less stagnant. We are hopeful



that we are going now in a stagnant phase."

The health official also said that the state government has prepared adequate health infrastructure and mobilised persons to ensure tackling Covid-19 cases and also the threat of cyclone Yaas in the

coming few days.

"As Bhubaneswar and Cuttack often see more migration of people it has seen a rise in positivity rate. We are also working in line with the government orders to ensure that we can tackle the Covid issues during the threat of cyclone Yaas," he

**As Bhubaneswar and Cuttack often see more migration of people, they saw a rise in positivity rate. We are, meanwhile, working in line with government orders so as to tackle the Covid issues during the threat of cyclone Yaas**

**BIJAY MOHAPATRA | DIRECTOR, STATE HEALTH SERVICES**

said.

The state Health department has also issued advisories to the district Collectors so as to ensure testing of persons whom they plan to shift to shelter houses or other places during cyclone Yaas.

It has also asked the district administrations to mobilise the ambulance services, Rapid Response Teams and other emergency health service providers during the cyclone. Special instructions have been given to the district administrations to ensure Covid-19 appropriate protocols in evacuation and rehabilitation of the people.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** With the state government extending lockdown till May 31, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Sunday, stated that it will continue feeding stray animals, including street dogs and bulls, during this period.

The civic authority here, which had been earlier involved in feeding stray animals during lockdown periods, stated that it will extend its initiative until complete normalcy is restored. It can be mentioned that the stray animals which are largely dependent on waste food from restaurants, hotels, meat shops and vegetable and fruit markets have been hit hard after lockdown imposed restrictions on all commercial activities.

"Under the feeding initiative, 7.5 quintal of cooked food is prepared daily at the Saheed Nagar Veterinary Clinic campus for distribution in the morning and afternoon hours, 3 quintal of cattle feed is distributed among the stray



bulls and cows across the city," a BMC official said.

"The canine food is prepared under the supervision of the veterinary experts at Saheed Nagar facility. While 5 quintal food is distributed between 8am to 10am in the morning, rest is given between 4pm and 6pm. The cooked food for dogs has ingredients like rice, dal and chicken pieces," he added.

Moreover, in a bid to make the food distribution process participatory and people-centric, the BMC has also engaged organisations involved in the field of animal welfare. As the food distribution for animals is zone-based, the civic authority has deployed 'People for Animal' in South East Zone, 'Alap'

in North Zone and 'Rehabitat Foundation' in South West Zone respectively.

While the food quality for stray animals is checked by the experts at the Sub-Divisional Veterinary Office of the Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Department, BMC provides logistics for the transportation of the cooked food and cattle feed to the various zones concerned.

However, it is learnt that while the stray animals in the residential zones are fed by the people, those roaming around markets and other public places are now facing a difficult time due to the lockdown. While the move to extend the feeding of stray animals was welcomed by many, a few were of the opinion that people should take individual responsibility in order to help the strays.

It can be mentioned that the civic authority had begun the process of feeding stray animals after the state government in a letter had instructed all Urban Local Bodies to provide food for the animals.

# Activists seek protection of tribals from Covid-19

**IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION WAS DEMANDED TO STOP SPREAD OF COVID AMONG DONGRIAS IN NIYAMGIRI AND BONDAS IN MALKANGIRI**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** In the matter of immediate intervention into the issue of spread of Covid among Dongrias in Niyamgiri and Bondas in Malkangiri, several social activists wrote letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik suggesting steps to be taken to protect the Dongria and Bonda communities from becoming victims of Covid pandemic.

In the letter the activists said, "It is with great concern we write to you about the recent surge of Covid cases amongst the Dongria Kandha and Bonda communities in Odisha. These two tribal communities are very vulnerable to being affected by the spread of the Covid virus."

Lingaraj Azad, social activist and member of Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti said home quarantine as a Covid protocol being suggested by the government in other places will not work within Adivasi communities because of different

ideas about privacy and isolation in Adivasi cultures. Home quarantine within Adivasi areas is not the right way to contain the spread of the virus or in breaking the chain of pandemic.

The government should take special and adequate community measures to protect the life of Dongria and Bonda communities from becoming victims of Covid pandemic. They suggested that the government should run different quarantine centres exclusively for Adivasi people and have separate centres for suspected and confirmed Covid cases funded by the public exchequer near (within 2 kms) Dongria and Bonda settlements/villages.

Also in order to create greater acceptability for testing, saline swab and gargle method of testing should be used which has the same efficacy as naso/oropharyngeal swab testing.

The testing must happen regularly, preferably scheduled twice every week for the Dongria and

Bonda people using the saline swab and gargle method.

They also suggested door to door surveys must be done by a team of trained local volunteers from villages for regular monitoring of symptoms and reporting to quarantine centres for any suspected cases.

All the Dongria and Bonda families must be provided with a special livelihood relief package as compensation for their agriculture and minor forest produce (MFP) which they cannot sell in the haats/local markets which are non-functional due to prolonged shutdown/lockdown. All the residents of the entire area should be distributed adequate 3 layered masks with PPE kits, necessary medicines and vitamins for and as safety precautions.

All PHCs located in Adivasi areas should be upgraded on a war footing and equipped with sufficient medical equipment, medicines, manpower and necessary infrastructure.

Prafulla Samantara, social activist and environmentalist said that we hope the Odisha Government will consider these proposals in the best of spirits and perspective. We urge the Government to immediately take urgent steps to protect the life of Dongria and Bonda people who are in more vulnerable situation to being adversely affected by contact from outsiders in their areas.



Unit-II market in Bhubaneswar



Kalinga Stadium road in Bhubaneswar

## FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS

Markets, roads and traffic junctions in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack wear a deserted look due to the weekend shutdown, Sunday



Cantonment road in Cuttack



Bapuji Nagar in Capital

# Rise in illegal firearms trade in twin city

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** The twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar have gradually turned into a thriving market for illegal firearms. The recent seizure of firearms in the City and its adjoining areas indicates towards the fact that the criminals engaged in the illegal trade in firearms have no fear of police.

The arms dealers have been moving freely in the twin city despite the heavy deployment of police forces at important checkpoints in

the city. They are using fake ID cards to dodge police on vigil at the check points. The Special Task Force (STF) of state Crime Branch Saturday arrested a history-sheeter and seized firearms in his possession at Acharya Vihar here.

Similarly, three criminals with firearms were arrested during lockdown checking in Nayapalli area Tuesday. The STF sleuths had also arrested two criminals from Niali area in Cuttack district and seized eight illegal firearms including two sophisticated guns from their possession April 9.

According to available data, around 1000 criminals engaged in firearms trade have been arrested by the Commissionerate Police during the last 15 years. There were 36 cases related to seizure of illegal firearms reported in 2007 while the number of similar cases rose to 128 in 2016. 149 cases each were registered in both 2014 and 2015 years involving illegal firearm seizure. The registration of such cases started declining after 2016.

Sources claimed the major reason behind the decline was the special drive 'Black Smoke' launched

by Commissionerate Police under its Quick Action Team (QAT) in 2014. However, the QAT had seized 93 firearms and 249 live ammunitions during 2014. In 2015, 63 fire arms and 162 live ammunitions had been seized by the QAT. The cops managed to seize 89 firearms and 212 ammunitions during 2016 under Black Smoke.

The QAT got embroiled in various controversies and has turned inactive since long. The twin city recently witnessed a significant rise in the illegal trade of arms during the last couple of years.

# ODISHA SENDS 20,007 MT OXYGEN TO NEEDY STATES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 23:** Odisha has sent 1,091 tankers with 20,007.336 MT of medical oxygen under strict supervision of the state police to at least 15 states facing acute shortage of the life-saving gas over the last 31 days, an official said Sunday.

As many as 100 tankers were dispatched from Angul with 1611.582 MT of oxygen. 265 tankers from Dhenkanal with 4269.5 MT of the life-saving gas, 252 containers from Jajpur with 5166.327 MT of the gas and 474 tankers from Rourkela with 8959.927 MT of the medical grade oxygen, according to data shared by the Odisha Police headquarters here.

While 340 tankers with 6693.074 MT of oxygen have so far been sent to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana received 4744.049 MT of oxygen sent through 278 tankers.



Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, received 78 tankers filled with 1382.667 MT of medical oxygen. Haryana has received 149 tankers filled with 2753.233 MT of oxygen.

As many as 41 tankers with 660.051 MT of oxygen have so far been sent to Maharashtra. Similarly, 598.35 MT of oxygen filled in 37 tankers have been dispatched to Chhattisgarh. While 58 tankers carried 1154.892 MT of oxygen to Uttar Pradesh, 65 tankers with 1147.76 MT of oxygen have been sent to Madhya Pradesh.

As many as 22 tankers with 410.24 MT of oxygen have been sent to Delhi, an official pointed out.

# Awareness on biodiversity should reach all: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** A national webinar on the theme 'We're part of the Solution #For Nature' was organised jointly by the Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput and Indian Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Dehradun on the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity-2021 Saturday.

CUO Vice-Chancellor I Ramabrahman inaugurated the webinar and urged people to protect the nature and give a healthy environment to all living organisms. He opined that awareness on the importance of biodiversity needs to reach all sections of the society.

Speaking on the theme 'Biodiversity-the Solution for Human Survival', former professor at School of Life Sciences in Sambalpur University, N Behera, opined that biodiversity ensures sta-

bility in the ecosystem. He threw light on the exploitation of biodiversity in underdeveloped countries on the plea of achieving development.

Behera suggested that the information related to biodiversity should be converted into knowledge and then to wisdom. The spread of wisdom will protect and promote nature, he said.

"If biodiversity decimation is a crisis, it can be solved by 3'As'-attitude, action and awareness. We all should be part of the solution for nature for our survival," he added.

Principal-ESG at National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), New Delhi, Ashok Emani, emphasised on the materiality of the biodiversity in ecosystem and its application to protect ecological balance.

He said that though India is one of the 17 mega-diverse countries in the world, biodiversity and ecosystem issues are very often over-



looked in traditional materiality calculations. He gave the value of biodiversity in economic terms for the Himalayan region.

Emani highlighted the economic importance of rich biodiversity of Eastern Ghats and Deomali as well as Similipal Tiger Reserve of Odisha. He claimed that the students of biodiversity have a lot of op-

tions and he also extended his support for collaboration on biodiversity related aspects.

ICAR-Indian Institution of Soil and Water Conservation (IISWC) regional director, M Madhu, delivered the welcome address and visiting professor to CUO K Kameswar Rao delivered the concluding remarks.

Madhu elaborated on the importance of soil and water for sustaining biodiversity. He highlighted his wide range of experience and experiments in the field of biodiversity and its outcome in KBK region of Odisha. "Scientific studies on biodiversity and natural resources along with conservation awareness are vital to save the nature. It is our responsibility to protect the nature for posterity," Madhu said.

Dean of School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources at CUO, Sharat Kumar Palita, delivered the opening remarks and coordinated the programme.

In his opening remarks, Palita discussed the origin of International Day for Biological Diversity and highlighted the importance of rich floral and faunal diversity of the Eastern Ghats.

He highlighted that sustainable development is the key to conserve biodiversity.

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## HARVESTING TIME



A farmer harvesting paddy for the rabi season with a machine on his farmland in Balasore district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## 1 killed in clash over land dispute

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Padmapur, May 23:** A person who was critically wounded Tuesday last in a clash between two families over land dispute at Karanjadia village under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district, died Sunday at a hospital. The deceased was identified as Babaji Siala.

According to reports, the land dispute between the families of Rabi Siala and Gouranga Behera (a resident of the same village) took an ugly turn May 18. Babaji was attacked by Gouranga and three others for supporting Rabi. He suffered grievous injuries and was admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. However, he failed to respond to treatment and breathed his last Sunday.

Following a complaint from Rabi, Nayakanidhi police have registered a case of murder against Gouranga Behera, Debendra Behera, Laxmidhar Behera and Ghanshyam Behera. Investigating Officer Dillip Kumar Dehuri said that Laxmidhar was arrested while the three others are absconding.

## Covid curbs thrown to winds during wedding processions

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Behrampur, May 23:** When the second wave of Covid-19 is sweeping both India and Odisha, people here are giving restriction guidelines a toss, a report said.

A group of villagers were seen dancing to the tunes of blaring music played by a DJ, while taking out a marriage procession in Baranga area under Patrapur block in Ganjam district. It should be stated here that marriage processions and other rituals attracting large gatherings have been banned by the government due to rising coronavirus cases.

The incident has come to the fore after a video clip of the entire incident went viral on social media. Hundreds of people of various age groups were seen dancing to the music in close proximity with one another while escorting the groom in a procession.

It should be stated here that according to Ganjam district administration's notification only 25 people are allowed to attend



marriage functions. While the district administration and police are on their toes to enforce lockdown restrictions effectively, the breach of protocols in public domain has raised many eyebrows.

A similar procession was also reported a few days ago in the district. Two brothers as grooms were seen riding on horses while hundreds of fellow revellers danced to the music without masks.

The incident occurred at Godarpali under Hinjilicut block in the district.

On being informed, police had conducted a raid and detained three persons. The Collector has ordered a probe into the incident. The viral video is being examined.

## RI injured in attack by sand mafia

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nischintakoili, May 23:** A group of miscreants engaged in illegal sand quarrying and transportation allegedly attacked a revenue inspector (RI) under Mahanga tehsil in Cuttack district Saturday afternoon. The RI identified as Ganeswar Hembram, in his FIR alleged that he was attacked by the goons in the presence of local police at Koliatha area when he tried to prevent the smuggling of the minor mineral.

Ganeswar had received information that the miscreants were illegal quarrying sand at Gunupur area in Birupa river. A team from Mahanga tehsil led by the RI rushed the spot and seized a tractor (with-out registration number) which was transporting the sand. However, when the tractor was being taken to the local police station, its owner and his relatives attacked the team. Ganeswar sustained grievous head injuries in the attack and was immediately rushed to Mahanga CHC.

Mahanga police initiated a probe into the incident.

# People in 16 coastal panchayats lose sleep

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Basudevpur/Bhadrak, May 23:** Thousands of people living in 16 coastal panchayats under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district are spending sleepless nights as the impact of cyclonic storm Yaas looms large.

On the other hand, the administration is gearing up to tackle the natural calamity. People in these panchayats have been alerted and those in low-lying areas will soon be evacuated.

Meanwhile, the administration has thrown open 38 multi-purpose cyclone shelters and 10 Red Cross facilities in the block to accommodate people.

Doubling the problem for the administration is the Covid-19 pandemic. As Covid-19 cases have been rising rapidly in seven coastal panchayats, they have been declared containment zones.

