



TURNING POINT

Actor Huma Qureshi has revealed a particular incident that changed her life completely

LEISURE P2



JAISHANKAR IN US

Minister S Jaishankar is in the US to review the progress in bilateral relations between the two countries

INTERNATIONAL P10



VILLARREAL TRIUMPH

Villarreal overcome Man United challenge via sudden death penalties to win the Europa League

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Not vaccine, bed or oxygen... what needs to be tackled first is states' bid to remove PM's photo from certificate!

Music director Shantiraj dead

Bhubaneswar: Renowned Odia music director Shantiraj Khosla passed away Thursday at the Covid-19 ward of the SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack. He was 50. Family sources said Khosla had tested positive for Covid-19 some days back and was under home isolation. He complained of breathing problems Thursday morning and was immediately rushed to the SCBMCH. However, doctors could not save him. A pall of gloom descended on the Odia film industry after news of his demise broke. P3

Newborn babies named after 'Yaas'

Bhubaneswar: To make 'Yaas' a permanent feature in their lives, parents of two newborn babies decided to name them after the cyclone. A total of 750 babies were born during 'Yaas' out of which 69 were in Bhadrak district only. Both the new mothers gave birth during the landfall of the cyclone. In Balasore district, Sonali Maiti gave birth to a boy while in Kendrapara district Saraswati Bairagi delivered a girl. P3

Another Covid vaccine on anvil

Paris: Production of another potential vaccine against Covid-19 will begin within weeks, its developers Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline said Thursday. They launched a large trial enrolling 35,000 adult volunteers in the US, Asia, Africa and Latin America. If the trial is successful, regulators could approve the vaccine for use in the last three months of the year, the drugmakers said in a statement.

Mission restoration starts

Chief Minister conducts aerial survey of worst-hit districts by cyclone 'Yaas'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made an aerial survey of the cyclone Yaas-hit areas Thursday and asked officials to complete restoration work on war-footing. The CM conducted a review meeting Thursday evening and directed officials of the various departments to provide special emphasis on relief, restructuring and restoration of infrastructure. He asked concerned district collectors to report damages suffered by houses in the affected districts within a week.

Patnaik also asked officials to ensure restoration of drinking water and power supply with immediate effect. The officials have been instructed to be vigilant as there is a possibility of floods in the lower catchment areas of the Baitarani river. "Odisha has once again proved successful and effective in managing natural disasters with the active participation of people," Patnaik said.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra said that Bhadrak and Balasore districts were the worst affected by 'Yaas'. He informed that power supply has been restored in all areas except the submerged ones. Drinking water supply



ASSESSMENT TOUR: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik makes an aerial tour Thursday of the districts affected by cyclone 'Yaas' OP PHOTO

is being ensured with generators and tankers in the affected areas.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said in a statement that over seven lakh people in 12 districts had been evacuated ahead of the cyclone. They were shifted to 8,410 cyclone shelters and safe houses. Jena informed that 200 blocks in the state received heavy rainfall with Kusumi block in Mayurbhanj district recording the highest at 515mm.

Energy department officials informed restoration work for 33KV and 11KV feeders are going on in full swing and

PM to visit Odisha today

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will Friday visit Odisha to review the situation in the aftermath of cyclone 'Yaas' that wreaked havoc in the state. According to the Prime Minister's office, Modi will hold discussions with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and officials of various departments to review the situation in the cyclone-hit areas. The Prime Minister will also undertake an aerial survey of the areas affected by the severe cyclonic storm in Odisha.

would be completed soon. Of the 30 lakh affected consumers, power supply will be ensured to 23 lakh by Thursday itself. Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department officials said water supply has been affected in 62 blocks due to 'Yaas'. Piped water projects have been restored by using 571 generators while 346 tankers have been deployed for remaining areas.

Works department officials said that Covid-19 hospitals have not suffered any damage due to the cyclonic storm. However, roads (both NH and state highways) have suffered damage to the tune of ₹31.97 crore.

ODISHA REGISTERS SHARP DECREASE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: Odisha reported Thursday a sharp decline in Covid-19 cases with 6,376 new infections. It was a sharp fall from the 11,623 cases reported Wednesday. However, experts attributed the decrease to lesser number of testing which was suspended in many districts across Odisha due to the very severe cyclonic storm 'Yaas'. The total tally of infected persons in Odisha stands at 7,32,739.

Out of the new infections, 3,774 were reported from quarantine centres while 2,962 persons contracted the virus locally.

However, the daily fatalities continued to be quite high with 34 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to information available from the Health and Family Welfare department.

Health services director Bijay Mohapatra acknowledged the sharp decline in the number of Covid-19 cases could have happened due to the lesser number of testing. "The rate of Covid-19 testing in Odisha has decreased since the last two-three days

India reports 2.73L cases

DELHI: India's Covid-19 infection tally climbed Thursday to 2,73,69,093 as 2,11,298 more people tested positive for the disease in a day. In a span of 24 hours, India also reported 3,847 deaths... the first time that the single-day fatality rate has dropped less than the 4,000-mark in a couple of weeks. The new fatalities took the total toll in India to 3,15,235, the Health Ministry said. The daily positivity was recorded at 9.79 per cent. It has been less than 10 per cent for three consecutive days now, the ministry said.

due to cyclone 'Yaas,'" said Mohapatra. He also informed that the positivity rate has come down to 14 per cent from 20 per cent.

The Odisha government had suspended Covid-19 testing, vaccination and door-to-door survey in Balasore, Bhadrak and Mayurbhanj districts from May 25 to 27 due to the impeding cyclonic storm. These activities will resume after people start returning to their houses, Mohapatra said.

'Govt should print cash immediately to boost economy'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 27: One of India's top bankers and president of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) Uday Kotak said Thursday that India immediately needs to print cash to support the economy that has suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Kotak pointed out that tough times need drastic measures and printing of new cash is the only way out.

Kotak, the chief executive of Kotak Mahindra Bank said this expansion needs to be done in two parts. The first will be for those at the bottom of the resources pyramid, and the other for protection of jobs for sectors affected by the pandemic.

"In my view, this is the time to expand the balance sheet of the government, duly supported by the Reserve Bank of India for monetary expansion or printing of money. Time has come for us to be doing some of that... If not now, when?" Kotak was quoted as saying by 'NDTV'. "Medical benefits to the poorest of the poor need to be given," he added. For direct cash transfers to the poor, the CII chief recommended a government expenditure of up to one per cent of GDP or between ₹1 lakh crore and ₹2 lakh crore.

Keonjhar, Bhadrak dists face flood-like situation

WITH BAITARANI IN SPATE, LOW-LYING AREAS IN DANGER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: A flood-like situation looms large in low-lying areas in the vicinity of Baitarani river as the water level is flowing above the danger mark at Anandapur in Keonjhar district and Akhuapada in Bhadrak district. Due to heavy rains during the last 48 hours, the flood threat is growing in these two places. Road communication between Angul and Keonjhar has also been disrupted with flood-water flowing on NH-49. Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said Thursday that there is every possibility of medium-level floods occurring in these two districts.

Currently, the water level of Baitarani stands at 39.28 metres at Anandapur against the danger level of 38.36 metres. The water level at Akhuapada has risen to 18.47 metres above the danger level of 17.83 metres. Till now the increase in water level is continuing," informed



A temple lies half-submerged as water level of the Baitarani river continues to rise in Bhadrak district

Jena. However, both the Subarnarekha and Budhabalanga rivers are flowing below the danger mark while the water level is also low in the Salandi river, he said.

The SRC said that the district administrations of Jajpur, Bhadrak, Kendujhar and Kendrapara have been warned regarding the possible flood-like situation. So, people residing in the low-lying areas of the districts are being relocated. Besides, many embankments

at various places, mainly in Kendrapada and Balliapal (Balasore) have been damaged due to high tides and gusty winds under the influence of cyclone 'Yaas' that hit the district Wednesday morning. Rohit Sethi, a senior official of the Water Resources department said, "We are spot-monitoring the water level. People living in low-lying areas have already been warned. Any possible breach in the river embankment will be repaired soon."

Fugitive Choksi to be deported to Antigua only

DIAMANTAIRE'S LAWYER CLAIMS THAT HE DID NOT GO TO DOMINICA 'VOLUNTARILY'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 27: Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne has asked neighbouring Dominica to deport fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi directly to India and not sent him back to the Caribbean island. Choksi was detained Tuesday night and then taken into custody Wednesday by cops in Dominica, after he fled Antigua and Barbuda allegedly. He had gone out for dinner Sunday evening and then had gone missing. Later on, his car was found close to a harbour in Antigua.

However, Choksi's lawyer Vijay Agarwal contended Wednesday that since his client acquired the citizenship of Antigua, he ceased to be a citizen of India. So Dominica can only deport the fugitive jeweller to Antigua.