Under such a grave situation, the administration and the people in these seven panchayats are worried over how to maintain Covid safety guidelines and social distancing while taking shelter in cyclone shelters. It has also become a tough challenge for the administration.

Problems have compounded for the administration as more than

## YAAS THREAT



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Doubling the problem for the administration is the Covid-19 pandemic. As Covid-19 cases have been rising rapidly in seven coastal panchayats, they have been declared containment zones

Under such a grave situation, the administration and the people in these seven panchayats are worried over how to maintain Covid safety guidelines and social distancing while taking shelter in cyclone shelters. It is also a tough challenge for the administration

half of the 38 cyclone shelters in these seven panchayats are in bad shape due to lack of maintenance.

Most of these shelters do not have power supply.

Locals have urged BDO Pranab Kumar Behera and the administration to work on a war footing to make the shelters fit for accommodation during the cyclonic storm.

The district administration has also stepped up its preparations in five other coastal blocks in the district. Four NDRF teams will be sent to cyclone-hit areas while over 100 light towers have been arranged.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena while reviewing the preparedness for the cyclone Sunday laid stress on uninterrupted supply of electricity and drinking water. It was also decided that people living in mud houses within a distance of three kilometres from the sea coast will be shifted to cyclone shelters.

## Suspected black fungus patient dies at MKCG

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Behrampur, May 23:** A suspected black fungus patient undergoing treatment at the Covid-19 ward of MKCG Medical College and Hospital here died Saturday night. The deceased was a 50-year-old woman admitted to the hospital in critical condition, three days back. She had a swollen face with black eyes and was not being able to speak.

Going by the symptoms, doctors suspected her to be suffering from Mucormycosis (black fungus) for which her nasal swabs were collected and sent for examination to the microbiology department.



The woman's health condition deteriorated further, forcing the doctors to shift her to the intensive care unit

However, her health condition deteriorated further, forcing the doctors to shift her to the intensive care unit of the medicine department. However, before the arrival of her report the woman breathed

her last. "The deceased was also suffering from other diseases. The exact nature of her disease can be ascertained only after her report arrives," MKCG superintendent Dr Santosh Kumar Mishra said.

## 13 fall sick in ammonia gas leak at prawn processing plant



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paradip, May 23:** Thirteen persons fell ill after inhaling ammonia gas which reportedly leaked from a prawn processing plant situated close to an ice factory at Paradip Garh Industrial Complex on the outskirts of this port town Sunday. Among those who fell ill, there were three women.

Lock police station officials and sarpanch Mihir Sahu of Paradip Garh panchayat rescued those who had fallen ill took them to the Biju Memorial hospital here for treatment. Later, the critical persons were shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack while the rest were discharged after primary treatment.

ADM Kanhu Charan Dhir and ASP Nimain Sethy and Lock police station officials reached the spot and engaged technicians and

experts from two fertiliser plants to assist in the efforts to contain the leak. The ADM also ordered the shutdown of the prawn plant with immediate effect and directed Assistant Director of Factories and Boilers, Chandrakant Dalei to conduct a probe into the gas leak.

Speaking about the mishap, Dalei said, that the incident occurred after a hose pipe burst at the Laxmi Narayan Exports Prawn Processing plant in Paradip Garh. It led to the leak of the ammonia gas.

The plant had restarted operations from May 1 after being closed for a lengthy period, informed Dalei. The people working in the plant came in contact with the gas and fell sick. Dalei informed that legal action will be taken against the errant plant owner. Efforts to contact the plant owner over phone failed as he did not respond to calls.

## MGNREGS clubbed with OLM to ease woes

EFFORTS LAUNCHED TO HELP POOR OVERCOME FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES DURING PANDEMIC IN SUNDARGARH

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sundargarh, May 23:** As pandemic-induced shutdown and lockdown have affected livelihood of daily wagers and the people in Odisha, the administration in Sundargarh district has laid stress on effective implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM). Under the rural job scheme, the daily wage (Rs 215) has been hiked by Rs 93 to Rs 308 since last year to encourage daily wagers. The extra payment of Rs 93 per head is being funded from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

It was learnt that MGNREGS has come to the rescue of the job card holders and is helping them to earn a living.

Currently, 4,614 projects under the scheme are being executed in the district. In 2020-21 fiscal, the district administration set a record by creating 1.41 crore workdays.

In the current year, the administration has set a target to create 2.20 crore workdays for job card holders. Till May 18 of this year, it has managed to create 15,38,151 workdays. Scores of women daily



WAGERS ALSO GOT THE SCOPE OF EARNING FROM RURAL JOB SCHEME PROJECTS. AS PER OFFICIAL DATA, ABOUT 49 PER CENT OF JOB CARD HOLDERS WERE WOMEN WHO BENEFITTED FROM THE MGNREGS PROGRAMME LAST YEAR.

Speaking about MGNREGS, PD (DRDA) Bhairab Singh Patel said that the district administration is laying special emphasis to ensure daily wagers earn well during the second wave of the pandemic. "We are trying to provide 100 workdays to each job card holder in the district to help them tide over the current difficulties," Patel informed.

Currently, 4,614 projects under the scheme are being executed in the district. In 2020-21 fiscal, the district administration set a record by creating 1.41 crore workdays

In the current year, the administration has set a target to create 2.20 crore workdays for job card holders. Till May 18 of this year, it has managed to create 15,38,151 workdays. Scores of women daily wagers have also got the scope of earning from rural job scheme projects

As per official data, about 49 per cent of job card holders were women who benefitted from the MGNREGS programme last year

of providing income generation to the rural people. OLM has been clubbed with MGNREGS.

Under the OLM, women are being financially empowered through various income-generating activities like poultry, goat rearing and Mo Upakari Bagicha. All such projects are being executed under the OLM scheme.

## Bahana nullah renovation awaits completion

PEOPLE IN LOW-LYING AREAS IN SILK CITY FRET OVER FLOODS AS MONSOON APPROACHES

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Behrampur, May 23:** With monsoons fast approaching, people in some low-lying areas in this town are worried. This is because the 'Bahana nullah' is choked with dirt and silt. If the situation persists, then draining out of water in the rainy season will be affected and lead to flooding of low-lying areas like Fast Gate, Aska Road, Sriramnagar, Somnathnagar, Tulasinagar, Sidharth Nagar, Gajapatnagar, Kalinganagar and Banchanidhinagar in this city.

It has been alleged that people have been dumping garbage into the nullah, leading to its clogging. 18 years ago, renovation of the nullah was started. However, till now the



Locals recalled unprecedented flood situation in Gajapatnagar following heavy rains in Oct, 2003

work has not been completed. Crores of rupees have been spent for the renovation which is being carried out by the Water Resources department.

Locals recalled the situation following heavy rains in October, 2003 during which rainwater flooded many houses. The flood situation in Gajapatnagar was unprecedented, as streets and houses re-

mained submerged under water. Thousands of people were marooned.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had taken stock of the situation and directed the administration for immediate relief and rescue operations. ODRAF teams had been deployed while help of Army personnel was sought then. Food packets were airdropped to the

hungry people. The situation remained grim for a week as motorized boats continued rescue operations in the marooned area.

There were massive encroachments along the Bahana nullah. Given such unprecedented flood situation, the government had to remove encroachments later.

The government allocated special grants for renovation of the nullah. "Eighteen years have passed since the renovation work was started, but it is nowhere near completion. An hour of heavy showers flooded a number of areas Saturday," locals lamented. They demanded that the Water Resources department should complete the renovation work before the onset of the monsoons.

## SAFETY MUST



A policeman forcing a biker to wear helmet during a mask and helmet checking drive at Kaudola Square under Koksara block in Kalahandi district, Sunday

OP PHOTO



FOCUS NATION

# ENEMY IS CLEARLY VISIBLE



Actually, the enemy is not invisible as our PM is saying; it is clearly visible in the form of hubris, complacency, and nonchalance of the ruling dispensation which prevented the ruling class from foreseeing the menace of the second wave

Pradhan Sevak, PM Modi empathised with people's excruciating pain and suffering and depicted the virus as an invisible and quick-changing enemy that was challenging the whole world. But the Congress alleged that the Central government's failures in handling the crisis are 'visible' in form of governance failure.

What is ridiculous is that if anything good happens, the government tries to take credit, celebrate pompously but attributes all its failures to the act of God or invisible enemy. Forget admitting its own failures, the government never owns any moral responsibility for any crisis or tragedy of such gargantuan proportions. The fact is Modi's ineptitude and lack of concern for the health sector made India more vulnerable to the onslaught of the virus. It has made India look despicable, an object of sympathy. If the government has no loopholes, why India gained the infamy of the second-worst affected country in the world and squandered its early successes in quelling Covid-19.

Actually, the enemy is not invisible as our PM is saying; it is clearly visible in the form of hubris, complacency, and nonchalance of the ruling dispensation, which prevented the ruling class from foreseeing the menace of the second wave. Excessive

complacency and rapacity for power made the ruling dispensation at the Centre declare and celebrate premature victory over the pandemic. India's leaders let down their guard despite a warning from a forum of scientific advisers in early March 2021 about a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus emerging in the country. Even until April, the government's Covid-19 taskforce had not met in months and the government did not take sturdy steps to stop the spread of the virus. The situation appeared like Covid never hit India or will not hit the country again. The entire government machinery went on speaking V-shaped recovery and took credit that the Indian economy is improving faster than expected. The ruling BJP remained engrossed with spreading political suzerainty by winning more elections, organising more election rallies, roadshows, allowing Kumbha Mela unfettered for political mileage that spurred the virus to make inroads throughout the country with greater intensity.

In an article in Time magazine, journalist Rana Ayyub said that the second wave of the pandemic in India is like "nothing she has ever seen" and the responsibility for it lies primarily with a strongman regime that has ignored all caution. Writing for the Washington Post, Professor

Sumit Ganguly opined that the Modi government abandoned caution and, in a series of stunningly reckless decisions, invited the second wave that is now crushing the country. An article in Financial Times says, "India's Covid-19 crisis diminished Narendra Modi. Many Indians feel abandoned by a leader who ignored signs of a second wave and appears indifferent to their plight." The Guardian said, "The system has collapsed: India's descent into Covid hell."

What is surprising is that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat minced no words in accusing the Modi government of negligence. He could not offer any credible defence with the crumbling healthcare system. Some other RSS members feel India is in a state of utter helplessness.

Actually, India is now a failed state. The first priority of any government was to vaccinate people as quick as possible. But India is trailing other countries in the percentage of the population that has been vaccinated against Covid-19. What is distressing is that instead of vaccinating its own people, vaccines were exported as part of vaccine diplomacy and to enhance Modi's image at the cost of the people in the country. Indian representative at the UNO is found to be saying the country at the time had exported more vaccines to 70 other countries than it had used for its own population.

Another responsibility of the government is to spend more especially on health infrastructure and transfer money to people's pockets. According to an APU survey, globally, Covid relief cash transfers have amounted to 32 per cent of monthly per capita GDP. But India's total transfer of Rs 1,500 amounted to a mere 12 per cent of the month's GDP per capita which is approximately Rs 13,000. There is no enhancement on health expenditure. The government should remember that a nation cannot prosper by hiding its failures or by comparing its abysmal performance with the worst performance of any previous regimes or that of any nation.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

EXCESSIVE COMPLACENCY AND RAPACITY FOR POWER MADE THE RULING DISPENSATION AT THE CENTRE DECLARE AND CELEBRATE PREMATURE VICTORY OVER THE PANDEMIC

The cataclysmic second wave of the pandemic in India has triggered global concerns about the horrifying human tragedy unfolding across the country that has decimated the lives and livelihoods of many people. The death toll is continuously rising alarmingly and has sparked a sense of consternation, trepidation, and dystopian nightmare. The situation is graver as India may have undercounted deaths by at least 4.3 lakh as per a new analysis from the University of Washington Institute.

The medical response to quell and tame the virus is encumbered by our dilapidated health infrastructure, inefficiency, dysfunction, and acute shortage of healthcare delivery systems. The world is fabled on the shocking images and heartrending, poignant stories of hopelessness flowing out of India - people struggling to find hospital beds, dying on pavements, in ambulance from scarcity of oxygen or not being able to procure life-saving drugs.

The melancholy image of the flames rising from the mass funerals in cremation grounds, queues in graveyards and crematoriums are found on the front pages of national and international newspapers. What is reprehensible is that there was no dignity in death for some Covid patients who succumbed to the infection. Unattended for several days, thousands of bodies have been found, some either floating in Ganga and Yamuna or buried along their banks, in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

All major foreign newspapers and TV channels have unanimously made scathing criticism on the Modi government's gross carelessness and utter ineptitude in ignoring warnings, holding an extended election in West Bengal, and not cancelling the Kumbh Mela. On 12 May 2021, a World Health Organisation (WHO) panel said the world could have prevented the catastrophe. It linked the surge in coronavirus cases in India to religious and political gatherings. Top journal, The Lancet, called it a 'self-inflicted catastrophe'.

As part of damage control exercise, describing himself as

## Piate

Tathagata Satpathy

## Vaccine Mess

Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to blame states and government officials for the Centre's utter failure to provide vaccines for people against COVID-19. While the states have been left in the lurch, whether it be procurement of vaccines or oxygen and medicines for citizens, the pandemic is tightening its grip on the country. The history of the Modi government has always been to deflect blame in matters of policy and welfare. In the case of vaccines, the missteps have been very evident and clear. India has always had a precedence of the Centre sourcing and providing vaccines for citizens. This has been the case for Polio, Small Pox and all other vaccines that are administered on a regular and continuous basis. There have never been any major hurdles in disbursement and distribution to various states in this tried and tested method. This is probably the first time the process has been altered and a completely new method is being tried, that too during the biggest pandemic the world has seen in recent times. The new method is putting the responsibility of procurement and distribution of vaccines squarely in the hands of the state governments. The major issue with this process is that state governments do not have the resources or the clout to outbid other countries and each other to snag vaccine deals from major producers. At a time when countries, including India, are failing to sign deals in the race to vaccinate their populace at the earliest, expecting state governments to participate and win in the international level tug of war is not only impractical, it is outright cruel. In the process, the Centre has completely abdicated its responsibilities and left the citizens helpless and to fend for themselves in one of the most critical times. A pointed example of the helplessness of the states can be taken from Punjab, which is buckling under the pressures of the second wave, like most other states. The Punjab government has stated that it had independently reached out to various vaccine manufacturers including Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, Sputnik V and Moderna. Out of these, only Moderna responded, refusing to provide vaccines directly to Punjab, saying according to its official policy, it will only deal with the Government of India. Most other manufacturers would probably have similar policies. It may be noted that Punjab has been forced to stop vaccination due to non-availability of vaccines.