In a late night development, the Dominican Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said that Choksi will be deported to Antigua. "Choksi would be charged with illegally entering Dominica. By the rule of law, he



■ Choksi is wanted by the CBI and the ED in connection with the over ₹13,500 crore PNB loan fraud case

■ Choksi went missing Sunday from Antigua after going out for dinner

■ Antigua PM had asked Dominican authorities to directly repatriate Choksi to India

will be sent back to his home country Antigua and Barbuda, where he holds citizenship for the past four years," CID officials were quoted as saying by local channel 'WIC' news.

Earlier after news of Choksi's arrest in Dominica came Tuesday night (local time), Browne told local media that he has given 'clear instructions' to

Choksi can only be sent back to Antigua as per Immigration and Passport Act Section 17 and 23 of the country.

"As per Indian Citizenship Act Section 9, the moment Choksi acquired the citizenship of Antigua he ceased to be a citizen of India. Hence legally he can be deported only to Antigua," said Agarwal.

The lawyer also indicated that Choksi may have not gone to Dominica 'voluntarily' and may have been forced to do so. "My understanding is that his reaching Dominica is not voluntary. It is fishy that nobody is trying to find out how he reached Dominica," Agarwal pointed out.

It should be pointed out that Dominica was one of the first nations to receive Covid-19 vaccines from India. External Affairs Minister had given this news February 21 in a tweet. He said, "A gesture of goodwill, an example of support. Made in India vaccines arrive in Dominica." May be it was because of '#VaccineMaitri', India was expecting that Choksi will be repatriated to India. Agarwal however, pointed out that

Jails rapidly becoming Covid breeding grounds

816 INMATES TEST POSITIVE IN MAY ONLY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: Prisons across Odisha are turning out to be breeding grounds of Covid-19 infections rapidly. It is happening because of overcrowding of the jails and lack of healthcare amenities. As per data provided by the Prisons Directorate, a total of 816 inmates have tested Covid-19 positive in May. The cases have been reported from 33 of the 87 prisons in Odisha.

Prison authorities also informed that 420 inmates out of those who had tested positive have already recovered till May 26. The rest of the infected are undergoing treatment in quarantine centres of the prisons. Those who are turning critical are being admitted to various Covid care hospitals in the state. The directorate claimed that several precautionary measures have been taken at the prisons to prevent the spread of the virus. Sixty two sub-prisons have been provided ₹15,000 each for procurement of medicines and Covid-19 prevention kits. The district and special jails have been given ₹25,000 each for the same purpose. Following the intervention of a high-powered committee (HPC), 658 inmates have been shifted from over-congested prisons to other jails with lesser number of prisoners after taking permission of the respective courts. A total of 18,580 prisoners are lodged in various prisons against the schedule capacity of 19,824. The total prisoner population in Odisha was 20,150 May 1.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	51115.22	↑ 97.70
NIFTY	15337.90	↑ 36.40
DOLLAR	72.63	↓ ₹0.20
EURO	88.58	↓ ₹0.05
GOLD	₹48,470	↓ ₹314
SILVER	₹71,235	↓ ₹176

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	33.2°C	32.8°C
MIN	24.2°C	23.0°C
Humidity	68%	73%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

leisure



DOUGLAS WANTS KRASINSKI TO PLAY HIM ON SCREEN

Veteran actor Michael Douglas would like actor John Krasinski to play him in a biopic. Krasinski is known for his film *A Quiet Place* as well as the series *Jack Ryan* and *The Office*.

PITT WINS JOINT CUSTODY OF CHILDREN WITH JOLIE

Hollywood star Brad Pitt has been granted joint custody of his children with his former wife, actress Angelina Jolie, following a long court battle. The two are parents to Pax, 17, Zahara, 16, Shiloh, 14 and 12-year-old twins Vivienne and Knox. Maddox, 19, is not subject to the custody decision.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will pay attention to the voice of your inner self today. This will help you implement all your plans perfectly. You will not only be jovial, but you will also not let disappointments cow you down. Ganesh says not only today, but you can summon this quality whenever you like.

TAURUS
Ganesh is pleased to see that you have a bright day ahead. Your efforts are due to give the results you expect. If you are in a mood to achieve something more than usual, this is the day for it. You are not likely to be disappointed.

GEMINI
Today, the bond that you share with your friends will get stronger. You are also likely to fall in love. If you are already in a relationship, you will plan to validate your bond either through an engagement or marriage. If you are a student, this is a good phase for you.

CANCER
There is every possibility that today, you will be probing and prying about your future, predicts Ganesh. A visit to a well-known astrologer cannot be ruled out. Also, you are likely to consult a doctor. It is all due to your bad lifestyle and habits. You had better improve your lifestyle.

LEO
Fortune smiles on but a few, and when it does, it can take you to places you have never even dreamt of. Today is an exceptional day, in the sense that Lady Luck is backing you in all earnestness. So go with the flow and take your chances.

VIRGO
You will start the day by scribbling down things to do. But don't just jot them down; instead, set realistic goals and prioritise them. Items you mark highest will demand quick actions, cautions Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you will be able to spend more time with your friend circle. You will be attracted to someone of the opposite sex. In the evening today you will be able to take out your beloved for a romantic evening combined with a drive and dinner at a restaurant.

SCORPIO
It is more than likely that you will find yourself in a tricky situation today, says Ganesh. You may start the day feeling lonely and empty but yet, at the same time, you will have some responsibility that will prevent you from showing it. Try to keep your mind off negative thoughts. Work and friends will help you cheer up later in the day.

SAGITTARIUS
Dressed to kill - this phrase is enough to describe you today, says Ganesh. Decked up from head to toe in chic attire and classy jewellery, you make a bold statement. Like a magnet, you will attract attention at a party. Don't get surprised if your list of admirers becomes longer.

CAPRICORN
Your investments, inheritance, receipts, etc. will keep your pockets filled with cash. No sooner you try to put them in safe; there will be more than one reason for some expenditure. Keeping a watch on incomes and expenses both will help you avoid any monetary problems, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
The day seems normal as you are unlikely to encounter unpleasant situations, says Ganesh. The high point of the day will be your consummate skill with which you will handle mundane tasks. Ganesh reminds you of the saying, "Success is one percent inspiration and 99% perspiration."

PISCES
Well begun is half done. With this in mind, you will set out to actively seek the cooperation of your colleagues and the sanction of your seniors to tackle some important projects, says Ganesh. The evening should find you heading out to watch a movie or doing something creative, like painting.

Nobody performs well under stress: Elnaaz

Mumbai: Actress Elnaaz Norouzi says she is not one to stress over performing well on screen or choosing the right project. The actress, who has been seen in the web series *Sacred Games* as well as the OTT-released film *Hello Charlie*, feels if she takes on pressure, she won't be able to perform well. "I believe that nobody functions well under pressure, especially me. So, I never put myself in a place where I feel the pressure of performance. That's detrimental, especially in a creative field like ours," she said. Talking about how she comes on board with a script, she says that it all depends on if she likes it and how different it is from

what she has done before. "I read the script and if I like it, and if I feel that it has potential, then I go for it. I never go for what I've done before or what people expect of me. It's my career, and the first priority is always what I love to do, and something that can be challenging for me as an actor. Hopefully that's the right script to choose," she says.



HUMA SHARES HER 'TURNING POINT' MOMENT



Mumbai: Actress Huma Qureshi says playing the protagonist Rani Bharti in the upcoming web series *Maharani* was exciting because it involved 'getting' a lot of what she knows, in order to become the character. She says moving from Delhi to Mumbai to be an actress was an experience that in some way helped her understand Rani. Rani is an illiterate village woman, oblivious to most things in the world outside, and yet she finds herself in the centre stage of Bihar politics after a twist of fate, and ends up being chief minister of the state. Like Rani's ig-

norance about the world of politics, Huma says she had no idea what it meant to be a part of Hindi film industry when she was growing up. "Moving from Delhi to Mumbai has been a turning point. It changed my life completely. I was living a different life in Delhi. I never thought that this was the world I belonged to," adds the *Badlapur* actress.

Neena had only ₹2,000 when Masaba was born

Mumbai: Fashion designer Masaba Gupta has revealed the anxiety her mother, veteran actress Neena Gupta, had to go through before giving birth. Masaba took to Instagram to share an excerpt from Neena's autobiography *Sach Kahun Toh*, where the actress talks about having very little money in her account that would be inadequate to afford a C-section delivery. The excerpt from the autobiography shared by Masaba, reads: "As my due date approached, I started to worry because I had very little money in my account. I could afford a natural birth because it would cost only Rs 2000. But I knew if I had to have a C-section, I would be in trouble because the surgery cost almost Rs 10,000." "Luckily, a tax reimbursement of rupees 9000 came through a few days before my delivery and I finally ended up with Rs 12,000 in my bank account," it says. "Good thing this money came through, because my doctor informed me that I would need a C-section. My father who had come down at the time to help me through the birth was livid. He said this was a ploy to just charge us more money," it further informs.

Friends - The Reunion: The one that flew down memory lane

The purpose of the show was always to remind the world that the hysteria still exists even after 17 years

AGENCIES
This Americal TV series was never really meant to reload the hysteria. The purpose was always to remind the world that the hysteria still exists. Seventeen years after the original series ended its run, the reunion special was essentially aimed at reiterating the fact that nostalgia around the series is still intact. Creators Kevin S. Bright, David Crane and Marta Kauffman have

wisely gone for an unscripted format, aware perhaps that no amount of smart story-writing could create an episode that would let them avoid comparisons with an original series that continues to draw overwhelming sentimental appeal. Bright, Crane and Kauffman let the cast be themselves, and also bring into the show the essence of the characters they played. One by one, they walk into Stage

24 on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank, California, and we get a close look at the sets that so seamlessly passed off as Monica's living room, Chandler and Joey's bachelor pad, the hallway between the flats, the fountain around which they groove to the title song and, of course, Central Perk. Essentially, the reunion special is about Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer being themselves, even as they let themselves be Rachel Green, Monica Geller, Phoebe Buffay, Joey Tribbiani, Chandler



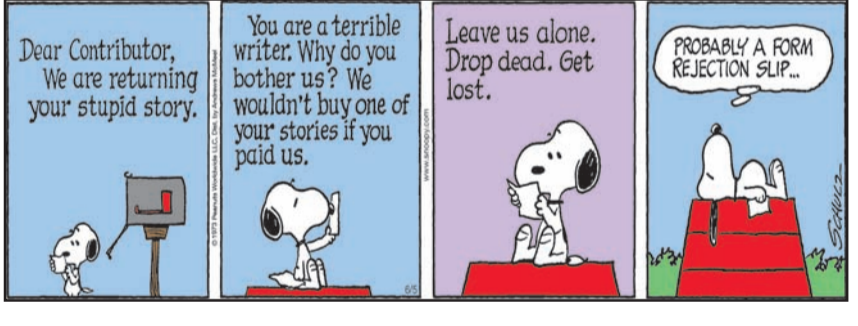
Cast: Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry, David Schwimmer, James Corden
Direction: Ben Winston

Bing and Ross Geller respectively. They open up their boxful of memories, seated on the orange sofa and next to the fountain of the theme song that are set on a stage. They relive the years that were, on and off camera, recreating highlight scenes and sharing behind-the-scenes trivia. It would have made for a perfect watch, but for a couple of

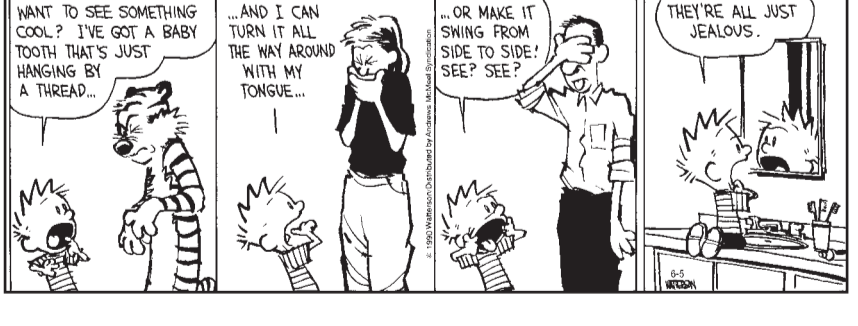
glitches. First, they should have let the six friends be. Instead, they put James Corden into the mix. The Late Late Show host is a master of chatting up celebs but, trying to fit himself on stage with the six and their sofa, he seems grossly out of place. The second thing lacking is audience connect. Watching Friends over 10 years - as well as in numerous reruns - one always became a part of the gang, in the same room which is missing in this special. *Friends: The Reunion* is the one that flew down memory lane and for legions of fans that is the one thing they've lived through the last 17 years.

TV SERIES REVIEW

PEANUTS



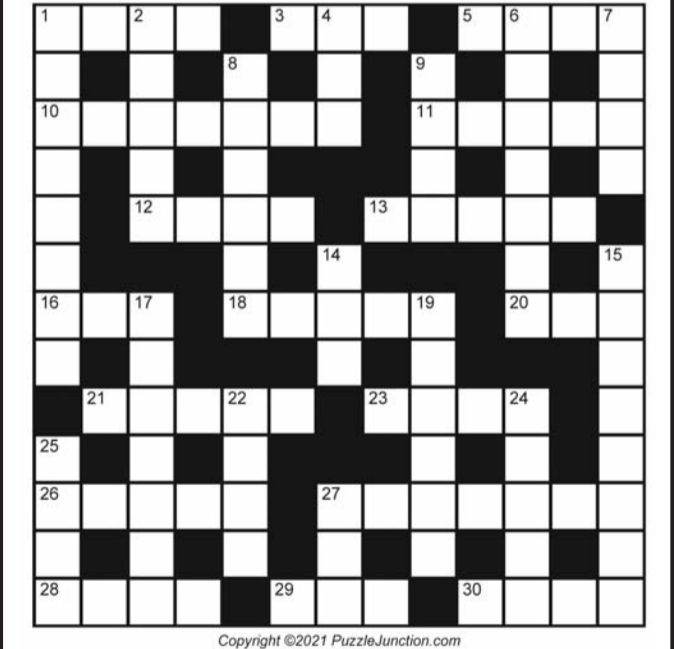
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



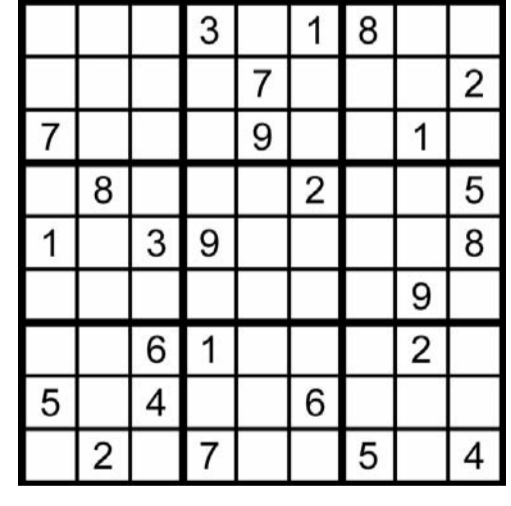
FUN post CROSSWORD



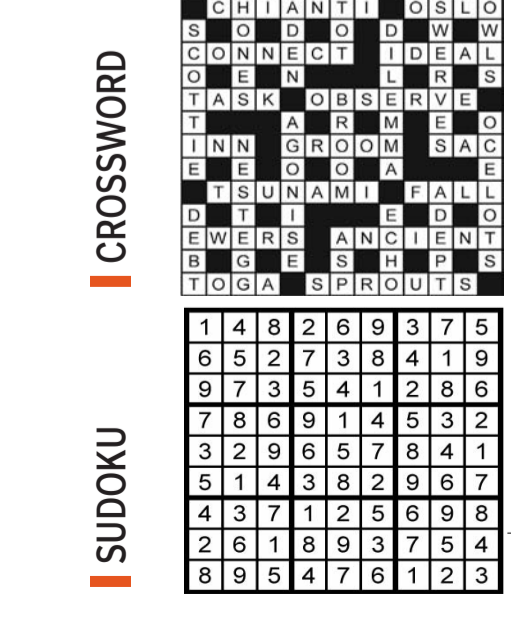
- Across**
- 1 Theatre offering
 - 3 World view
 - 5 Black, to poets
 - 10 Wine designation
 - 11 Words to a deadbeat (3,2)
 - 12 Picture of health? (1-3)
 - 13 Backhoe bucket
 - 16 Saturn's wife
 - 18 Get into shape
 - 20 Rocky prominence
 - 21 Magician's cry
 - 23 Small combo
 - 26 Leg joint
 - 27 Ocean occurrence (3,4)
 - 28 Fairy tale villain
 - 29 Tasseled topper
 - 30 Give off
- Down**
- 1 A place to gather
 - 2 Building addition
 - 4 Astonish
 - 6 Refuse to do business with
 - 7 Little bites
 - 8 Empty
 - 9 Colossal
 - 14 Race unit
 - 15 Kind of roll
 - 17 Pool relative
 - 19 Hospital workers
 - 22 Onion relative
 - 24 Loathing
 - 25 Mackerel shark
 - 27 Caustic chemical

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



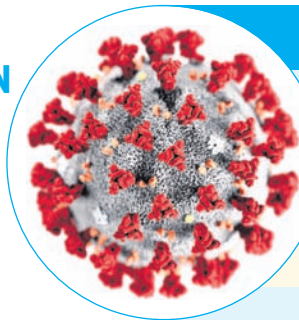
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