At such a juncture, the Prime Minister has been making video conferences with district magistrates to issue sermons to them to ensure, among other things, there is no wastage of vaccines. This is presuming as if there is enough availability of vaccines and the state administration is failing to plug wastage. Nothing can be further from the truth. The government has no answer to the barrage of criticism from the judiciary, several states and international media.

Whatever falsehood the BJP-led government at the Centre has been relying on to save its skin fell flat with the damning disclosure on May 21 by the executive director of the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), Suresh Yadav, producing the high in demand Covishield vaccines in India. Yadav squarely blamed the Centre for the country's vaccine shortage. He claimed the government did not take into account the available stock of vaccines and ignored World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines while rolling out inoculation phases. Initially, 300 million people were to be administered the vaccine for which 600 million doses were required. But, before the target could be reached, the government opened vaccination for all above 45 years, quickly followed by those aged 18 plus despite knowing very well that the required number of vaccine doses would not be available. A good example of successful vaccine rollout can be seen in many European nations. Take for example the UK. England has recently opened the window for 34 and 35 year olds to get their jobs, which is calculated to be about a million plus people. India, on the other hand, has already declared vaccines for all above the age of 18. The announcement has been made by the Central government and not by states. This has resulted in a huge rush for vaccines, bottlenecks created at every level, jamming of ill functioning websites needed to book slots and basically resulted in chaos. This shows the utter carelessness and miscalculation on the part of the government at Centre. The urge of the Modi government to build image without backup action has taken a heavy toll on the nation. The pandemic has taken a death grip on India in the so-called second wave, taking millions of lives and wrecking many families. Another sad post script is that WHO has not yet approved ICMR developed Covaxin of India. This implies, all those who have received the jab will not qualify to travel internationally, whenever borders open for Indians.

### WISDOM CORNER

Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Keep your feet on the ground, but let your heart soar as high as it will. Refuse to be average or to surrender to the chill of your spiritual environment. ARTHUR HELPS

One of the things you can always depend on - this is one of the truths of the universe, and you heard it first from here - whatever we decide we want to do is what we do. MORGAN FREEMAN

### WORDSWORTH

#### Nepenthes

Nepenthes (you will note the word is singular) is a drug or potion that brings welcome forgetfulness of bad memories. It appears in Homer's Odyssey, in which it was the name of the drug that Paris gave to Helen after he had abducted her to make her forget her old home. It's from classical Greek nepenthes (pharmakon), "anti-sorrow drug", where the first word is made up from ne-, not, plus penthos, grief. (The second word is the root of English words such as pharmaceutical.) Expert plantspeople probably know it best as the botanical name for a genus of tropical carnivorous pitcher plants. As the pitcher plants contain liquid in which the captured insects drown, the botanical name would seem appropriate, though in this case any forgetting is terminal. Some writers have suggested Homer's potion was opium. This is one old recipe, which should be enough to make anybody forget anything: Take of tincture of Opium made first with distilled Vinegar, then with spirit of Wine, Saffron extracted in spirit of Wine, of each an ounce, salt of Pearl and Coral, of each half an ounce, tincture of species Diambrae seven drams, Ambergis one dram: bring them into the form of Pills by the gentle heat of a bath (The Complete Herbal, by Nicholas Culpeper, 1653). The word has commonly appeared as nepenthe, lacking its final letter: "Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!" Quoth the raven, "Nevermore" (The Raven, by Edgar Allan Poe, 1845). This is a more recent example: He was scarcely conscious of her now, for this utterly soft end of a hard day was as soporific as the fabled nepenthe and he could feel himself slipping away, as though his fingertips were relaxing from the edge of the cliff of harsh reality in order that he might drop-drop-through the soft clouds of gathering sleep into the slowly swaying ocean of dreams (The Robots of Dawn, by Isaac Asimov, 1983). It would make a wonderful name for some spirituous drink and indeed the owner of an Australian winery has called his enterprise Nepenthe.

### SPECTRUM URBANISATION

## Dispersal of IT crowd & urban decongestion



Ajay Kumar Mohapatra

WFH SYSTEM OF WORKING ADOPTED BY MOST IT SECTOR FIRMS AS WELL AS THOSE IN OTHER SECTORS CAN ADDRESS THE TYPICAL PROBLEM OF URBAN CONGESTION OF METROPOLITAN AREAS IN INDIA

The coronavirus pandemic has inflicted miseries on the entire world population. India has witnessed massive migrations from urban to semi-urban and rural areas mainly due to unemployment for certain populations and the luxury of work from home (WFH) for the rest.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the effectiveness of the WFH system of working adopted by most IT sector firms as well as those in other sectors in addressing the typical problem of urban congestion of the primary metropolitan areas in India. Many governments have failed to tackle this efficiently due to the employment generating capabilities of the urban areas.

Before the first lockdown came into effect and all offices shut down in a week's notice, the idea of a remote workplace was unthinkable for many MDs and CEOs. The basic thought behind it being the Indian environment doesn't support a remote workplace policy. But with extended lockdown in the country, the entire IT industry was forced to adopt a full scale WFH model of working. Advancement in optical fibre and emergence of local service

providers during lockdown have paved the way for a digitally connected India with higher broadband speeds achieved even in Tier-3 cities. With some minor disruptions in the initial months, the entire setup was ready for a decentralised and distributed workforce in the IT industry. The communication infrastructure build-up in semi-urban and rural areas during the first phase of the pandemic has eliminated problems with internet speed and connectivity which are the heart and lungs of the IT infrastructure.

India witnessed urban migration of the masses in the early 21st century. Most of this could be attributed to the expansion of the IT industry. This is evident by the rise of Hyderabad and Bangalore as new metropolises of India. At present, Bangalore is the third largest urban agglomeration in India.

Rapid urbanisation has been a pressing issue for the past few decades. The population density of megacities is somewhere around 5-10 times of Tier-2 cities. This rising population leads to class divide and economic difference between two areas of the same cities. The crux of the first wave of the pandemic was borne by these

urban areas. Drainage and waste management are already a problem for municipal corporations. Unhygienic conditions have made them breeding centres for diseases such as dengue and malaria. Lack of ample healthcare facilities by the government has made the economically backward population stand in long queues for medical consultations.

The government has always overlooked the urbanisation issue over its revenue generation abilities and the depiction of growth to the world. Steps taken to decongest urban settlements only included building satellite cities in the suburbs. Although it is successful in developing infrastructure, it leads to traffic-induced pollution due to increased travel time to office. Even if some IT companies are crawling up in Tier-2 cities, most people refrain themselves from shifting places due to limited professional growth opportunities.

The pandemic-induced status quo will be a positive reinforcement on the environment as well as the available resources for the metro cities which experience substantial waste and water management issues.

Immediate relief as already witnessed in current terms are - i)

Reduction in waste generation; ii) Reduction in noise and air pollution brought by reduction in traffic; ii) Reduction in total water demand of the urban areas. Some auxiliary benefits would also include better urban planning capacities and rationalisation of real estate prices which were pushing through the roof. Work fatigue and ineffectiveness are common side-effects to long term WFH solutions as the Indian population loves to socialise over workplaces. This can be mitigated by leasing out workplaces in smaller cities providing a socially conducive environment.

With organisations like TCS weighing in the option of permanent WFH, it would highly benefit the already exhausted megacities of India. In the author's opinion, the future of the IT industry should be to spread out to centres in each state instead of being concentrated in a handful of cities. Organisations or even employees can make best use of smaller or open/leased offices instead of huge technology parks for an even distribution of talent and economy throughout the country.

The writer is a Big Data Engineer. He can be reached at ajaykmyy@gmail.com

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST  
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### Mucormycosis epidemic

Sir, Apropos the news item "India reports 8,848 mucormycosis cases", Orissa Post, May 23, government experts have attributed black fungus epidemic to a combination of Covid, diabetes and irrational steroid use that suppresses immunity. But rheumatology and head of AIIMS, New Delhi, says, doctors had been using steroids routinely in rheumatology patients, but they had never seen such high cases of mucormycosis. On the other hand, experts claim unhygienic delivery of oxygen to patients was the root cause. Medical oxygen as opposed to industrial oxygen was highly purified, undergoes a range of processes such as compression, filtration and purification. Even its cylinders undergo disinfection and cleanliness processes. Meanwhile, the first study by Indian researchers on the spread of mucormycosis published in international journal Elsevier found overall 101 cases of mucormycosis in Covid patients worldwide - 82 from India and 19 from the rest of the world. Do all these observations point to a possible role of unclean delivery of industrial oxygen for Covid treatment - that resulted in surge of black fungus in India? N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Grave concern

Sir, Till last month, Odisha was well managing the spread of COVID-19, but since the last three weeks the number of new cases and deaths is exponentially increasing. For all other big states (population more than 1 crore), the second surge peak is over and active cases are fast declining except in Tamil Nadu, Assam and Odisha. It's a matter of great concern that this time we are not able to control it. A separate department under Health Ministry should be formed to concentrate on this issue. Gopal Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

### Global immunisation

Sir, The Commonwealth countries have expressed deep concern over the stark gaps in access and delivery of COVID vaccine doses and called for fair and transparent pricing for the vaccine. As per reports, only 0.3 per cent of the life-saving vaccine doses have been administered in 29 poor countries. Many low-middle income countries still do not have access to the much-needed vaccine supplies for the vulnerable populations in their countries. We should not leave the poor countries to their fate in this pandemic. Cooperation to develop a global immunisation plan to deliver equal access to vaccines with extra medical supplies such as ventilators and medicines is the need of the hour. Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)



# Why blue is a sought after colour in UP politics

BJP has been trying to bring a splash of blue into its sea of saffron and the Congress would also like its tricolor to get a larger share of blue, while the Samajwadi Party is more than willing to bring blue into its green by befriending Dalits



Dalit activist, who worked closely with late Kanshi Ram and died a fortnight ago, had said at a function that blue has been synonymous with Dalit activism ever since Ambedkar emerged as a Dalit icon. "For Dalits, blue is a colour that they call their own and no one has ever tried to change this. Dr Ambedkar was often seen wearing blue coat with a red tie, especially in the last three decades of his life, and the flags have always been blue for Dalit outfits even though they may have differed with each other," he had said.

Ram Kinkar Gautam, a Dalit writer, had his own take on the significance of blue for Dalits. "Any community that is marginalised and deprived looks for symbolism to unite. The colour blue was promoted by Dr Ambedkar and became the colour of the Dalit community. Simply raising a blue flag, today, symbolises Dalit unity and parties like the BSP have only promoted it. Today, even if Mayawati wants, she cannot change the colour of the party because blue is a bigger symbol for Dalits than even the BSP," he said.

# Death of teachers in UP: Priyanka demands ₹1cr compensation, job for kin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 23: Slamming the Yogi Adityanath dispensation over the death of teachers and workers who were on panchayat poll duty, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadera Sunday demanded that the Uttar Pradesh government give Rs 1 crore compensation each to the next of kin of the deceased and employment to one dependent from the bereaved family.

Attacking the government, Priyanka Gandhi said, "1,621 teachers who have died during the panchayat election duty should not fall prey to the government's callousness." They fulfilled their responsibilities towards their duty, the Congress general secretary asserted.

"Now, the UP government should not indulge in a cover-up and should give compensation of Rs 1 crore to the families of all the deceased teachers, workers, and give a job to a dependent from the bereaved family," she said.

That will be the real tribute to them, Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi, using the hashtag #Nyay4ElectionWorkers.

Last week, Uttar Pradesh Prathmik Shikshak Sangh president Dinesh Chandra Sharma had said that 1,621 teachers and workers of the Basic Education

Department have died since the first week of April following the outbreak of the second wave of COVID-19.

Of these 1,621 deaths, more than 90 per cent of the teachers were on panchayat election duty, he had said, while also demanding Rs 1 crore to be paid to the kin of deceased teachers and workers as financial assistance.

However, Satish Chandra Dwivedi, the UP minister of state (independent charge) for basic education, had said that all these deaths cannot be attributed to elections and according to government data, only three teachers died due to Covid. Earlier Sunday, in a Facebook post, Priyanka Gandhi cited a media report to allege that the brother of the UP minister of state (independent charge) for basic education got an appointment as an assistant professor, "posing as poor".

"In this crisis, the ministers of the UP government are absent in helping the common people but are eager in grabbing opportunity in disaster," she alleged.

Several lakh youths are looking for employment in UP but the jobs are going to those who are looking for "opportunities in disaster," Priyanka Gandhi said, adding that the state government is "making fun of both the poor and of reservation."



# UP farmers warned of possible locust attack

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh, May 23: As Uttar Pradesh is struggling to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the emergence of black fungus cases, the possibility of a locust attack also looms large.

The Aligarh district administration has now sounded an alert over a likely locust attack. Officials have issued the advisory after swarms of locusts were spotted in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer city.

The state's agriculture department has geared up and remains vigilant. Farmers have also been warned on the issue.

Desert locusts that move in large swarms, can consume crops up to their own weight every day. When millions of locusts descend on a crop, they destroy everything. The desert locust is considered the most destructive migratory pest in the world and a single swarm covering one square kilometre can contain up to 80 million locusts.

Last year, almost 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh were put on alert after the locust swarms which travelled from Pakistan invaded India



and made their way to at least five states, leaving a trail of destruction.

According to District Agriculture Officer Vinod Kumar Singh, on the basis of the advisory issued by UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Rajasthan has sounded an alert for a possible locust attack and directed authorities to plan, coordinate and execute a strategy to repulse it. Following this, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued directions to be fully prepared and ensure a timely response to tackle an infestation of the short-horned grasshoppers.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 23: Blue is the colour of tranquillity but in Uttar Pradesh politics, it has become symbolic with upheaval.

The colour is synonymous with Dalits - their empowerment and their aggression - and almost every political party in the country is apparently keen to get a slice of the Dalit cake.

The BJP has been trying to bring a splash of blue into its sea of saffron and the Congress would also like its tricolor to get a larger share of blue. The Samajwadi Party is more than willing to bring blue into its green by befriending Dalits.

The fledgling Bhim Army has completely embraced blue and its shade of blue is now stronger than BSP's shade of blue in western UP.