RUSH AMID LOCKDOWN

AG Square in Bhubaneswar witnesses traffic snarl despite the Covid-induced lockdown, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,92,51,999	15,09,25,146	35,15,442
India	2,73,69,093	2,46,33,951	3,15,235
Odisha	7,32,739	6,35,179	2,618

Close watch on cyclone shelter returnees' health



People at a cyclone shelter in Bhadrak district

STORM AFTERMATH

THE H&FW DEPT DIRECTS THE COLLECTORS OF BALASORE, BHADRAK, KENDRAPARA, JAGATSINGHPUR, MAYURBHANI, KEONJHAR, SUNDARGARH, PURI, CUTTACK, DHENKANAL, ANGUL AND KHURDA TO REMAIN WATCHFUL ON HEALTH STATUS OF PEOPLE ENGAGED IN RESCUE AND RESTORATION EFFORTS

THE DEPARTMENT ALSO ASKED THE COLLECTORS TO SENSITISE THE TEAMS ENGAGED IN DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEY TO BE PARTICULARLY VIGILANT WHILE SURVEYING THE FAMILIES RETURNED FROM THE CYCLONE SHELTERS AS WELL AS THOSE ENGAGED IN THE CYCLONE MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION WORKS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: The state government has asked the Collectors of 12 districts to ensure close monitoring of health of people returning from shelters and those engaged in cyclone management as they may develop symptoms for Covid-19, an official said Thursday.

In a letter to the Collectors of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Puri, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul and Khurda, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said that in a bid to protect people from the fury of cyclone Yaas, the state government has evacuated lakhs of people from vul-

nerable areas to safety where they stayed in close quarters. This apart, those engaged in evacuation as well as restoration works have also worked in close proximity to others. Hence, chances of their getting infected with novel coronavirus are high, said the department.

"As the families in the shelters are now returning to their homes and the restoration works will be completed very soon, it is important that the persons concerned should be closely monitored for Covid symptoms for at least a few weeks now," the H&FW department told the Collectors.

The department also asked the Collectors to sensitise the teams engaged in door-to-door survey to be particularly vigilant while

surveying the families returned from the cyclone shelters as well as those engaged in the cyclone management and restoration works. "The personnel engaged in the house-to-house survey need to monitor their own health as well. In case of any symptom, they should be immediately isolated and tested for Covid-19," said the H&FW department.

According to statistics shared by the Special Relief Commissioner's office, over 6.5 lakh people have been evacuated to safety, while over 5,000 workers have been engaged in the cyclone restoration as well as relief works.

750 babies born in 10 dists amid Yaas fury

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: As the state government was battling cyclonic storm Yaas, more than 700 births were registered in 10 coastal districts, with some families rushing to name their newborns after the menacing storm, officials said.

Sonali Maiti, a resident of Parakhi area in Balasore, said she couldn't have thought of a better name than 'Yaas' for her baby boy, whose birth marked the advent of the cyclone.

Similarly, Saraswati Bairagi from Kendrapara district said she named her newborn girl after the storm, as that way everyone would remember the time of her arrival.

State government sources claimed that as many as 750 babies have been successfully delivered at the hospitals in 10 coastal districts during the peak of cyclonic storm Yaas that made a land-fall on Odisha coast Wednesday.



A woman and her newborn baby in Jajpur district

The Women and Child Development department had directed the officials to locate the pregnant women with expected date of delivery in June first week and shift them to hospitals as part of the state government's preparedness to deal with the summer storm.

With the help of Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and others, the district administrations identified 4,555 such pregnant

Sonali Maiti, a resident of Parakhi area in Balasore, said she couldn't have thought of a better name than 'Yaas' for her baby boy, whose birth marked the advent of the cyclone

Similarly, Saraswati Bairagi from Kendrapara district said she named her newborn girl after the storm, as that way everyone would remember the time of her arrival

women. Out of them, 2,107 women, who were expected to deliver very shortly, were shifted to hospitals May 24. Amidst the chaos caused by the cyclone, 750 babies were delivered in 10 coastal districts of the state May 25 and 26, sources said.

Kendrapara had the highest number of deliveries (166) followed by Bhadrak (98), Khurda (95), Jagatsinghpur (84), Jajpur (69), Cuttack (61), Balasore (58), Keonjhar (55), Mayurbhanj (36) and Puri (28).

All the newborns and their mothers are safe and secured, state government sources said. Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti department Principal Secretary, Anu Garg, had earlier conducted a review meeting in virtual mode to take stock of the preparedness of the department to deal with the cyclonic storm. Senior officials of the department, DSWOs and CDPOs participated in the meeting.

Garg had directed the field functionaries of the department to ensure proper arrangement for shifting of pregnant women to hospitals.

She had also instructed the Anganwadi workers to make frequent visits to cyclone centres /relief camps. The officials had been directed to ensure medical check-up of high risk pregnant women, expectant mothers and severely underweight/severely Acute Malnutrition (SAM) children by following the Covid-19 protocols.

Oppn slams govt for lack of pucca houses in coastal areas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: The opposition parties in the state Thursday took a dig at the state government alleging that the latter has neglected the poor in cyclone-prone areas by depriving them of pucca houses.

BJP leader Bishnu Sethi told reporters Thursday that the state government has been boasting of massive evacuation activities whenever a cyclone approaches Odisha, but it has failed to provide pucca houses to them under state and central rural housing schemes.

"The state government has been boasting about large-scale evacuation of people during cyclones for the last few years. I fail to understand why at all such an exercise is needed every time. Where are the pucca houses in Odisha constructed under Indira Awas Yojana or Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana as claimed by the government?" he quipped.

Sethi also added, "The govern-



I fail to understand why at all such an exercise is needed every time. Where are the pucca houses in Odisha constructed under Indira Awas Yojana or Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana as claimed by the govt?
BISHNU SETHI | BJP LEADER

ment claims that it has been providing financial assistance ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 1.5 lakh to people for rural housing. Where is the money going then? Why those who are forced to shift to shelter houses in cyclone events are still deprived of pucca houses. The Union gov-

ernment had been sanctioning funds for rural housing but people are still suffering. This is a failure of the state government."

The state unit of Congress also took a pot shot at the government for alleged lack of timely action in cyclone-affected areas.

Party leader Suresh Routray said, "Odisha was lucky that the cyclone did not have devastating impact on the state. However, the people are suffering now due to waterlogging, uprooting of trees and other incidents. The Centre has allocated crores for cyclone mitigation to Odisha, but the funds are not being utilised properly," he said.

He also added, "The Chief Minister has conducted an aerial survey of the cyclone-affected areas. However, I urge the Chief Minister to address the issues of the people affected by the storm. We also urge the Union government to allocate around Rs 1,000 crore to the state for early rehabilitation works in the state."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



HEAVY RAIN TRIGGERED BY YAAS LASHES NORTH ODISHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 27: Heavy rain lashed several districts of north Odisha under the impact of Cyclone Yaas, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, Thursday.

Joda in Keonjhar district recorded extremely heavy rainfall of 268.6 mm over the past 24 hours, followed by 254.8 mm in Jashipur area of Mayurbhanj district, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said.

Lathikata in Sundargarh registered very heavy rainfall of 213 mm, while Basudevpur in Bhadrak recorded 195 mm precipitation.

JODA IN KEONJHAR DISTRICT RECORDED EXTREMELY HEAVY RAINFALL OF 268.6 MM OVER THE PAST 24 HOURS, FOLLOWED BY 254.8 MM IN JASHIPUR AREA OF MAYURBHANJ

Chandikhola in Jajpur and Deogarh received 177 mm and 131 mm of rain, respectively, it said. There was downpour of 112 mm

at Pallahara in Angul and 99 mm at Soro in Balasore, while Bamra in Sambalpur logged 98.4 mm rain, the Met office said.

The IMD had Wednesday issued a red warning for nine districts for the next 24 hours.

The Bhadrak district administration said the water level of Baitarani river at Akhuapada was 18.37 metres, above the danger mark of 17.83 metres, at 2 pm Thursday. Cyclone Yaas wreaked havoc in the beach towns in north Odisha and neighbouring West Bengal, as it hit the coast Wednesday morning with wind speeds of 130-140 kmph, inundating low-lying areas amid a storm surge, officials said.

2 more drive-in vax camps in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: In a bid to ensure a maximum number of people above 45 years of age get inoculated against Covid-19, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday added two more locations for drive-in vaccination in the Capital city.

According to the civic body, those above 45 years of age and willing to get inoculated against Covid-19, can drive either to BDA Kalyan Mandap at Kalinganagar (K-7) or Fortune Towers at Maitree Vihar in the City to take the jabs May 28 and 29. Prior booking of slot is a must for vaccination, the civic body tweeted.

Music director Shantiraj loses battle to Covid-19



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 27: Renowned Odia music director and singer Shantiraj Khosla passed away at the Covid ward of SCB Medical College and Hospital here, Thursday. He was 50.