The BJP outreach into Dalit politics has been more than evident in the past four years in Uttar Pradesh. The party has inducted most of the leaders from BSP and continues to promote Dalits within the

party. As a result of this, the BJP won 15 of the 17 reserved seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The Samajwadi Party that had allied with the Bahujan Samaj Party in the 2019 elections is now trying to woo Dalits in a big way after the BSP snapped ties with SP. The party has even formed Baba Saheb Vahini that will work to bring Dalits into the party fold. The party also announced a 'Dalit Diwali' on Ambedkar Jayanti. This is the first conscious and visible effort of the SP to wade into blue waters (read Dalit politics). Till now, SP had restricted itself to OBCs and Muslims.

The Congress is also making an attempt to try its 'hand' at Dalit politics. While its general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadera has been visiting home of Dalit victims who have faced atrocities, state Congress leaders have been seen wearing blue scarves during such events.

But when and how did blue become the colour of the day for

Dalits in the country and even outside it?

SR Darapuri, retired IPS officer and now a leading Dalit activist, explained, "Blue is the colour of the sky and the sea and shows limitlessness. Dr BR Ambedkar was very fond of the colour. When founded the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942, he chose a blue flag. Then in 1956, he founded the Republican Party of India and gave it a blue flag too. Dr Ambedkar always wore a blue coat and was internationally known for his colour choice. For Dalits, this became a symbol of empowerment and it continues to this day because major Dalit outfits represent themselves through this colour."

Darapuri further recalled that blue is one of the primary colours of Buddhism and 'Blue Buddha' is most revered. Dr Ambedkar, in his later years, had embraced Buddhism and in Buddhism, blue colour is associated with tranquility, compassion and kindness. Dr Dauji Gupta, a social and

# Villagers turn to unlicensed clinics

In villages, medical facilities are dilapidated and doctors and nurses are few on the ground, meaning many clinics are run by people who don't have training

REUTERS

Parsaul (UP), May 23: An Indian former hospital worker with no medical education is running a small unlicensed clinic, tending to patients with breathing difficulties and checking their oxygen levels as they lie on cots on the mud floor.

India has been hard hit by a second wave of coronavirus infections which has overwhelmed its health system, even in big cities.

In the countryside, medical facilities are dilapidated and doctors and nurses are few on the ground, meaning many clinics are run by people who don't have training.

The poor health infrastructure and lack of testing means many patients do not know if they are in-

fectured with COVID-19 or just have a cold.

In Parsaul village, about 60 km (40 miles) from the capital New Delhi, villager Ashok said people in his area were afraid to step out of their houses. He suspects that coronavirus had killed around 15 people nearby in recent days.

Ashok has come with a patient who had fever to the clinic run by a 52-year-old former hospital assistant who moves from one cot to another to check IV levels. Empty intravenous drips lie piled up under a brick-walled staircase.

"Patients with fever and breathing problems have increased in the last two months," said the former assistant, who said he had been helping patients at his clinic since 1993 but did not wish to be identified as he feared a backlash



from authorities.

"The people from nearby six or seven villages know me personally and trust me."

Some patients wore face masks lying on cots, while others had their faces covered with clothing.

Bubli, 30, visited the clinic to get treatment for fever.

"No, she doesn't have COVID, it's just a fever," Bubli's husband told Reuters. "...We are scared of COVID, but going out to a big hospital is more dangerous."

# HP MLAs asked to give home isolation kit to patients

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, May 23: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur Saturday launched home isolation kit and asked the legislators to provide them to Covid-19 patients at their doorstep.

Simultaneously, he launched Himachal Covid Care Application and e-Sanjeevani OPD to connect people with the AIIMS in Bilaspur for online consultation and treatment.

Speaking on the occasion, Thakur said the home isolation kits would be provided to the patients by MLAs.

He urged the elected representatives to ensure that the kits were made available to the patients at the earliest.



The Chief Minister said e-Sanjeevani OPD would ensure effective communication between the patient and the doctor.

He said the Covid Care App would provide an effective mechanism for monitoring the patients in home isolation.

Thakur said over 18 lakh tests have been conducted in the state and about 175,000 persons had tested Covid-19 positive.

A total of 2,636 people had lost their lives. He said the positivity rate in the state during the first phase was 5.53, whereas it has increased to 15.67 per cent in the second wave.

The bed capacity has been increased from 1,200 to about 5,000. Similarly the state has increased the storage capacity of oxygen by 25 metric tons.

# POLLUTED GANGA



Boats remain anchored in the polluted waters of the Ganga River, amid COVID-19 lockdown, at a ghat in Varanasi, Sunday. PTI PHOTO

# HIMACHAL TRIBALS BREAK VACCINE HESITANCY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, May 23: Tribals, mainly Buddhists, settled in Himachal Pradesh's Spiti valley spread over the Himalayan peaks, have set an example for others in the country by demonstrating that vaccination is the only route out of this pandemic.

Officials told IANS that the entire elderly population -- those above 60-years-old -- in 13 panchayats of Kaza subdivision, a cold desert adjoining Tibet where there is shortage of health infrastructure, is now fully vaccinated. Those above 45-years-old have been provided the first vaccine dose.

The world's highest post office, Hikkam, located 15,000 feet above sea level and its nearby village of Komik and Langche were among the worst hit in the first wave of the pandemic last year.

"The vaccine coverage for those above the age of 60 years in Hikkam, Komik and Langche is 100

per cent," Block Medical Officer Tenzin Norbu told IANS over phone. He said the people there were not hesitant to take the vaccine.

"Very soon we are going to start vaccination for those in the age group of 18 to 45," he said.

Explaining the high trust in authorities, accredited social health activist (ASHA) Padma, who carried out the vaccination in Hikkam, said: "The drives to educate the locals encouraged them to support government efforts for boosting immunisation."

"The understanding that a delay could cause significant mortality helps to overcome vaccine hesitancy," she said.

Kaza, the headquarters of Spiti that supports a population of nearly 12,000, was the first in the state to sanitise the entire block to prevent the spread of coronavirus last year.

Health authorities say 762 people above 60 years have got both doses of the vaccine in Kaza sub-



division, which is 100 per cent of the total number, while 1,590 people between the age of 45 and 60 have been given the first dose.

As several recipients do not own smartphones or have no access to the internet, about 80 per cent of the registration is being done offline, Additional District Magistrate Gian Sagar Negi told IANS.

"One can get the slot booked

by calling up the health department. We are getting 20 per cent registration online," he said.

Unaware of registration process, Bishan Negi, a 65-year-old retired forest guard, said: "I do not own a smartphone. But I want to get myself vaccinated on priority as the emergence of new variants shows that until everyone is vaccinated no one is safe. So, I decided to opt for walk-in mode to get vacci-

nated." Local schoolteacher Dolma Negi said: "I do own a smartphone, but internet rarely works here. So, I booked slots for myself and my husband by phone."

Officials say internet connectivity in 10 of the 13 panchayats in the subdivision is not available. It is available in Kaza, Losar and Rangrik.

Additional District Magistrate Negi said there were many challenges when the first phase of the vaccine drive was launched on January 18. "Our teams went from village to village to educate the locals about the life-saving vaccine doses, the only way to reduce severe disease and also to keep the pandemic at bay. At that time, we were not sure that we would be able to achieve 100 per

cent vaccination of the most vulnerable age-group of 60 plus," he said.

According to him, the locals were initially reluctant to go to hospitals owing to a belief they could get treated of the virus with the blessing of a local deity. "We have managed to break that hesitancy," Negi said.

This month, authorities at Kaza went one step ahead to ensure community protection from the pandemic by framing their own Covid-19 health protocols that include mandatory rapid test for all those entering the area, even from within the state. Notably, Kaza, some 320 km from the state capital, is a Schedule V area and the Constitution empowers the local communities for self-governance.

The drives to educate the locals encouraged them to support government efforts for boosting immunisation. The understanding that a delay could cause significant mortality helps to overcome vaccine hesitancy

PADMA I ASHA





**Significant transformation in health infrastructure has been achieved during this pandemic**  
K SUDHAKAR | KARNATAKA HEALTH MINISTER

## BODY IN GARBAGE TRUCK

The body of a 21-year-old man, who allegedly died by suicide, was taken for the funeral in a garbage vehicle in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas district, following which the local civic administration suspended its health official and terminated the services of three temporary employees



## of the day quote

Indians in the world have become synonymous with corona and our 'Mera Bharat' has turned into Covid (epicentre)



KAMAL NATH | FORMER CHIEF MINISTER OF MP

I do not like sharing photographs of dead bodies. The entire country and the world are sad seeing such photos, but one has to understand the pain of those who left their kin along the river Ganga out of compulsion. They are not at fault



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

We have been constantly working on increasing the production and availability of vaccines, and will have each Indian vaccinated by December, which will be a huge record



GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT | UNION MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Security up in Hisar

**Chandigarh:** The district authorities here stepped up security ahead of a farmers' protest Monday. Farmers had given a call for the protest after the state police booked over 300 of them in connection with a violent clash in the district last Sunday. Police had lobbed tear gas shells and used force to disperse a group of farmers who had tried to march towards the venue where Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had gone to inaugurate a Covid hospital. Farmers' organisations had said they will gherao the Hisar police commissionerate Monday.

### Goa cancels Class X exams

**Panaji:** The Goa government Sunday cancelled the upcoming Class X board exams, due to the rising number of Covid cases in the state, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said. Sawant also said that Class X students will instead be assessed according to their already accrued internal marks.

### Barge toll climbs to 70

**Mumbai:** The Indian Navy recovered four more bodies from the Arabian Sea as divers from a specialised vessel continued to search for the remaining missing persons after the tragedy that befell Barge Papaa-305 last Monday in the Bombay High Fields, officials said here Sunday. With this, the toll has shot up to 70 and around six are still reported missing, while 188 have been rescued safely so far.

### Lockdown extended Pongdy

**Pondicherry:** Pondicherry Sunday decided to extend the ongoing lockdown till May 31 as Covid-19 cases continue to surge in the Union Territory. Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan in a press release, said that the lockdown will be extended till May 31 from the midnight of May 24, when the present lockdown from May 10 was due to end.

### Two Khalistani activists held

**Chandigarh:** Two activists of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), involved in several heinous crimes including the murder of a 'Dera Premi' and firing on a priest, were arrested in Punjab, Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said Sunday.

## 'WHITE FUNGUS' RAISES CONCERN



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** As India grapples with alarmingly rising cases of the Black Fungus (Mucormycosis disease) after battling severe oxygen shortage amidst the second wave of the pandemic, the health fraternity is now concerned with White Fungus which is being reported among Covid-recovered patients who are on long-term steroid use and suffer from severe uncontrolled diabetes, among other conditions.

White Fungus has generally been seen in immuno-compromised people like those on chemotherapy or undergoing bone marrow transplant.

Covid-19 itself is a condition which predisposes body to other added infections via use of high-dose steroids, broad spectrum antibiotics, monoclonal antibodies and industrial oxygen, which can carry mucor during non-sterilised equipment for humidification.

Now, a case of White Fungus has been found in a Covid-recovered patient from Mau district in Uttar Pradesh, and the health fraternity fear that many such cases are going unreported.

"White Fungus usually referred as to infection from Candidiasis. It is usually seen as an opportunistic infection among immunocompromised host such as patients with HIV, on anti-cancer therapy, on long-term steroid use or severe uncontrolled diabetes," said Harshal

### 'Diabetes may increase risk of mucormycosis'

Since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, patients with diabetes have been in the spotlight for their increased risk of severe Covid-19 outcomes. Now health experts say diabetes, coupled with Covid, may be the reason for the sudden spike in mucormycosis or 'black fungus' infections in the country. India is known as the world's diabetes capital. Nearly one in six people with diabetes in the world is from India. Available scientific literature reveals that diabetes damages the pancreatic beta cells and leads to insufficient insulin production, resulting in hyperglycemia -- a condition which causes dysfunction of the immune response.

R. Salve, Associate Professor at the Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi.

According to Pratibha Dogra, senior pulmonologist from W Pratiksha Hospital in Gurugram, first signs or symptoms could be severe headache and pain in the sinus area, blackish growth or discharge from nose.

"Diagnosis is simple through routine microscopic sample of mucor growth. If not diagnosed early, it has mortality of over 50 per cent," she said.

## 12 Oppn parties back farmers' protest call

In a joint statement, the parties said, "We extend our support to the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to observe a countrywide protest day on May 26, marking the completion of six months of the heroic peaceful Kisan struggle"

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** Twelve major opposition parties, including the Congress, Trinamool Congress, Left parties, SP, NCP and DMK on Sunday extended their support to a countrywide protest call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha May 26, marking six months of the farmers protest against the Centre's farm laws.

Farmers from various parts of the country are protesting at Delhi borders against the three farm laws brought by the Centre, alleging that the legislations will hamper farming. In a joint statement issued here by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and chief ministers Mamata Banerjee, Uddhav Thackeray, M K Stalin and Hemant Soren said the Centre must stop



being obdurate and immediately resume talks with farmer leaders and repeal the three farm laws.

Other signatories to the joint statement include former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah (JKPA) and Akhilesh Yadav (SP) besides Tejashwi Yadav (RJD), D Raja (CPI)

and Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M).

"We extend our support to the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to observe a countrywide protest day on May 26 marking the completion of six months of the heroic peaceful Kisan struggle," the statement said.

## DEALING WITH HUNGER



Homeless people wait to receive food at Chandni Chowk in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

## Moderna refuses to send jabs to Pb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, May 23:** US-based Covid-19 vaccine manufacturer Moderna has refused to send vaccines directly to the Punjab government stating that it only deals with the Centre, a senior state official said Sunday.



Punjab's nodal officer for vaccination Vikas Garg said according to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's directions, all vaccine manufacturers were approached for direct purchase of Covid vaccines including Sputnik V, Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson.

A reply was received only from Moderna wherein the company refused to deal with the state government, he said. According to Moderna's policy, it deals with the government of India and not with any state government or private parties, the Punjab government said in a statement. Earlier, CM Singh had directed officials to explore possibilities of floating a global tender for the procurement of vaccines from all possible sources to ensure that people of the state are vaccinated against Covid-19 at the earliest. Notably, Punjab was forced to stop vaccination for phase 1 and phase 2 categories because of the non-availability of vaccine doses.

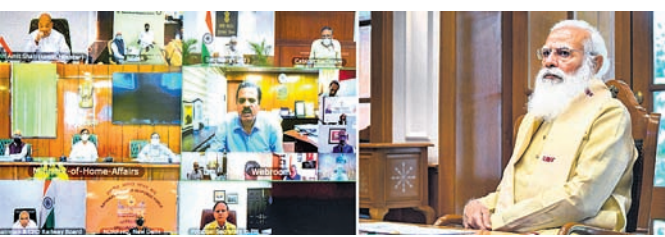
## PM reviews Yaas preparedness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday called for timely evacuation of those involved in off-shore activities as he chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of states and central government agencies to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone Yaas.