According to family sources, he had tested positive for Covid-19 some days ago and was under home isolation. He complained of breathing issues Thursday morning. He was immediately rushed to the Covid ward of SCB.

However, the doctors could not save him. He lost his battle against the disease while undergoing treatment.

A pall of gloom descended Odia

film industry after the news of his demise broke. Khosla is survived by his wife and daughter, sources said.

Born in Koraput district in 1966, Shantiraj was a guitarist and a mandolin player himself. He gave music in around 50 Odia movies including Wrong Number, To Bina Mo Kahani Adha, Mate Ani Dela Lakhe Phaguna, Dhanare Rakhibu Sapatha Mora, Mu Sapanara Soudagara, Keun Duniaru Asila Bandhu, Don, Tora Mora Jodi Sundara, Baishi Pahache Kheliba Meena, ACP Ranveer and Jay Hind.

He had also given music direction for around 100 Odia albums. Some of his popular album songs are: Deunchi Mo Ba'an Akhi, Hai Samaya Bayasa Ku Mora Nela Chorei and Sagare Taranga Pari Athaya Adhira.

Khosla had also given music direction for several devotional songs including Sakha he, He Bandhu Bidaya and Padare Noopura. He had been felicitated with Odisha Chalachitra Purashkar in 2019.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and several Odia film actors including Anubhav Mohanty and Akash Das Nayak condole Khosla's untimely demise.



Carpenters fixing spokes to a hub as part of the chariot construction work at Rath Yard in Puri, Thursday

CHARIOT WORK IN FULL SWING



Blacksmiths shape iron clamps and nails for chariots



A crane being used to transport logs to Rath Yard

OP PHOTOS

SHOT OF HOPE



People queue up for vaccination against Covid-19 at Chauliaganj community health centre in Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

27 dists record above 10% positivity rate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: Data from the Union health ministry Thursday revealed that the novel coronavirus infection is not calming down in Odisha. At least 27 out of 30 districts continued to record an average test positivity rate (TPR) above 10 per cent during the last week, said the data.

As per a list published by the ministry, Bhadrak was on the top of the list with a TPR of 39.6 per cent, followed by Boudh (38.84 per cent), Balasore (37.29 per cent), Khurda (31.43 per cent), Dhenkanal (31.29 per cent), Cuttack (29.47 per cent), Angul (28.5 per cent) and Jajpur (25.91 per cent).

Tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district witnessed a positivity rate of 24.26 per cent while it was 23.01 per cent in Puri and 21.08 per cent in Rayagada, the ministry said.

Similarly, the TPR stood at 18.91 per cent in Jagatsinghpur, 18.71 per cent in Bargarh, 17.89 per cent in Nabarangpur, 16.09 per cent in Nayagarh, 15.75 per cent in Sonepur, 15.27 per cent in Sundargarh, 14.87 per cent in Kendrapara, 14.66 per cent in Kalahandi and 14.63 per cent in Koraput.

The other districts which were in the Centre's list are—Keonjhar (14.61%), Nuapada (14.10%), Ganjam (13.99%), Sambalpur (13.71%), Kandhamal (12.96%), Jharsuguda (11.33%) and Bonagir (10.25%).

The Health Ministry in its list



A health worker collects swab sample from a man in Bhubaneswar (FILE)

WEEKLY REVIEW

Bhadrak was on the top of the list with a TPR of 39.6 per cent, followed by Boudh (38.84 per cent), Balasore (37.29%), Khurda (31.43%), Dhenkanal (31.29%), Cuttack (29.47%), Angul (28.5%) and Jajpur (25.91%)

stated that 313 districts of India have recorded a positivity rate above 10 per cent during the week of which 27 districts are from Odisha.

No vaccination in 3 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: The State Health department Thursday said that there would not be any Covid vaccination drive in three districts of Odisha Friday.

These affected districts included—Balasore, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara. The government has planned only 674 sessions for Friday.

The drive was meanwhile suspended in seven districts of Odisha Thursday. The government was able to vaccinate a total of 99,537 persons in the ongoing inoculation drive Thursday.

Yaas weakens into depression

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: The very severe cyclonic storm Yaas has weakened into a depression and moved to Jharkhand Thursday. It will further weaken into a well-marked low pressure area during next 12 hours, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, Thursday.

"There will be no heavy rainfall in any place in Odisha for the next two days. Light to moderate rain may occur at one or two places of north coastal Odisha, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kandhamal and Gajapati during next three days," said director of Bhubaneswar Met Centre, HR Biswas. Thunderstorm and lightning is also likely to occur from May 30, he said.

Under the influence of depression over south Jharkhand strong surface wind speed reaching 35-45 kmph is likely to occur over northwest Bay of Bengal during next 12 hours. Therefore, the IMD advised fishermen not to venture into sea along and off Odisha coast during the period.

Maximum temperature is

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DEPRESSION OVER SOUTH JHARKHAND STRONG SURFACE WIND SPEED REACHING 35-45 KMPH IS LIKELY TO OCCUR OVER NORTHWEST BAY OF BENGAL DURING NEXT 12 HOURS

THE IMD ADVISED FISHERMEN NOT TO VENTURE INTO SEA ALONG AND OFF ODISHA COAST DURING THE PERIOD

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE IS LIKELY TO RISE BY 3-5 DEGREES CELSIUS IN NORTH COASTAL ODISHA AND SOUTH ODISHA DISTRICTS DURING NEXT 2-3 DAYS

likely to rise by 3-5 degrees Celsius in north coastal Odisha and south Odisha districts during next 2-3 days while it will go up by 3-5 degrees over the districts of north interior Odisha after 24 hours, he said.

Maximum temperature of 41 degrees Celsius was recorded at Paralakhemundi town in Gajapati district while it was 40.7 degrees at Bhawanipatna. All other places of the state recorded a temperature of below 40 degrees Celsius Thursday.

Odisha sends 22,836 MT O2 to needy states

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 27: Odisha has so far sent 22,836.855 MT of medical grade oxygen through 1,243 tankers under active supervision of the Odisha Police to 15 states or union territories facing acute shortage of the life-saving gas in treating Covid-19 patients, an official said Thursday.

In the last 35 days, as many as 112 tankers were dispatched from Angul with 1818.282 MT of oxygen, 280 tankers were sent from Dhenkanal with 4534.35 MT of the life-saving gas, 265 containers were sent from Jajpur with 5429.977 MT of the gas and 586 tankers carried 11054.246 MT of oxygen from Rourkela, said the official.

While 377 tankers with 7400.634 MT of oxygen have been sent to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana received 5569.089 MT of the gas filled in 321 tankers.

Tamil Nadu received 117 tankers filled with 2076.907 MT of medical grade oxygen, while Haryana received 172 tankers filled with



FILE PHOTO

3178.333 MT of oxygen.

At least 41 tankers with 660.051 MT of oxygen have been sent to Maharashtra, 629.321 MT of oxygen filled in 39 tankers have been dispatched to Chhattisgarh and 62 tankers carried around 1232.062 MT of oxygen to Uttar Pradesh in the period.

On the other hand, 66 tankers with 1163.97 MT of oxygen reached Madhya Pradesh, while Delhi re-

ceived 410.24 MT of the life-saving gas filled in 22 tankers.

While four tankers carried 107.89 MT of oxygen to Punjab, eight tankers with 151.12 MT of the life-saving gas reached Karnataka in the period.

Moreover, three tankers with 66.14 MT of oxygen were sent to Bihar, two tankers with 25.29 MT of the gas were sent to Chandigarh, seven tankers

In the last 35 days, as many as 112 tankers were sent from Angul with 1818.282 MT of oxygen, 280 tankers were sent from Dhenkanal with 4534.35 MT of the life-saving gas, 265 containers were sent from Jajpur with 5429.977 MT of the gas and 586 tankers carried 11054.246 MT of oxygen from Rourkela

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has formed a special cell with ADG (Law and Order) YK Jethwa as its nodal officer to monitor the transportation of oxygen to other states

with 126.388 MT of medical grade oxygen reached Kerala and two tankers with 39.42 MT of the life-saving gas have so far been sent to Rajasthan, added the official.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has formed a special cell with ADG (Law and Order) YK Jethwa as its nodal officer to monitor the transportation of oxygen to other states.

EXPERIENCE HELPS ECoR RESTORE SERVICES SWIFTLY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: East Coast Railway (ECoR) has resumed transport of essential commodities immediately after cyclonic storm Yaas crossed Odisha.

The ECoR has prepared itself to run passenger train services too. This was done due to prior planning and constant touch with ground level staffers deputed at different vulnerable sections in the affected areas, said the ECoR sources.

Pre-planning and experience from previous cyclones helped ECoR to speed up restoration work. Patrolling on tracks & bridges in sensitive areas and pre-cyclone minute-to-minute planning for restoration work thereafter have helped the ECoR in early resumption of the services.

ECoR had also taken steps like positioning of special teams for early restoration of tracks, signalling system, electrification and ensuring safety of train operations. Diesel locomotives had been kept in position for utilisation during failure of electricity. As red alert had been issued for coastal areas, ECoR was keeping watchful eyes on all the stations between Bhubaneswar & Bhadrak in Bhubaneswar-Kharagpur Railway Section.

ECoR General Manager had earlier directed the concerned officials to be on full alert towards any incident like flooding near the tracks and ensure safety and smooth



operation of trains.

Accordingly, all precautionary measures had been taken. The catch water drains and side drains have been cleared of silt, vegetation and other obstructions to ensure free flow of rain water. The water ways of bridges have been cleared of vegetation and other obstructions.

Patrolling of tracks was made to check for damages like submergence of tracks or breaches on lines due to heavy rain. After the cyclone, the team deputed at different places checked the tracks and bridges and restored the tracks submerged in water.

Tower wagons were made ready

Patrolling on tracks & bridges in sensitive areas and pre-cyclone minute-to-minute planning helped the ECoR in early resumption of the services

ECoR had taken steps like positioning of special teams for early restoration of tracks, signalling system, electrification and ensuring safety of train operations

at different places before cyclone and inspection and minor repairing works made through tower wagons done quickly after the cyclone where the gusty winds had affected overhead electric cables.

Thrust on rail-port connectivity

Railway stations like Bhadrak, Jajpur-Keonjhar Road, Paradip Port and Dhamra Port were put on high alert where heavy rainfall and speed wind were experienced during the cyclone. Port-railway operations at both locations were resumed by late evening after completing inspections of their loading and unloading machinery and tracks.

Resumption of train services

Railways have decided to resume some of the Special Train services which were cancelled in view of Yaas. It was decided to run goods trains from Wednesday evening, just after cyclone. Passenger train services have been resumed Thursday afternoon on normal route which were earlier cancelled due to cyclone.

INVITING TROUBLE



Throwing social distancing norms to winds, people make queues at an Aahar centre on Capital Hospital premises in Bhubaneswar, Thursday (OP PHOTO)

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FOOTPRINTS OF YAAS



Cracks appear on a road in Dhamnagar block of Bhadrak



ODRAF personnel in the search of a missing fisherman in Gamei river, Bhadrak



A woman farmer at her submerged farmland in Bant block of Bhadrak



Rain water overflowing on Basudevpur- Jamujhadi road in Bhadrak following a breach



Marooned Talachua panchayat office in Kendrapara



Bikers negotiating an inundated bridge on Simulia-Soro road in Balasore

YAAS AFTERMATH

Focus on relief, restoration work

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, May 27: Relief, rescue and restoration work have posed a major challenge for the district administration here after cyclone Yaas battered this district inundating over 86 villages and thousands of acres of farmlands.

District Collector K Sudarshan Chakraborty said that the relief and restoration work is the main focus of the district administration now. People whose houses have been marooned are being rescued and rehabilitated in the multi-purpose cyclone centres and provided with food and drinking water. Generators are being put into use to ensure drinking water supply to the areas which have been devastated due to the cyclone.

Over 86 villages have been inundated during the calamity and people in these areas are being provided with drinking water through mobile vans. Fire-fighters, ODRAF and NDRF personnel are clearing uprooted trees and utility poles on various routes for smooth movement of traffic and people.

All the officials are working to prepare an assessment of the losses to their respective departments in various blocks. The Health department is keeping a close watch on the situation to ensure that Covid epidemic and other diseases, especially water-borne ailments, do not spread.

People have been asked to inform the district administration about any problem they may be facing in their respective areas, while a detailed report on the total losses will soon be submitted to the state government for assistance.

On Wednesday, surging sea water crossed the coastline and entered 86 villages out of which 20 villages were marooned and cut off from the



BALASORE DISTRICT

Over 86 villages have been inundated during the calamity and people in these areas are being provided with drinking water through mobile vans. Fire-fighters, ODRAF and NDRF personnel are clearing uprooted trees and utility poles on various routes for smooth movement of traffic and people.

People have been asked to inform the district administration about any problem they may be facing in their respective areas, while a detailed report on the total losses will soon be submitted to the state government for assistance.

Fish farming, which is major occupation of people in the district due to its close proximity to sea and rivers, has been severely affected as hundreds of prawn gheries were destroyed in the calamity

outside world. The saline sea water also submerged thousands of acres of farmland in the district.

Fish farming, which is major occupation of people in the district due to its close proximity to the sea and rivers, has been se-

verely affected as hundreds of prawn gheries were destroyed in the calamity.

Power supply has been disrupted as many large trees, utility poles and transmission poles were uprooted due to the impact of the gale when the cyclone made its landfall near Bahanaga here, Wednesday. People, public representatives and administrative officials have joined hands and are relentlessly undertaking relief and restoration work.

Vishal Dev, Commissioner and Secretary to the Odisha government, said that the district administration has managed the calamity well due to advanced preparations. Except one death, no casualty has been reported from any part of the district.

The administration has been focusing on rescue and relief work in the 86 inundated villages close to the sea. People whose houses have been damaged are being provided with polythene sheets and other assistance. Loss assessment of the damaged farmlands will be

Flood threat looms large in Bhadrak's riparian areas

WATER LEVEL IN BAITARANI RISING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak/Bhandaripokhari, May 27: After witnessing the devastation caused by cyclone 'Yaas', a flood-like situation is staring at the local residents as well as the administration as Baitarani river is flowing above the danger level at Akhuapada in the district, Thursday.

While the river's danger mark is 17.83 metres at Akhuapada, the water level stood at 17.92 metres around Thursday noon, leaving the already panicked people in fear and apprehension.

With flood water continuously flowing into the river since Wednesday night, the water level in the river was at 15.46 metres at 10:00 am Thursday. It increased to 16.95 metres at 11:00 am. By 11:45 am, it had already crossed the danger mark of 17.83 metres. The water levels at 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm were 17.92 metres, 18.20 metres and 18.37 metres respectively.

As if the devastation caused by cyclone 'Yaas' was not enough, the flood threat has arrived as another jolt for people living in riparian areas.

made and adequate compensation will be paid to the farmers. The district administration will make an assessment of the losses and submitted it to the state government within deadline fixed by the government, he added.

Similipal National Park spared from nature's fury

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, May 27: Two months ago, a video of a Forest officer dancing in joy had gone viral on social media as rain brought much-needed relief to the fire-ravaged Similipal National Park.

Nature again came to the rescue of the national park in Mayurbhanj district by sparing it from the devastation of cyclone Yaas Wednesday.

According to the information, there is no loss of any human life, nor wildlife, Field Director M Jayayoganand said.

Yaas wreaked havoc in the beach towns in north Odisha and neighbouring West Bengal, as it hit the coast Wednesday morning with wind speeds of 130-140 kmph, inundating low-lying areas amid a storm surge, officials said.

Balasore, Bhadrak, and Mayurbhanj districts have been worst affected by the cyclone that touched the Odisha coast near Bahanaga, which lies south of Balasore and north of Dhamra Port.

The authorities of the National Park inspected vital infrastructure in the reserve, around 190 km north of Bhubaneswar. There has been no such injury among the staff, villagers, and the wildlife, he told this news agency over the phone.

Markfed to procure groundnuts from Deogarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, May 27: The state-owned Markfed will procure groundnuts from the farmers in this district and the district administration formed a committee for the purpose.

This was announced by district Collector Sudhanshu Mohan Samal recently during a video-conferencing held at the conference hall of the district collectorate.

The meeting decided to engage

Only a major wooden bridge inside the tiger reserve, five such small bridges, and a culvert have been damaged

However, there has been some damage to the infrastructure, the top official said.

A major wooden bridge inside the tiger reserve, five such small bridges, and a culvert have been damaged, Jayayoganand said. The official added that small patches of forest road, cumulatively 30 km approximately, had been affected.

Work was carried out late at night and in the morning to remove the uprooted trees and restore vital communication at the wildlife sanctuary, the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) tweeted. All the roads have been cleared for communication.

Established in 1973, Similipal derives its name from the 'simul' (silk cotton) tree and is known for the tiger, elephant, and hill mynah. Sal trees are found abundantly in the region. The area, a total of 5,569 sq km, was designated as a biosphere reserve by Unesco in 2009.

Jayayoganand said, the reserve received a lot of rainfall, but the wind speed was not as anticipated.

CYCLONE IMPACT

Hundreds of boats, prawn gheries destroyed in Balasore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rupsa, May 27: Cyclone Yaas has passed over the coast of North Odisha leaving behind a trail of destruction in the region which will take time to recover.

The calamity has severely damaged the Bahabalarup fishing jetty under Sadar block in Balasore district by damaging over 100 boats of fishermen and prawn cultivation in the area. Over 25 of our boats parked in the jetty have been damaged in the gale and high tidal waves, boat owners have alleged. Moreover, the strong wind has thrown up 100 of our boats on the road and embankment.