He asked officials to work in close coordination with states to ensure safe evacuation of people from high-risk areas, and to ensure that time duration of outages of power supply and communication network are minimum and restored swiftly, a PMO statement said. Modi also asked officials to ensure proper coordination and planning with state governments to ensure that no disruption is caused to Covid-19 treatment and vaccination in hospitals.

He called for involving various stakeholders like coastal communities and industries and directly reaching out to them and sensitising them, the PMO said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that



the cyclone is expected to cross West Bengal and north Odisha coasts by May 26 evening with the wind speed ranging 155-165 kmph and gusting to 185 kmph.

It is likely to cause heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of West Bengal and north Odisha. The IMD has also warned of storm surge in coastal areas of West Bengal and Odisha. The IMD has been issuing regular bulletins with latest forecast to all states concerned, the PMO noted.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is reviewing the situation and is in touch with the state governments, union territories and the central agencies concerned. It has already released the first instalment of SDRF in advance to all states, and the National

Disaster Response Force has pre-positioned 46 teams which are equipped with boats, tree-cutters, telecom equipments in five states and UT. In addition, 13 teams are being airlifted on Sunday for deployment and 10 teams have been kept on standby, the PMO noted.

Home Minister Amit Shah, other ministers and senior officials attended the meeting. In a tweet, Modi said he emphasised on timely evacuation as well as ensuring that power and communications networks are not disrupted.

"Also emphasised on ensuring COVID-19 treatment of patients in affected areas does not suffer due to the cyclone. Praying for everyone's safety and well-being," he said.

## Vardhan asks Ramdev to withdraw statement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Sunday called yoga guru Ramdev's statement on allopathic medicines "extremely unfortunate" and asked him to withdraw the remark, saying it disrespects 'corona warriors' and can break the morale of healthcare workers.

In a strongly worded letter to Ramdev, the minister also said that "through your statement you not only disrespected corona warriors but also deeply hurt the sentiments of countrymen". Citing a video circulating on social media, the Indian Medical association Saturday had said Ramdev has claimed that allopathy is a "stupid science" and medicines such as remdesivir, favilfu, and other drugs approved by the Drugs Controller General of India have failed to treat Covid-19 patients. The doctors' body also quoted Ramdev as saying that "laks of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines".

These remarks were denied as

### ROW OVER ALLOPATHY



"false" by the Haridwar-based Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust. In his letter, Vardhan asked Ramdev to withdraw his statement on allopathy and said the remarks disrespects 'corona warriors' and hurts the sentiments of the country. "You also are aware that countless healthcare workers lost their lives in their fight against Covid," he said in the letter. "You calling allopathy treatment a 'drama, useless and diwalya' (causing bankruptcy) is unfortunate," the health minister said. Vardhan said that if today deaths due to Covid-19 is just 1.13 per cent and recovery rate more than 88 per cent, it is because of the contribution of allopathy and its doctors.

## Women can get jab anytime after delivery: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** A woman can get vaccinated against COVID-19 anytime after the delivery of her baby, healthcare experts have said and stressed on the need to permit vaccination of even pregnant women to protect them from the infection.

The government recently allowed vaccination for lactating mothers. The NITI Aayog Member (Health) has stressed that there is no problem in breastfeeding after vaccination and it must not be halted "even for an hour".

Healthcare experts have also said that a woman can get vaccinated against Covid-19 anytime after the delivery of her baby.

Dr Khan Amir Maroof, Professor, Department of Community Medicine, University College of Medical Sciences and GTB Hospital, Delhi, said there is no risk to the



neonate from a vaccinated, breastfeeding mother. "There is no reason to delay the vaccination after delivery," he said. Further, he said, no specific precautions need to be taken by lactating women in view of vaccination and the same precautions which apply to the general popula-

tion are applicable to them as well. Dr. Loveleena Nadir, senior consultant gynaecologist and obstetrician at Fortis La Femme, Rosewalk Hospital and Apollo Cradle Royale, said vaccination can also be done during any phase of menstrual cycle. "Covid-19 is not an indication

for caesarean delivery but there has been an increased frequency of pre-term births and caesarean deliveries, probably due to maternal illness associated with Covid-19 infection. If one has recovered from Covid infection, defer vaccination for 3 months from date of recovery," she said.

She further said that if a patient has taken the first dose and later turned out to be pregnant, they are advised to continue the pregnancy. "Pregnancy doesn't increase the risk of acquiring SARS-COV-2 infection but appears to worsen the clinical course as compared to non-pregnant women," she added. Experts have stressed on the need to vaccinate pregnant women to protect them from the infection. Maroof said the government guidelines has not yet recommended Covid-19 vaccination for pregnant women. "This is because the Covid

vaccine trials were not done on pregnant women and their safety and efficacy related data is not available. The Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India has, however, recommended that Covid vaccine should be given to pregnant women as the risk of getting infected with Covid and mortality is high during this pandemic," he said.

"This seems to be higher than the risk due to the side effects of the vaccine," he said. Dr. Sujeet Ranjan, Executive Director of the Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security (CFNS), New Delhi, said WHO guidelines state that pregnant and lactating mothers can be vaccinated but in India, the matter regarding inoculation of pregnant women is under discussion and further deliberation by the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI).

## BOY 'BEATEN TO DEATH' BY SECURITY PERSONNEL IN UNNAO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Unnao (UP), May 23:** A home guard jawan accused of beating a 17-year-old boy to death for violating the Covid lockdown in the Bangarmau area of Uttar Pradesh's Unnao has been arrested, police said Sunday.

Three persons - police constables Vijay Choudhury and Simavat and home guard jawan Satyaprakash -- were booked on the charge of murder for allegedly beating up the boy, a vegetable vendor, first outside his house in Bhatpuri and then at the police station Friday.

"One accused has been arrested, while efforts are on to nab the other two," Unnao Superintendent of Police (SP) Anand Kulkarni said in a statement. "The matter is being probed by the Crime Branch and they are collecting evidence. Action will be initiated against the guilty persons," he added. Police sources said the arrested person is home guard jawan Satyaprakash.

The police booked the three security personnel following a protest by the locals after the boy's death. Sources in the state health department said according to the post-mortem report, head injuries above the right ear were the main reason behind the boy's death, while there were 13 injury marks on his back.

The family members of the boy have alleged that he was beaten up at the police station in front of the inspector in-charge.



## of the day quote

Conducting the examination by toying with students' safety will prove to be a big mistake. First vaccine, then exams. The Centre should talk to experts if they can be given the Covishield or Covaxin vaccines

**MANISH SISODIA** | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

The real problem that the country is facing these days is absence of adequate vaccines and production facilities

**KAPIL SIBAL** | CONGRESS LEADER

Not only coronavirus, the fungal diseases related to the infection are also extremely serious and fatal. The Centre and the state governments must work with full seriousness and in a concrete manner because preparations to tackle COVID situation in the country are still incomplete

**MAYAWATI** | BSP SUPREMO

## SHORT TAKES

### 5 of family murdered

**Ayodhya:** Five members of a family, including three children were murdered over a family dispute in Ayodhya. The incident took place late on Saturday night under Inayat Nagar police circle. According to reports, Pawan, the nephew of the couple had a long-standing property dispute with his uncle Ramesh, 35. The nephew lived in the same house as the deceased couple. Late Saturday night, the alleged accused slit the throats of his uncle Ramesh, his wife Jyoti and two minor sons and a daughter and fled.

### 3 booked for gangrape

**Agra:** Three persons have been booked for allegedly raping a 12-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh. Shamsabad police station in-charge Pradeep Kumar said: "A case has been registered under section 376 D (gang-rap), 506 (criminal intimidation), and 5/6 of POCSO Act at Shamsabad police station against three accused. Police have rounded up a few persons for interrogation and raids are on to arrest the accused."

### Ch'garh: Surajpur Collector removed

**Raipur:** The collector of Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district, Ranbir Sharma, was removed from the post Sunday after a viral video showed him slapping a man and throwing his mobile phone for alleged Covid-19 norms violation. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel issued instructions for the removal of the 2012-batch IAS officer from the post. The CM also directed officials to provide a new mobile phone to the man, identified as Aman Mittal (23), as his handset was damaged in the incident that took place Saturday. There were several other videos of Saturday's drive in which the collector and other officials were purportedly seen making people do sit-ups for allegedly violating the lockdown norms in Surajpur.

### Man commits suicide

**Kota (Raj):** A 27-year-old man here allegedly committed suicide by consuming a poisonous substance after not being able to marry a girl of his choice, police said Sunday. The girl, whose marriage was fixed for Saturday, also tried to end her life by taking poison. She was saved by immediate medical intervention and married off on Saturday night, police said. Police have denied recovering any suicide note.

# India becomes 3rd nation to cross 3L deaths

India has been reporting over two lakh daily cases - peaking to over four lakh cases - and thousands of deaths over the last several weeks, which led to crumbling health infrastructures and long queues outside crematoriums and burial grounds

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** The official count of deaths in India linked to the coronavirus, ballooned by the worst second wave of infections anywhere in the world, has crossed the three lakh-mark, adding the country to the grim global club with just two other members - the United States and Brazil.

India has been reporting over two lakh daily cases - peaking to over four lakh cases - and thousands of deaths over the last several weeks, which led to crumbling health infrastructures and long queues outside crematoriums and burial grounds. With 2,40,842 new Covid cases, India's overall case count had surged to 2,65,30,132 this morning. 3,741 deaths were also reported in 24 hours. However, fresh state-wise figures took the number past the grim milestone. Experts say

## COVID SURGE

INDIA HAS BEEN HARD HIT BY A SECOND WAVE OF CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS WHICH HAS OVERWHELMED ITS HEALTH SYSTEM, EVEN IN BIG CITIES

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, MEDICAL FACILITIES ARE DILAPIDATED AND DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE FEW ON THE GROUND, MEANING MANY CLINICS ARE RUN BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE TRAINING

the official countrywide Covid figures are an undercount as those dying outside the system are not being added. Also, in rural areas, testing is either non-existent or very low despite the rapid and deadly surge. India is now only behind the United States and Brazil



as far as total death counts are concerned. The United States is the worst-affected country with 589,703 deaths from 33,105,188 cases, followed by Brazil with 448,208 deaths from 16,047,439 cases.

Eight more species have been added to the national capital's list of snakes. The new additions are -- common bronzeback tree snake, common trinket snake, common cat snake, barred wolf snake, common kukri, streaked kukri, common sandboa and saw-scaled viper



## Six extremists gunned down in Assam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, May 23:** At least six Dimas National Liberation Army (DNLA) militants are killed Sunday in an encounter with police and Assam Rifles in Dhansiri Area of Karbi Anglong district, a top police official said.

Four AK-47 rifles, four revolvers, some live grenades, improvised guns and huge rounds of ammunition were found in the possession of the slain militants.

A section of media, however, said that eight DNLA guerillas were killed in the counter-militant operation, which is still underway under the command of the Karbi Anglong's Additional Superintendent of Police Prakash Sonwal.

Director General of Assam Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said that six hardcore top cadres of DNLA were neutralised in Karbi Anglong District when they fired at a joint team of police and Assam Rifles during an anti-terror operation.

The police chief said that the outlawed DNLA has been involved in kidnapping, extortion, killing and these are not tolerated in Assam.

Counter-insurgency operations in the Dhansiri area of the Karbi Anglong district, bordering Nagaland, were recently intensified after the suspected DNLA militants killed one Sanjoy Ronghang at Daojingphang village May 19.

Several organisations including Dimas Students' Union had condemned the killing of Sanjoy Ronghang and demanded action against the perpetrators. The DNLA has been active in certain areas of Karbi Anglong as well as adjoining Dima Hasao district.

## Lockdown extended in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Chandigarh, May 23:** Lockdown was extended Sunday in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Puducherry with many states already imposing Covid-induced restrictions till May-end to rein in infections and deaths during the second wave of the pandemic.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that the on-going lockdown in the national capital will continue for another week and said the process of "unlock" will start from May 31 in a phased manner if the number of Covid-19 cases continues to decline.

The Rajasthan government, which extended the coronavirus lockdown by 15 days till June 8, also said the state may allow some relaxations in commercial activities from June 1 in districts where the Covid-19 situation will show significant improvement.

Extending the lockdown till May 31, the Haryana government said the positivity and fatality rates have to be brought down further, though it did allow some relaxations in the curbs. In the past 24 hours, Delhi recorded around 1,600 positive cases and the positivity rate went further down to below 2.5 percent, Kejriwal said in an on-line briefing.

He said if the lockdown is lifted now, the gains made in the last one month through a lot of struggles, hard work and sacrifice may be lost.

## Pilot, Sidhu giving headache to Cong

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 23:** While Congress is trying to corner the government for the mismanagement of the Covid pandemic, the party is facing internal feud in the ruling states of Rajasthan and Punjab. Former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot has upped the ante against Ashok Gehlot, while in Punjab, Navjot Singh Sidhu is targeting Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

The new twist to the political saga of the Congress came in Rajasthan when senior Congress MLA Hemaram Choudhary, who belonged to the Pilot camp, sent his resignation to Assembly Speaker, while Ved Prakash Solanki, from the same camp turned vocal against the government, demanding that power should be decentralised and the party workers should be given more opportunities.

Solanki said, "Senior MLAs are not being heard in the present government. Hemaram Choudhary has just resigned. A thorough probe should be conducted to find out why the senior leader and six-time MLA had to step down."

Solanki belongs to the group of MLAs who under the leadership of Pilot had rebelled against the leadership of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in July last year. However, the 19 rebel MLAs were re-inducted into the party after senior Congress leaders stepped in to sort out the matter, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and the late Ahmed Patel.

Sachin Pilot did not say anything directly but said, Choudhary is most honest and respected leader hinting that all is not well in the state.

While Congress is likely to constitute a committee for Punjab but the committee formed for Rajasthan has not come out with any amicable solution since the demise of Ahmed Patel last year. The Pilot camp is getting restless as it's about a year when he rebelled only to come back in the party fold, since then he is putting pressure on the party to accommodate his loyalists in the government but somehow Gehlot has managed to evade the issue.

Similarly in Punjab, Sidhu has openly called the disgruntled leaders to go to Delhi and air their grievances to the party leadership. Navjot Singh Sidhu has been training guns at Chief Amarinder Singh over the 2015 sacrilege issue and calling for party leaders to go to Delhi and raise it with the top leadership, the Congress Friday said it was seized of the matter and will soon act.

Congress General Secretary, Organisation, KC Venugopal said: "We are watching it and will take a call on it" while terming it an "organisational issue".