This has made it difficult for pedestrians and vehicles to move in the area. The fish market, Gangamata temple and the offices of fishermen and fish traders have been marooned in the sea water.

The strong wind has also blown the tin-roofs of many shops and business establishments in the area. The prawn gheries on 100 of hectares have been completely damaged after sea water entered them. Local fishermen have demanded the government's intervention and financial assistance.

GARBAGE DUMPING IN CANALS KILLS FARMING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, May 27: Canals of various water conservation projects here are choked with silt and garbage due to lack restoration work in Paralakhemundi town of Gajapati district. As a result, thousands of acres are deprived of irrigation.

According to reports, at different times the erstwhile royals of Paralakhemundi had dug large ponds and canals for irrigation. The prominent projects among them include Ramsagar, Sitasagar, Laxman Sagar and Gajapati Sagar. In the past, thousands of acres were utilised for irrigation throughout the year through a network of well planned canals.

Now, many canals are in bad shape, while some of them have become very shallow due to deposits of silt and garbage. Moreover, people have even encroached parts of many canals at different places.

A case in point is a 5-km-long canal from Ramsagar to Sitasagar.



ROYAL ERA WATER BODIES

Water stored in the ponds helped the farm sector flourish in the region. But over the years, as the township began to expand, farmers started selling their land.

Some people even grabbed parts of canals and built their houses on or near them. Last year, the administration removed encroachments

at some places, but many areas still remain under encroachment. The district administration has issued an order to hand over the 2.5 km of canal area from Patapatnam till Sitasagar to the local civic body.

The problem is that effluents and garbage discharged from houses and hospitals are being dumped into

the canal. Sewerage water mingles with the water in the canals at different points between Medical Chak and Serijagil Sahi.

Tons of garbage have been dumped in the 1-km stretch Serijagil Sahi to Gopalpur in Andhra Pradesh.

The civic body is hardly concerned about the problem and seldom clears the garbage dump, locals allege. During rains, the garbage dumped in the canal is carried to the farmlands. As farming is hit by choked canals and garbage, farmers in the area are compelled to sell their land to land sharks at throwaway price. This trend has picked up since last few years. Land mafia has started selling farmlands through plotting.

On the other hand, the 2.5-km-long canal is under the Minor Irrigation department, but it has not been handed over to the civic body till date. As per the order of the Collector, the civic body has supervisory responsibility over the canal area.

For the last 15 years farmers of the local pani panchayat have been demanding that the civic body clears the garbage from the canal, but all pleas fell on deaf ears, alleged Suryanarayan Patmaik, president of the Krushak Sangh.

Laxmiprasad Acharya, a local resident, warned of an agitation if the district administration and the civic body failed to clear the garbage from the canal.

Asked to comment on the issue, executive engineer of the Minor Irrigation department, PK Rout blamed the civic body for choking the canal, saying that the canal is choked due to release of garbage and effluents into it.

On other hand, the district administration had demolished a house located behind a local hospital with a view to reconstruct the canal. But it is alleged that the drive has been halted as some influential people who live in the area opposed the district administration's move.

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ଆକାଶ ଶୋଭା ବିଳାପିତା

ପଞ୍ଚିତ ଜବାହରଲାଲ ନେହେରୁ ମାର୍ଗ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର- ୭୫୧୦୦୧
ପତ୍ର ସଂଖ୍ୟା 19973/ ଭୁ.ଉ.କ., ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଚା19.05.21ରିଖ
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ସୂଚନା

ଏତଦ୍ୱାରା ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ଅବଗତ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଜଣାଇ ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି କି ରାଜକର୍ମଗୁଡ଼ିକ ନେତାଜୀ ସୁବାସ ଏନ୍‌କ୍ଲେଭ ଗୃହ ନିର୍ମାଣ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପରେ ଗୃହ ନଂ. HIG Flat No. T-04କୁ ରାଧାକାନ୍ତ ସାହୁ, ପିତା- ନାରାୟଣ ସାହୁ, ଗ୍ରାମ- କାମୁରଗିଆଁ, ପୋ.ଅ.- ଜାରକା, ଜିଲ୍ଲା- ସାକପୁର, ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଆବେଦନ କରାଯାଇଅଛି। ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ରାଧାକାନ୍ତ ସାହୁ ଉକ୍ତ ଗୃହକୁ ତୃତୀୟ ଅନ୍ତରାଳ ଆଧାରରେ ଶ୍ରୀ ବିଜୟ କୁମାର ପ୍ରଧାନ, ପିତା- ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାଥ ପ୍ରଧାନ, ଗ୍ରାମ- ବାଘୋଇ, ପୋଷ୍ଟ/ଆନା- କୁଜଙ୍ଗ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା- ଜଗତସିଂହପୁର, ଓଡ଼ିଶାଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ମାଲିକାନା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଉନ୍ନୟନ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷକୁ ଆବେଦନ କରିଅଛନ୍ତି।

ଉକ୍ତ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପ ଗୃହର ମାଲିକାନା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯଦି କାହାର କିଛି ଦାବି/ ଆପତ୍ତି ଥାଏ, ତା'ହେଲେ ଏହି ନୋଟିସ ପ୍ରକାଶନର ୧୫ (ପନ୍ଦର) ଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ନିମ୍ନ ସ୍ୱାକ୍ଷରକାରୀଙ୍କୁ ଲିଖିତରୂପେ ଜଣାଇବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିବେ ଏ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ କୌଣସି ଆପତ୍ତି/ ଅଭିଯୋଗ ଶୁଣାଯିବ ନାହିଁ ଏବଂ ଗୃହର ମାଲିକାନା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଇନ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରାଯିବ।

ସ୍ୱା./- ଆବେଦନ ଅଧିକାରୀ-୧
ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଉନ୍ନୟନ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷ



Gratitude: A humble recognition of all that the Divine has done and is doing for you.

THE MOTHER

Saving Independent Local Media

In 2021, the world will start to recover from Covid-19, thanks to unprecedented scientific cooperation and global vaccination efforts. Economies will emerge from the crisis, and communities will begin the long road back to "normal." But it won't be the old normal: Some job functions will be lost, and entire industries will disappear forever. We must not allow independent media to be one of them.

The pandemic has underscored the role that local media play in relaying critical information regarding people's health and livelihoods. According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's 2020 Digital News Report, local newspapers and their websites in the surveyed countries are the top source of news about a particular town or region and reach four in ten people weekly. During the pandemic, local media have helped to inform communities about basic preventive hygiene practices, testing sites, and vaccination procedures. They have provided citizens with lifesaving information and debunked conspiracy theories related to the coronavirus and vaccines.

When anxiety about the virus increases, media consumption rises as well. But according to IREX's annual Media Sustainability Index, higher media consumption in Eastern Europe has not led to higher revenues. In Georgia and Serbia, for example, local media readership has risen considerably before and during the pandemic, but advertising revenues continue to decline. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media advertising market has shrunk by about 60% in the last ten years, according to local estimates.

Even before the pandemic, an IREX study found that governments, political parties, and private interests in Eastern Europe had stepped in as major subsidizers of the media, due to the volatility of the region's advertising markets. This trend will escalate after the pandemic, and local media outlets exhausted by Covid-induced financial stresses may fall under the control of oligarchs or repressive governments that strip them of their independence.

This danger is not limited to Eastern Europe. According to the 2020 Freedom House report "Beijing's Global Megaphone," China is gaining influence over key parts of some countries' information infrastructure, including South Africa and Italy's, as Chinese technology firms closely linked to the ruling Communist Party of China acquire content-dissemination platforms used by tens of millions of people.

Such pressures could result in small local media outlets ending up in the hands of government officials who use them to push their own agenda. Editorial independence, always a somewhat nebulous concept in China, will disappear altogether, and the constraints of journalistic self-censorship will tighten.

To avoid this, international media development organizations should focus on six steps to address the challenges faced by independent local media. First, the pandemic has accelerated the move online, moving media further away from traditional financing models. Incubating alternative models — such as crowdfunding and online advertising — could reduce local media outlets' reliance on donor resources and minimize the influence of political and business-driven owners, who tend to curtail editorial independence.

A second priority is to support independent media in leveraging digital platforms. Local news outlets are improving their online presence, but need a better understanding of digital opportunities in order to capitalize on it. Smaller local media need training and assistance from supporting institutions to understand how to survive online competition with social networks and provide citizens with quality content.

Third, establishing new government and nongovernment emergency funds would help to support journalists and media outlets that are under pressure. Like Freedom House's Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund for civil society organizations, or Luminata's International Fund for Public Interest Media, multiple funds should be established for emergency assistance and resiliency grants. One or two initiatives like this will not be enough to address the global challenge facing local media. Tackling the issues at scale will instead require a concerted effort led by government and nongovernment international development institutions.