Sources say that the party is likely to constitute a committee to look into the issue in Punjab, where Assembly elections are due next year.

Cricketer-turned-politician Sidhu, who had been lying low since his resignation from the state Cabinet in July 2019, has launched scathing attack this month against the Chief Minister over his government's action over the alleged desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib in 2015 when the Akali Dal-BJP government was in power, and accused him of "shielding the Badals".



## Kuru Kolumn

### Reverse defection worries BJP?

Why has the entire BJP leadership gone into super hyper mode in West Bengal? An insider in the kitchen cabinet of Union Home Minister Amit Shah revealed that the BJP is extremely

worried about the possibility of massive "reverse defection" in West Bengal after the huge drubbing. The BJP may have a taste of its own medicine. It gave the "defection pill" to sitting MPs, MLAs and MLCs to quit their parties and seats and join the BJP. The BJP brought them back in houses. It won majority in Goa, Manipur and Madhya Pradesh even after losing in state polls. The massive win for Mamata Banerjee has injected a fear factor. Though Mamata doesn't need any MLA, BJP knows that the majority of its 75 MLAs are vulnerable. It is said that nearly 50 of them originally belonged to Congress, TMC or the Left. The way all 75 BJP MLAs were given security by the Central security forces lock, stock and barrel is an indication of an

extraordinary situation. The arrest of four Mamata key men including two ministers is part of this BJP offensive. But Mamata Banerjee is not taking things lying down despite threats of a dismissal due to anarchy and violence by TMC in the state.

### Sonia takes charge to unite Opposition

Congress president Sonia Gandhi seems to have taken the command in her own hands of uniting the Opposition parties once again. This time, she neither asked NCP leader Sharad Pawar or CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury to talk to like-minded parties. Instead, she deputed Jairam

Ramesh to draft the letter and deputed Mallikarjun Kharge and Ghulam Nabi Azad to talk to Opposition leaders. Kharge spoke to former PM HD Deve Gowda, while Azad talked to Feroz Khan Noon and others. Party general secretary KC Venugopal talked to MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and special efforts were made to seek the signature of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. She herself talked to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to join the Opposition ranks in its fight against the Modi government. The move suffered a few setbacks also as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal declined the ranks with the Congress. Similarly, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also excused himself. Samajwadi party

leader Akhilesh Yadav agreed to join the ranks but BSP supremo Mayawati firmly declined to join hands. The YSR-Congress and TRS too kept at arm's length. It is clear that henceforth Sonia Gandhi secretariat's has taken complete charge and creation of UPA-III beginning.

### Mamata is keeping quiet too

Mamata Banerjee is a bigger worry to Modi than what Nitish Kumar posed in 2015. Modi had suffered an equally humiliating defeat in Bihar polls and Nitish Kumar had emerged on the national scene over-night. But late Arun Jaitley offered Nitish Kumar a platter to Modi within two years

after JD (U) walked out of alliance with Lalu. Why Nitish chose to defect will always be shrouded in mystery as he could have been a huge challenge to Modi in 2019 particularly when Rahul Gandhi was positively inclined to him. Both had held several meetings. But for some "compelling reason", Nitish switched sides. He paid the price in 2020 when BJP marginalized him and he is sitting on the fence again. But Mamata is made of a different metal. She has shown her fighting skills, emerged unscathed in scams gripping her party stalwarts, half of them in BJP, a bachelor and loner type like Modi. Today, she has high credibility compared to any Opposition leader. She fought a lonely battle while Nitish either needed Lalu or BJP to survive

## LOVE FOR ANIMALS



A zoo-keeper feeds Roofed Turtle at Assam State Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden, on World Turtle Day in Guwahati PFI PHOTO

## WRESTLER MURDER CASE

# Sushil Kumar, his associate held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** Evading arrest for nearly three weeks, Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar was nabbed Sunday and remanded in police custody for six days in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that had led to the death of a wrestler here.

Kumar (37) and his associate Ajay alias Sunil (48) were arrested in outer Delhi's Mundka area, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) P S Kushwah said.

Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra granted the police six-day custody of Kumar, who was physically produced in court.

The stockily-built athlete, who used to be wrapped in the tricolour after winning medals for the nation, had his face masked by a towel and both hands held by Delhi Police's special cell officers.

Ironically, all this unfolded on World Wrestling Day.

The case relates to the May 4 incident at the stadium in which wrestler Sagar Rana died and two of his friends, Sonu and Amit Kumar, were injured after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers.

The Delhi Police had announced



a reward of ₹one lakh for information leading to the arrest of Sushil Kumar, who had since been on the run. Another reward of ₹50,000 was announced for Ajay Kumar's arrest.

After questioning him for around 30 minutes inside the court, the police sought his custody for 12 days for further interrogation.

During the proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava, representing the state, told the court that Kumar's custo-

dial interrogation was required to unearth the whole conspiracy and motive behind the crime.

"The camera at the stadium was dismantled and he took away the DDR of the place. This has to be recovered," the prosecutor told the court, seeking Kumar's custody. Earlier, a Delhi court had refused to grant anticipatory bail to the two-time Olympic medallist, saying he was prima facie the main conspirator and allegations against him were serious in nature.



# international



India is running away from table talks with Pakistan on Kashmir. Let this be clear, Pakistan's position on the issue of Kashmir is very clear. There can be no talks until India reverses its decision of August 5, 2019  
SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI | FOREIGN MINISTER, PAKISTAN

## EX-BBC CHIEF QUILTS TOP JOB OVER DIANA INTERVIEW

A former BBC chief who was criticised for his "woefully ineffective" probe into Martin Bashir's deception in securing a bombshell interview with Princess Diana Saturday resigned as chair of Britain's National Gallery



## of the day quote

From the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, I warned that no one is safe until everyone is safe...Grossly unequal access to vaccines, tests, medicines and supplies, including oxygen, have left poorer countries at the mercy of the virus

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

After careful consideration, we determined that we must do what we can to support Haitian nationals in the United States until conditions in Haiti improve so they may safely return home

ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS | HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY, US

When the SAR government discusses travel arrangements with other countries or places, it will require Hong Kong residents to be vaccinated, to make sure they would not be infected when they are abroad

CARRIE LAM | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HONG KONG

## SHORT TAKES

### B'desh lifts ban on travel to Israel

Dhaka: Bangladesh has announced to lift a decades-long travel ban to Israel, a move welcomed by the Jewish state which called upon Dhaka to establish diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv for the benefit of the people of the two countries. Bangladeshi passports earlier had a clause written on them that said "This Passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel", but the government Saturday decided to remove "except Israel" from the document making it valid for the entire world. Israel has welcomed Bangladesh's decision to remove the travel ban.

### SL probes impact from ship fire

Colombo: Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) has launched an investigation into the possible environmental impact from a fire that erupted onboard a container ship in waters near the Colombo port. The Singapore-flagged vessel, X-PRESS PEARL, carried shipment of nitric acid, and the investigation is intended to see if the incident has caused any damage to the marine environment, Xinhua news agency quoted the MEPA as saying Saturday.

### Airstrikes hit Houthi bases

Sanaa: The Saudi-led Arab coalition launched multiple airstrikes on Houthi positions in Yemen's oil-rich province of Marib, a government military source said. The strikes Saturday targeted Houthi positions and their military vehicles on the frontlines in western and northern districts of Sirwah and Madghal, the source told Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported 15 coalition airstrikes on Houthi positions in the two districts.

### Volcano leaves burning debris

Goma: Congo's Mount Nyiragongo unleashed lava that destroyed homes on the outskirts of Goma, but witnesses said Sunday that the city of 2 million had been mostly spared after the volcano erupted at night and sent thousands fleeing in panic. Authorities said at least five people had died in a road crash while trying to leave Goma, but cautioned it was too early to give a death toll in the hardest hit communities.

## ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE

# UNSC calls for full adherence



UN Security Council members have also called for the immediate need for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly in Gaza

AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

United Nations, May 23: The UN Security Council Saturday called for "full adherence to the ceasefire" in the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in its first statement since violence erupted May 10.

The statement received backing from the US delegation - which had blocked earlier drafts - only after the removal of a paragraph condemning the violence, a sensitive issue since it raised the question of blame.

An earlier draft said that "Security Council members condemned all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as acts of provocation, incitement and destruction."

That draft also "expressed concern about the tensions and violence in east Jerusalem, especially in and around the holy sites, and urged for the respect of the historic status quo at the holy sites."

In a statement Saturday, the Israeli Foreign Ministry thanked the United States "for its continued support for Israel and its right to

## Egypt sends aid to Gaza

Egypt has sent 130 truckloads of aid supplies, including foodstuffs, medicines, clothes and household essentials to the bordering Gaza Strip, after an 11-day bloodshed came to a halt in the besieged enclave, the government in Cairo said. In a statement issued Saturday, the government said that the 2,500-tonne aid package, provided by the Tahya Mir Fund under the presidency, also covers such supplies as mattresses, disinfectants, face masks, and baby formula, reports Xinhua news agency. The move came hours after a Cairo-brokered ceasefire between the Hamas and Israel.

defend its citizens," and it placed "full blame" for the recent violence on Hamas militants for firing thousands of rockets at Israel.

"We expect that the international community condemn and disarm Hamas, and ensure Gaza's rehabilitation while preventing the diversion of funds and weapons to terrorism," the statement said.

The US delegation, always one of Israel's strongest supporters in the UN, had also rejected a French draft demanding an immediate end to hostilities and calling for the unimpeded distribution of humanitarian aid throughout Gaza.

The Council reiterated the importance of achieving a comprehensive peace based on the vision of a region where Israel and the Palestinians live side by side in peace with secure borders.

## Cable car plunges to the ground killing at least 13

AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

Rome, May 23: At least 13 people were killed and two children seriously injured Sunday after a cable car plunged into the side of a mountain in northern Italy, emergency services said.

The accident occurred by the resort town of Stresa, which lies on the shores of Lake Maggiore in the Piedmont region.

The 20-minute cable car ride, popular with tourists, links Stresa with the 1,500-metre summit of the Mottarone mountain, and offers spectacular views of the Alps.

An emergency services spokesman said thirteen people were killed and two children aged nine and five injured and taken by helicopter to a pediatric hospital in the city of Turin. The ministry of infrastructure said in a statement that the accident occurred around 12:30 pm as the cabin was about 100 metres from the summit.

# UK to unveil digital visas to count migrants

IT MEANS PEOPLE WANTING TO COME INTO THE UK WITHOUT A VISA OR IMMIGRATION STATUS WILL HAVE TO APPLY FOR AN ELECTRONIC TRAVEL AUTHORISATION, SIMILAR TO THE US SYSTEM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 23: UK Home Secretary Priti Patel is set to unveil a new US-style digital visa regime at the country's borders in order to measure immigration levels in and out of the country, according to UK media reports Sunday.

The senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister is to confirm the so-called "sweeping changes" to the UK's immigration policy to "streamline" the way in which people come into the country Monday.

The post-Brexit changes will include the border being managed digitally, which the government says will be easier to navigate for businesses and allow for the first time to accurately count people in and out of the UK.

"Our new fully digital border will provide the ability to count people in and out of the country, giving us control over who comes to the UK," Patel was quoted as saying in the 'Observer'.

"Our new approach will make it easier to identify potential threats before they reach the border. The British people will have confidence that the strongest controls are in place to keep them safe," she said. The UK Home Office hopes to make entry to the UK fully digital by the end of 2025.

It means people wanting to come into the UK without a visa or immigration status will have to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), similar to the US system, with 30 million applications expected to be processed every year.

As well as launching her latest immigration plans, Patel will also

## CICADA INVASION



A cicada from Brood X clings to a flower after emerging from 17 years underground to join the trillions of cicadas that will surface in eastern US states in the coming weeks, in Falls Church, Virginia



focus on failings in the asylum system and the need to crack down on people smugglers. Earlier in the week, she was filmed accompanying police as they arrested suspected ringleaders of a people smuggling gang that used minicab and lorry drivers to move migrants in and out of the UK.

The British government has said that in the past 10 days, more than 140 foreign criminals have been removed from the UK, totalling more than 700 so far this year.

By the end of 2025. It means people wanting to come into the UK without a visa or immigration status will have to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), similar to the US system, with 30 million applications expected to be processed every year.

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PRITI PATEL | UK HOME SECRETARY

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# Oppn to file writ petition against House dissolution

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, May 23: Nepal's Opposition alliance Sunday postponed the registration of a writ petition in the Supreme Court and will file it Monday against the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President.

The Opposition parties, which had planned to register the writ Sunday, put off the procedure until Monday, citing lack of adequate time. According to a CPN-Maoist Centre leader, the petition will be filed at 10:00 am Monday, The Himalayan Times reported.

Leaders of the alliance Sunday were engaged in conducting meetings and collecting signatures of the lawmakers from the Maoist Centre, the Nepali Congress, the Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal, Rastriya Janamorchha and Madhav Nepal faction of the ruling CPN-

## POLITICAL POLARISATION



President Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives Saturday for the second time in five months and announced snap elections November 12 and November 19 on the advice of PM Oli

UML, it said. Although the signature collection campaign has not ended, more than enough people have signed up to prove a majority, the report quoted a Maoist Centre leader.

Alarmed by the President's step to dissolve the House yet again, the leaders of Nepal's Opposition alliance Saturday decided to take all legal and political means to counter PM Oli and President Bhandari's "unconstitutional, undemocratic and regressive" move.

The Opposition alliance blamed the president for making an assault on the Constitution and democracy in partnership with the prime minister, who had lost a trust vote in the House.

## PARL CALLS TO LIMIT ALLIANCE WITH IAEA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tehran, May 23: The Iranian Parliament Sunday called to limit cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), even though a resolution is in sight regarding talks with the US about ending sanctions linked to Tehran's nuclear programme.

"The IAEA had three months to fulfil its obligations, it did not do so and the deadline expired yesterday (Saturday)," Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Sunday.

Accordingly, the UN agency should no longer have access to pictures of and information from Iran's nuclear facilities, dpa news agency quoted Ghalibaf as saying.

Under an interim agreement reached between Tehran and the IAEA at the end of February, full monitoring of Iran's nuclear facilities would only start when the 2015 Vienna nuclear deal was implemented, and US sanctions lifted.

# EU decries junta's electoral body plan to dissolve Kyi's NLD

AGENCIES

Brussels, May 23: The European Union Sunday denounced a proposal by Myanmar's junta-appointed election commission to dissolve deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which overwhelmingly won the general election in November.

"If the Commission were to proceed with this proposal, it would show yet again the junta's blatant disregard for the will of Myanmar's people and for due legal process," a spokeswoman of the EU's executive Commission said in a statement.

Friday, media cited the chairman of the junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC), Thein Soe, as saying the panel would have to dissolve the NLD for committing vote fraud in the November election.

Myanmar's army seized power Feb 1, overthrowing and detaining the elected civilian leader Suu Kyi, who led a non-violent struggle against dictatorship in the last two decades of the military's 1962-2011 rule of Myanmar. The military justified its coup by accusing the NLD of obtaining a landslide victory through a manipulated vote, though the electoral commission at that time rejected its complaints. The NLD says it won fairly.

The EU echoed the NLD's position, underscoring the party's victory had been confirmed by all independent domestic and international observers. "No repression or unfounded pseudo-legal proceedings can grant legitimacy to the junta's illegal takeover of power," the spokeswoman for the EU Commission said.

"The EU will continue to denounce all attempts to overturn the will of the Myanmar people and to alter the outcome of the last general elections."

# Turkey marks a decade of coexistence with Syrian refugees

ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY, A MAJORITY OF THE SYRIAN COMMUNITY PREFERS TO STAY IN TURKEY DESPITE CHALLENGING LIVING CONDITIONS AND PREVAILING ANTI-REFUGEE SENTIMENT AMONG SOME LOCALS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ankara, May 23: Turkey has marked the 10th anniversary of immigration of Syrian refugees, who fled the Civil War in their conflict-ridden country.

Since the initial arrival of a couple of hundreds Syrians in April 2011, their number has increased exponentially, reaching 3.7 million, according to official data released Saturday.

Never to date, Turkey had witnessed a wave of immigration of such a scale, Xinhua news agency reported.

Novel institutions and policies have been established to address the challenge of offering Syrians a

new life in the country.

First welcomed in many camps near the Syrian border in southeast Turkey in line with an "open door" policy, the refugees now live scattered across the Turkish soil.

Roughly two-thirds are concentrated in urban areas, benefiting from European and Turkish humanitarian aid schemes.

Syrians are classified as having "temporary protection" status and not as refugees.

In a decade, nearly half a million Syrian babies have been born in the country.

"Turkey was confronted with a huge challenge of hosting so many refugees," Didem Isci, a researcher at Ankara's Social Sciences



University, told Xinhua. Isci stressed that rules of social isolation imposed during the coronavirus outbreak had also widened the social gap between Syrian and local communities.

According to a recent study, a majority of the Syrian community prefer to stay in Turkey despite challenging living conditions and

a prevailing anti-refugee sentiment among some locals due to an unfavourable economic climate.

Only about half a million Syrians have returned to northwest Syria since 2018. Meanwhile, Turkey and the European Union are in talks to renew a critical deal on the refugee issue.

The 2016 agreement envisaged that Turkey prevents refugees and migrants from trying to reach Europe in exchange for aid totalling 6 billion euros.

Ankara has, so far, spent around \$40 billion on Syrians, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan repeatedly said, urging European nations to offer more financial assistance.



# business

## of the day quote

There is an acute shortage of soybean in the supply line, leading to massive price escalation. The only option is now to ensure import to cool down the prices to save livestock farmers

**BAHADUR ALI** | CHAIRMAN, ALL INDIA POULTRY BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

With the support of the Tamil Nadu government, TAFE is happy to offer free-of-cost rental services to the small and marginal farmers of Tamil Nadu.

**MALLIKA SRINIVASAN** | MD, TRACTORS AND FARM EQUIPMENT LTD

We launched in India in November 2017 and have grown together with the audiobook industry and have helped grow it as well, especially in Indian languages where we are very strong. The overall growth (in India) has been strong

**YOGESH DASHRATH** | COUNTRY MANAGER, STORYTEL INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Renault-Nissan fights court battle

**New Delhi:** Renault-Nissan has told an Indian court it needs to continue production at its car plant to meet orders, rejecting claims from an employee union that Covid-19 safety protocols were being ignored at the factory, legal filings show. Renault-Nissan India and workers at its plant in Tamil Nadu have been locked in a legal tussle after workers petitioned a court to halt operations because social distancing norms were being flouted and health benefits were outweighed by the risk to their lives.

### IPMA seeks govt intervention

**New Delhi:** Industry body Indian Pipe Manufacturers' Association (IPMA) has sought government intervention to regulate the prices of steel, which are trading at an all-time high in India. In a letter to Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the body has also sought a temporary ban on its export, a move which will prevent steel players from diverting their produce to the international markets.

### Indiabulls Housing extends support

**New Delhi:** Indiabulls Housing Finance has extended its support initiatives for its Covid-hit employees. It has decided that in case of a death of any of its employees due to Covid, it would continue to pay the monthly salary to the bereaved family for a period of two years, among other measures. Gagan Banga, company's MD, in a mail said, "I would like to reassure all that we are with your family and you."

### Exide Life targets over 30% growth

**New Delhi:** Exide Life Insurance expects over 30% jump in new business premium during the current financial year, on the back of higher sales for term life products as well as focus on rider-based plans, a top company official said. "Last year when the pandemic hit and afterwards people got used to dealing with the new normal, we found that we had an improvement in customers paying their renewal premium. "We had improvement in persistency figure as well," Exide Life Insurance MD and CEO Kshitij Jain said. He said following the pandemic, there have been a rise for protection policies that the company is selling.

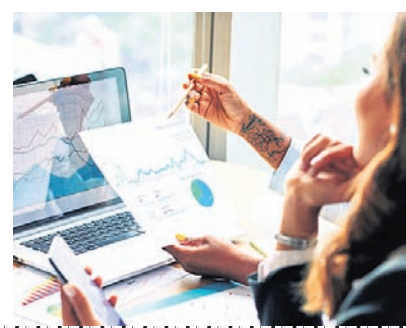


**Telecom vertical is one of the biggest markets for staffing industry...This was one of the verticals which grew even during the Covid times, and I believe that trend will continue in 2021**

**DEVAL SINGH** | BUSINESS HEAD, TELECOM, TEAMLEASE SERVICES

### NINE OF TOP-10 FIRMS GAIN ₹2.41TN IN M-CAP

Nine of the 10 most valued companies together added ₹2,41,177.27 crore in market valuation last week, in line with a strong broader market, with HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries topping the list



## INDIA CHALLENGES \$1.2BN CAIRN ARBITRATION AWARD

In a statement, the finance ministry refuted reports that the GoI has purportedly asked state-owned banks to withdraw funds from foreign currency accounts abroad in anticipation of the potential seizure of such accounts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** India has challenged an international arbitration tribunal asking it to return \$1.2 billion to UK's Cairn Energy Plc on grounds that it had never agreed to arbitrate over a 'national tax dispute', the finance ministry said Sunday.

In a statement, the ministry also refuted reports that the Government of India has purportedly asked state-owned banks to withdraw funds from foreign currency accounts abroad in anticipation of the potential seizure of such accounts.

While the government appointed a judge on the three-member arbitration panel and fully participated in the proceedings against India seeking ₹10,247 crore in back taxes from Cairn, the ministry said the tribunal "improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate."

India had seized and sold shares of Cairn in its erstwhile India unit, confiscated dividend due and withheld tax refunds to recover the tax demand it had levied two years after passing a law in 2012 that gave it powers to levy tax retrospectively.

Cairn invoked arbitration under the India-UK bilateral investment treaty. In December last year, Cairn won an award that held the levy of taxes using the 2012 law unfair on



the company and the tribunal asked the Indian government to return \$1.2 billion plus cost and interest.

In a statement, the finance ministry called the 2006 reorganisation of Cairn's India business for listing on the local bourses as "abusive tax avoidance scheme that were a gross violation of Indian tax laws, thereby depriving Cairn's alleged investments of any protection under the India-UK bilateral investment treaty."

"The award improperly ratifies Cairn's scheme to achieve double non-taxation, which was designed to avoid paying taxes anywhere in the world, a significant public policy concern for governments worldwide," it said, adding the government March 22 challenged the arbitration award in a court in The Hague - the seat of the arbitration. It is not clear if a court in The Hague can go into merits of levy of taxation by the Indian go-

vernment over a corporate amalgamation scheme.

Precedence dictates that challenges to international arbitration award are restricted to tribunal not following due process.

The tribunal that went into Cairn's challenge consisted of three judges: one judge each being named by the company and the Indian government and a third neutral presiding officer.

The three-member panel unanimously overturned the tax and asked India to return the value of shares sold, dividend seized and tax refund withheld. This together with interest and cost comes to \$1.72 billion.

With India refusing to pay, Cairn registered the award in nine jurisdictions including the US, the UK, Canada and Singapore and has started a process to recover the money from government-owned entities.

## IBA reaches out to govt for refund of CI waiver by banks

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) on behalf of lenders has approached the finance ministry to refund the burden fallen on their shoulders due to a recent Supreme Court judgment on the waiver of compound interest (CI) on all loan accounts which opted for moratorium during March-August 2020.

The March judgment of the apex court directed the banks to waive off compound interest on loans above ₹2 crore availing moratorium as loans below this got blanket interest on interest waiver in November last year.

CI support scheme for loan moratorium cost the government ₹5,500 crore during 2020-21, and the scheme covered all borrowers including the prompt one who did not avail moratorium. Various banks are at the different stages of executing the order.

Punjab & Sind Bank MD S Krishnan said the burden on the bank due to waiver works out to be around ₹30 crore. The issue of reimbursement of the waiver amount by the government is being pursued by IBA on behalf of the banks, he said. Asked if the finance ministry has responded to their request, he said, "So far, we have not heard anything positive on this."

The apex court order this time is only limited to those who availed moratorium. So, the liability of the public sector bank should be less than ₹2,000 crore as per rough calculations, sources had said.

The RBI March 27 last year an-



The March judgment of the apex court directed the banks to waive off compound interest on loans above ₹2 crore

Compound interest support scheme for loan moratorium cost the government ₹5,500 crore during 2020-21

nounced a loan moratorium on payment of instalments of term loans falling due between March 1 and May 31, 2020, due to the pandemic, later the same was extended to August 31. The apex court March 23, 2021, directed that no compound or penal interest shall be charged from borrowers for the six-month loan moratorium period, which was announced last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic, and the amount already charged shall be refunded, credited or adjusted.

The apex court refused to interfere with the Centre and the RBI's decision to not extend the loan moratorium beyond August 31 last year.

## Renault-Nissan fights court battle with Indian workers on operations

REUTERS

**New Delhi, May 23:** Renault-Nissan has told an Indian court it needs to continue production at its car plant to meet orders, rejecting claims from an employee union that Covid-19 safety protocols were being ignored at the factory, legal filings show.

Renault-Nissan India and workers at its plant in the southern state of Tamil Nadu have been locked in a legal tussle after workers petitioned a court to halt operations because social distancing norms were being flouted and company-provided health benefits were outweighed by the risk to their lives.



In response, Renault-Nissan has argued in a court filing - which is not public - that there was a "compelling need" to continue operations to fulfil domestic and export orders. It said all Covid-19 norms were being followed.

The case will next be heard on Monday at the Madras High Court when the state government, which is also party to the case, is expected to file its response.

A top Tamil Nadu state official told Reuters on Sunday automobile companies will be allowed to continue operations, but action will be taken against violations of social distancing protocols by any company.

## APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY AUDITORS

### CII suggests changes in RBI's guidelines

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has come up with several recommendations for changes in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) guidelines for appointment of statutory auditors by banks and NBFCs.

Commending the RBI's intent of working towards strengthening the audit quality and governance process, CII in a statement, noted that this process is critical and fundamental to trust and credibility of the capital market.

CII has suggested that the requirements related to reduction in the tenure of audit engagement, cap on number of audits and extended cooling off periods, may not specifically address any perceived concerns on audit quality.

These are inconsistent with the provisions in the Companies Act, 2013 and are not comparable with international practices and regulations as prescribed by the IESBA, PCAOB, SEC, etc., which are widely accepted and adopted globally, it said.



## O<sub>2</sub> CONCENTRATORS

# GST Council may decide on easing levy on imports



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** The GST Council, in its upcoming meeting, scheduled to be held May 28, is likely to take a call on levy of 12 per cent tax on import of oxygen concentrators for personal use. The Delhi High Court last week said that imposition of 12 per cent Integrated GST (IGST) on oxygen concentrators for personal use or those received as gifts is "unconstitutional".

The Court's observation came on a plea filed by an 85-year old Covid patient whose relative had sent oxygen concentrator from the US. It also quashed a May 1 notification

of the Finance Ministry which said that a 12 per cent IGST will be levied on oxygen concentrators imported for personal use or gift. Sources said the final decision on this issue would be taken by the Council in its upcoming meeting Friday.

Tax experts said that the Council may decide to exempt IGST on such imports as the revenue implications would not be much.

Abhishek Jain, Tax Partner, EY, said, the government had already provided exemption from IGST on free import of oxygen concentrators for Covid relief by any state government or any agency authorised by the state government.

# Retail industry urges state to provide 'relief package'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 23:** Retailers Association of India (RAI) urged both the state and union governments to provide relief package to the retailers so that they can fight out the deadly impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

RAI requested the extension of benefits of ECLGS 3.0 to retail companies. While this was mentioned in the announcement of ECLGS 2.0 it has not been clarified in the notification which announced ECLGS 3.0. This needs to be clarified and ECLGS funds made available to the retail sector immediately.

RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan said, "As of now, almost 80% of the retail stores are closed due to various restrictions across states. The cash inflow of the industry has come to a standstill, while the fixed operating costs remain intact. If a timely relief package is not provided by the government to ease the financial stress, then the industry will find it hard to survive."

The association also urged to announce a moratorium on principal and interest for 6 months for the 26 stressed sectors. Retail sector represents an investment of ₹2,50,000 crore and almost ₹75,000 crore could turn NPAs if urgent measures to ease the working capital challenges are not taken by the RBI and the Government of India.



Managing Director of Panda Retail Pvt. Ltd., Bhubaneswar Shiba Prasad Panda said, "About 90% of retail employees work at the stores, earning minimum wages and living a hand to mouth existence. There is an urgent need for relief package of some sort from the policymakers to help save jobs along with saving lives."

Jaspal Singh Arora, Managing Partner, Kalamandir Fashions, said, "Restrictions and closures severely impact a retailer's finances.

The entire supply chain will be under stress. Distributors, C&F manufacturers, raw material suppliers and the entire value chain will have order cancellation and loss of income, which may lead to permanent closures of business, loan defaults or NPA situations."

RAI also requested that interest rates on all loans to retail industry are reduced to an effective rate of 6% through suitable mechanisms such as interest subvention schemes.

# Covid trends to guide markets this week: Analysts

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** With earnings season largely coming to a close, equity markets this week would be guided by updates on the Covid-19 front as well as global trends for further direction, analysts said. Benchmarks closed the previous trading week with robust gains, enthused by a declining trend in Covid-19 cases in India, though the pace of the vaccination drive remains an overhang.

"The entry of new vaccines in the market which will ease supply crunch and a steady decline in the new Covid cases are factors

boosting investor confidence in the market.

Hence, the market will continue to focus on Covid numbers to pump in more optimism... Due to a relatively quiet week for economic data," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Equity markets may also witness volatility this week amid derivatives expiry Thursday.

"We feel global cues will continue to dictate the trend in near future. The recent buoyancy in banking and financial stocks is certainly encouraging and participation of other sectors on ro-



tational basis would further fuel the recovery," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

During the last trading week, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,807.93 points or 3.70 per

**We feel global cues will continue to dictate the trend in near future. The recent buoyancy in banking and financial stocks is certainly encouraging and participation of other sectors on rotational basis would further fuel the recovery**

**AJIT MISHRA** | VP (RESEARCH), RELIGARE BROKING LTD

cent. "Investors will continue to focus on trajectory of daily caseload and vaccination ramp up in the

country in the near term," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Grasim Industries, BPCL, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries and Central Bank of India are among the few major companies scheduled to announce their quarterly earnings this week.

Besides this, movement of the rupee, foreign institutional investors' investment trend and Brent crude prices would also be monitored by investors.

"Going ahead investors will keep a close eye on Covid-19 related development," said Sumeet Bagadia, Executive Director, Choice Broking.



SHORT TAKES

Asia Cup event shifted to 2023

**Dubai:** The 2021 edition of the Asia Cup will now be held in 2023 due to a lack of window in a rejigged cricket calendar that is constantly subject to change amid an evolving Covid-19 situation. This year's continental tournament was moved from Pakistan to Sri Lanka but rising cases in the island nation had led to its cancellation. All the big four Asian sides have packed schedules until the end of the year. So finding a window for the tournament this year would have been extremely difficult, the Asian Cricket Council said. "We want an event with top teams, so we will have it in 2023," the ACC said.

Covid-19 outbreak on Mount Everest

**Kathmandu:** A coronavirus outbreak on Mount Everest has infected at least 100 climbers and support staff, an expert mountaineering guide said. It is the first comprehensive estimate amid official Nepalese denials that the disease has spread to the world's highest peak. Lukas Furtenbach of Austria, who last week became the only prominent outfitter to halt his Everest expedition due to virus fears, said Sunday one of his foreign guides and six Nepali Sherpa guides have tested positive. "I think with all the confirmed cases we know now, there are 100 people positive for Covid-19 in the base camp, Furtenbach said on his return to this city.

Help promised

**New Delhi:** Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said Sunday his department will soon provide financial help to footballer Sangeeta Soren, who received a national call-up last year before the Covid-19 pandemic forced her to work as a daily wage labourer to support her family. Sangeeta has represented India in U-18 and U-19 events in Bhutan and Thailand. Then she was called up for the senior women's team. She has been working at a brick kiln in Dhanbad's Basamudi village. "I've been informed about footballer Sangeeta Soren, who has represented India in international competitions, and is in a financial crisis in this pandemic. My office has contacted her & financial help will be extended soon. Ensuring a dignified life for athletes is our priority," Rijiju tweeted.

Impressive feat

**Berlin:** Robert Lewandowski scored Saturday for Bayern Munich against Augsburg for a record 41st goal in one Bundesliga season to erase former Munich icon Gerd Mueller from the record books. Lewandowski, 32, was on target in the 90th minute with an easy tap-in to complete a 5-2 win as he gained sole possession of the record, after drawing level with former Bayern great Mueller last weekend. Mueller's 40 goals had come in the 1971-72 season and for many decades it had appeared to be a record for eternity.

Double for Coco

**Parma (Italy):** American tennis player Coco Gauff made a clean sweep of the titles at the Emilia-Romagna Open. She won the singles crown and then she paired with compatriot Caty McNally to win the title late Saturday evening. Earlier in the day, the 17-year-old Coco won her second career WTA singles crown, dispatching China's Wang Qiang 6-1, 6-3 in the final. At 17 years and 70 days old, Coco is the youngest player to win the double crown at a WTA since Maria Sharapova won both titles at 2004 Birmingham, at 17 years, 55 days old. AGENCIES

SPORTS FRATERNITY AGHAST AFTER OLYMPIC MEDALLIST SUSHIL KUMAR'S ARREST

# Fall from grace

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 23:** There was lingering disbelief and considerable disappointment as India's sports fraternity came to terms with Sushil Kumar's monumental fall from being one of India's greatest Olympians to an arrestee in a murder case. The stockily-built man, who used to be wrapped in the Tricolour after winning medals for India, had his face masked by a towel and both hands held by Delhi Police's special cell officers Sunday after being on the run since May 5. Ironically, all this unfolded on 'World Wrestling Day'.

Sushil has been reminded to police custody for six days. He had been evading a non-bailable warrant for his alleged involvement in the death of a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankar during a brawl at the Chhatrasal Stadium.

Incidentally Sushil is the only Indian to win two Olympic medals – a bronze at Beijing (2008) and a silver at London (2012). He is also a three-time Commonwealth Games gold-winner.

"What he has done for Indian sports is something that can never be taken away from him. That's all I want to say at this point. Let things be clearer," said boxer Vijender Singh. Incidentally both the Beijing Games and Sushil won medals at the Beijing Games.

Paddler A Sharath Kamal stated that the development is bound to have a negative effect. "If this has actually happened, it is unfortunate



DOWNFALL: Sushil Kumar (face covered) being led away Sunday by police personnel after his arrest

PTI PHOTO

and reflects badly on Indian sport, not just wrestling," said Kamal. "People look up to him (Sushil). So if he has done what he has done, it will negatively impact not just wrestlers but athletes from other sports also.

Captain of India's World Cup-winning hockey squad Ajitpal Singh still doesn't know what went wrong with the 'polite' man. "It is very shameful and unfortunate. Being a role model Sushil should have led by example and never indulged in such a brawl. He has got

**He (Sushil) has got everything in life, the sport gave him money and fame. It is very shameful and unfortunate**

AJITPAL SINGH

everything in life, the sport gave him everything, money, and fame," Ajitpal said.

Many other athletes also described Sushil as a simple person. They said they were baffled by

how things took such a turn. They preferred to keep their observations anonymous.

It is not just his brethren in Olympic sports, Sushil was much admired in the cricte fraternity too. A former player who has interacted with him at social events said he will wait for more details before forming an opinion. "He is still just an accused. ...It is disappointing but if he is innocent he will certainly get justice," the former cricketer said on condition of anonymity.

AGUERO GETS A BRACE IN FAREWELL GAME

## Liverpool, Chelsea ensure CL berths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, May 23:** Liverpool and Chelsea (CL) berths for the 2021-22 season, finishing third and fourth in the Premier League points table.

However, Leicester City lost out in the race for the Champions League as they suffered a shocking 2-4 defeat to Tottenham Hotspur to finish fifth in the competition.

In the last round games played Sunday, Liverpool beat Crystal Palace 2-0 with Sadio Mane getting a brace. The win helped Liverpool reach 69 points from 38 games while Chelsea who suffered a shocking 1-2 loss to ended on fourth place with 67 points from an identical number of matches.

In the other matches played on the last day of the Premier League, it was a walk in the park for already crowned champions Manchester City who routed Everton 5-0. It was a sweet farewell for Sergio Aguero who donned the blue jersey for the last time. The Argentine came in as a substitute

and scored two goals in what will be his final match for Manchester City. The other goals were scored by Kevin de Bruyne, Gabriel Jesus and Phil Foden. Man City finished on 86 points well ahead of their rival Manchester side, United who ended on 74 points.

A visibly emotional Aguero said he couldn't have dreamt off a better farewell. "It was a dream to get two goals in the final match for a club that will always remain an integral part of my life," Aguero said as he left the pitch.

Second-placed Manchester United also signed off on a winning note scraping past Wolverhampton 2-1. The goals were scored by Anthony Elanga and Juan Mata in the first half itself. The second half turned out to be a very scrappy affair with most the play restricted to the midfield.

It was a season Arsenal would like to forget as they finished eighth in the table with 61 points. However, the Gunners went home happy at least for the day as they got the better of Brighton 2-0 with both the goals being scored by Nicolas Pepe.

DIEGO SIMEONE'S MEN LEAVE IT VERY LATE WITH NARROW WIN OVER REAL VALLADOLID

## Atletico Madrid seal La Liga crown

AGENCIES

**Madrid, May 23:** Atletico Madrid finally emerged La Liga champions Saturday and Luis Suarez found vindication, his goal securing the 2-1 victory over Real Valladolid that clinched his team another remarkable Spanish title.

Suarez began the season crying after being forced out of Barcelona but ended it with his 21st goal of the season earning Atletico a first league triumph since 2014, this one at the expense of Real Madrid.

Atletico knew victory would guarantee them the title regardless of what Real Madrid did at home to Villarreal but they were never comfortable, with Valladolid taking a shock early lead. However, when the final whistle blew, the players ran onto the pitch, Suarez underneath a pile of red and white shirts, with Europe's most nerve-wracking and unpredictable title race finally complete.

Valladolid took the lead from an Atletico corner as Yannick Carrasco lost the ball and Valladolid broke at speed, ping-pong passes through midfield and finally through to Oscar Plano, the



DAY TO REMEMBER: Atletico Madrid players celebrate after winning the La Liga crown Saturday

former Real Madrid youngster who pulled away and fired past Jan Oblak.

However, after the interval Atletico came out with renewed vigour. Angrel Correa got the equaliser in the 57th minute and then Suarez got the winner 10 minutes later.

Suarez thanks club

Luis Suarez was in tears Saturday after his goal helped Atletico Madrid

clinch the Spanish Liga title. He thanked the club for rescuing him. The Uruguayan, who moved to Madrid from Barcelona in August, thanked Atletico for opening their doors to me during difficult times.

"I am filled with emotions," the 34-year-old Uruguayan striker told Spanish broadcaster 'Movistar'. He offered veiled criticism of his former club, who finished the sea-

son in third place. "I had to live through a difficult situation, starting the season being under-appreciated and Atletico opened the door to give me the chance to show that I could still be a force," Suarez said. "That's why I'm always going to be grateful to this great club for trusting me. Many people have suffered with me, my wife, my children, every day," Suarez said through his tears.

## Pugilists aim to pack a punch

CRUCIAL TEST FOR INDIAN BOXERS AHEAD OF TOKYO OLYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, May 23:** A crucial test of preparations for Olympic-bound boxers, the Asian Championships get underway here Monday with India aiming to better their record-shattering medal haul in the event's previous edition. A total of 19 Indian boxers – nine men and 10 women – will stake their claim for the top honours, which will also come with an unprecedented bonus of prize money this time.

The boxers reached here Saturday after a tumultuous few hours, which included a delayed landing and some confusion over approval paperwork. In addition, the team had to withdraw South Asian Games gold medallist Vinod Tanwar's (49kg) name after he tested positive for Covid-19.

The build-up and the subsequent journey seemed symbolic of the Indian boxers' Olympic preparations this year with Covid-19 disrupting training on several occasions.

"This will give us a good sign as to where we stand before the Olympics and where we need to adjust. It would be good for us that way," Indian men's boxing's High Performance Director Santiago



Indian boxers participating in the Asian Championships pose for group photo in Dubai

PTI PHOTO

Nieva said Sunday. India delivered its best ever Asian Championship performance in the 2019 edition in Thailand, claiming 13 medals, including two gold, four silver and seven bronze. This time too, expectations are high.

"We always come to win. We know it will be a very tough competition with many nations featuring Olympic qualified boxers and many medal winners from World Championships. But we are confident that our team will bring home a good results," Nieva asserted with confidence.

From the Olympic-qualified group, defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg), last edition's silver-winner Ashish Kumar (75kg) and past medallist Vikas Krishan (69kg) will be the ones spearheading the men's challenge.

Among the women, six-time World Champion MC Mary Kom, who has won five gold medals in this event in the past, along with Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and defending champion Pooja Rani (75kg) will be the strong medals bets. All four have already qualified for the Tokyo Games.

## BCCI to give T20 WC money within a week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 23:** The Indian eves, who made the final of last year's World T20 in Australia, will receive their share from the USD 500,000 prize money by the end of this week, a senior BCCI official said Sunday after it came to light that they are yet to be paid.

A report in the UK's 'Telegraph' newspaper quoted an official from the Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) as saying that the BCCI is yet to disburse the runner-up prize money of the global event, which was held in February-March last year. India were led by Harmanpreet Kaur and they lost to Australia in the final.

"The members of the Indian women's cricket team will be getting the share of their prize money by the end of this week. The transactions have been processed and I am expecting that they will receive their shares very soon," the senior board functionary told this agency. "We received the prize money amount late last year, so that has been the cause for the delay," he added.

Since last year, the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai have remained closed due to the Covid-19 situation across India leading to delay in payments all across.

GIRO D'ITALIA THROWING UP NEW FACES

## Campenaerts sprints to victory in stage 15

AGENCIES

**Rome, May 23:** Victor Campenaerts (Team Qhubeka Assos) won Sunday his first World Tour victory in stage 15 of the Giro d'Italia in Gorizia. The Belgium time trial specialist attacked out of a large breakaway of 15 riders taking a small group clear: Only Oscar Riesebeek (Alpecin-Fenix) was able to live with Campenaerts and the pair was engaged in a fierce tactical battle as they neared the finish line.

In the sprint to the finish line, Campenaerts showed that he had enough power in his legs to ensure victory.

Stage 16 will certainly be tougher Monday. It will be a day to climb with the route passing through the Dolomites the riders will have climbs of over 2,000 metres thrice. They will then have a steep descent at Cortina D'Ampezzo, as they approach the finish line.

"It was fantastic," said Campenaerts. "This morning at breakfast we said 'what else can we do to make this Giro greater for the team?' Three victories are just epic, we went all-in for today as it was the last chance to get a good re-



Victor Campenaerts

sult with the team we have," Campenaerts was quoted as saying by 'cyclingnews.com'.

We gave everything at the start. It was quite dramatic with the crashes. We were already away in the first few kilometres but we did the same thing again. Three guys in the breakaway and we were just so committed. We all had a good result and I took the victory. We try to give everything for each other and we did an amazing race," he added.