Fourth, media-literacy training for journalists, editors, and producers is crucial for combating disinformation. Journalists often do not have the skills or time to fact-check information. In the race to break a story, accuracy often is not the highest priority. Mid-career training for professional and freelance journalists in media literacy, fact-checking, and debunking conspiracy theories needs to be widespread.

Fifth, international funders should help to finance psychological support for media professionals. The 24/7 news cycle and the demands of reporting from the pandemic's front lines are taking their toll on journalists and independent content creators, but media companies rarely provide staff with the necessary psychological help to withstand these challenges. An emergency psychological-support mechanism for media professionals could help ensure that journalists stay in the profession and provide citizens with critical information during the post-pandemic recovery.

Lastly, supporting investigative journalism is crucial. According to the World Bank, corruption is one of the primary obstacles that developing countries face. Investigative journalism is one of the most important and often overlooked tools for fighting it. The availability of troves of online data and inexpensive artificial-intelligence tools to analyse it should be a gold mine, but journalists often lack the skills to use them. Teaching media professionals at local smaller outlets how to work with data and open sources to conduct investigations is key to holding local governments accountable and mitigating corruption.

Current global media trends are worrying, but there are grounds for optimism. The expansion of digital media and broad acceptance of the importance of quality information may give independent media organizations the opportunity to carve out a new role for themselves. That is especially important for local news outlets, which remain an information lifeline for millions of people around the world.

The writer is Director of the Information and Media Practice at IREX.

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LOL

Let the cops arrive

A Scotsman, who was driving home one night, ran into a car driven by an Englishman. The Scotsman got out of the car to apologize and offered the Englishman a drink from a bottle of whisky. The Englishman was glad to have a drink. "Go on," said the Scot, "Have another drink." The



Englishman drank gratefully. "But don't you want one, too?" he asked the Scotsman. "Perhaps," replied the Scotsman, "after the police have gone."

FOCUS SUPER INFLATION

HUNGRY, JOBLESS INDIA

Multiple taxes, unemployment, high 10.49 per cent wholesale price index (WPI) rise and severe income losses are thawing the nation amid high Covid-19 deaths.

The six-month high Wholesale Price Index (WPI) figures in April would be straining the economy. Actual price rise at the retail level would be a minimum of 10.49 per cent plus 4.29 per cent CPI inflation, not less than 14.78 per cent. The super inflation in 1974 was at 28.66 per cent, and 16.94 per cent in 1973. Those days purchasing power of the people had collapsed and protests marked the national scenario. It may not look serious, but if income losses of 84 per cent of the people are added it appears grim. As per a study of the Azim Premji University, the pandemic has led to worsening in quality of employment, with a number of salaried employees joining the ranks of precariously self-employed.

"The annual rate of inflation in April 2021, is high primarily because of rise in prices of crude petroleum, petrol, diesel and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said.

As most rise in prices, fares, freight are due to the CIM stated factors, the economy is slowing down, indicating a lower GDP as well. It is being further complicated by rising joblessness at 8 per cent in April amid the second Covid-19 wave from 7.4 per cent in March 2021. A CMIE study - Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS) - observes weekly unemployment rate touched 14.5 per cent May 15. The CMIE says that 84 per cent household has suffered a decrease in monthly income and that more than one-fourth of the country's working-age population is unemployed.

World Bank warns 70 per cent of employment and about a third of GDP comes from the 'informal' workers. They are likely to lose their jobs or suffer severe in-



World Bank warns 70 per cent of employment and about a third of GDP comes from the 'informal' workers. They are likely to lose their jobs or suffer severe income losses during Covid-19 lockdowns and they tend to be largely excluded from social safety nets

come losses during Covid-19 lockdowns and they tend to be largely excluded from social safety nets. Informality has made eight lakh migrant workers move out of Delhi, according to the state government. No nation, World Bank says, could have actual recovery unless these 'informal' people, particularly women, are taken care of.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das says that manufacturing and services PMI along with inflation would continue the price pressure. It may aggravate because global prices continue to rise. Amid such scenario it looks strange that the RBI, itself in crisis, approves a dividend payout bonanza of Rs 99,122 crore for July 2020-March 2021. It is 73 per cent higher than the entire previous year's Rs 57,126 crore. It is time for austerity not only in the debilitated public sector units but also in its expenses on many real estate and cosmetic projects.

It also needs to review increasing the number of Members of Parliament that would strain the nation's finances further. Their contribution has not been much in giving direction or putting on

leash the expenses. Most MPs just kowtow blindly, unlike the MPs of 1950s and 1960s, the party policies for fear of losing their seats as per provisions of the anti-defection laws. Such laws need review for ensuring that MPs could function in the interest of the people they represent.

The country is avoiding discussing such criticality that leads to impasses. The recent farmers' agitation against the three draconian laws is the result of the 'patocracy'. The nation does not want to discuss the irrationality of multiple taxes and the woes of the people. Since economic concepts have been given a go bye, the rulers are only concerned about the State revenues without pondering how it could improve if the people themselves were in distress.

The citizens are paying taxes on taxes — on old cars, multiple taxes on petrol, bank deposits, vaccine, coffin, Rs 25 per km road toll and also a GST on that, junking their own cars and even on oxygen — that thankfully was undone by the Delhi High Court, and irrational atrocities and penalties on masks and Covid-19 related is-

ses. No political party discusses such police excesses. A senior political observer and journalist, Ajal Setia, comments that even in government "ministers don't know what is going on in their ministries".

The discriminations are not being discussed. The Serum Institute of India is stated to have made profits of Rs 59,000 crore (\$8.2 billion) in 2020 and Rs 85,000 crore (\$ 12.7 billion). Similarly, some selected corporate are making tons as edible oil, fruit and gas prices are soaring apart from their international and national business. The concern of rising monopolies that are checked in the US through anti-trust laws remains missing. The PSUs that are sustaining the nation are designed to become junks.

In such situation, expectation that GDP and tax revenue would spurt are not realistic. A hungry and unemployed country cannot sustain cosmetic expenses though there is stress on it as some are bestowed with large profits. The model has to be sustainable and the entire economic concept has to be approached afresh.

The second wave or spurt in cases of Covid-19 since April has not only caused loss of lives but has cast its shadows on growth prospects. A third wave has been warned. Downward revision of tax revenue and GDP projections are realities. The Central government's gross tax revenue in Budget 2020-21 estimates was reduced by more than 20 per cent in 2021-22 Budget. The government would be facing heavy shortfall, which is imprudently being tried to be made up through taxes on fuels, an impractical move.

The governance method has to change with the participation even of the Opposition. The crisis is national and to surpass Bangladesh, the country has to take prudent drastic steps, prune expenses and not do politicking on issues of benevolence. One step would go through long chain of changes.

INFA

SPECTRUM HEALTHCARE

Odisha needs more medical colleges

Dr Satyajit Pattnaik

ODISHA HAS A LITTLE OVER 10,000 COVID BEDS IN THE ENTIRE STATE WITH A POPULATION OF 4.76 CRORES, WHILE ANDHRA PRADESH, HAS 48,000 COVID BEDS (ALMOST 5 TIMES MORE) FOR 9.25 CRORE PEOPLE

Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the chinks in our health care delivery system. Many experts have lamented the inadequacy in our public healthcare system. One important aspect of tackling the pandemic is strengthening the primary and secondary healthcare system (which comprises our primary health centers, community health centers and all hospitals up to the district hospitals). I would like to focus here on the tertiary healthcare mostly provided by medical college hospitals. For the proper functioning of primary and secondary healthcare system we need a strong back-up of tertiary healthcare system with adequate referral linkages. Tertiary health care consists of mostly medical college hospitals and specialty hospitals (both private corporate hospitals and public specialty hospitals). For now I will focus on medical college hospitals (MCH).

In Odisha the first medical college hospital was established in Cuttack in 1944. The next one was at Burla in 1959 followed by another in Bhubaneswar in 1962. There were no medical college hospitals for the next 43 years. The first private medical college was established in Bhubaneswar in 2005 followed by two more private med-

ical college hospitals in Bhubaneswar in 2007. In the year 2012, another private medical college hospital started functioning in Rourkela. In the same year AIIMS was started operation in Bhubaneswar. In the year 2017, two government medical colleges were opened in Koraput and Bolangir followed by two more in Bolangir and Balasore in 2018. As of now we have 12 medical college hospitals in Odisha.

Medical college hospitals primarily serve three purposes. Firstly, to create more health workforce including doctors, nurses and a host of other equally important paramedical personnel such as physiotherapist, technicians and others. The second important function of a medical college hospital is to provide services to the people in the form of healthcare, including specialty and super specialty healthcare. The third is to undertake research in various fields.

We will first discuss the status of health workforce in Odisha. We have an acute shortage of health workforce. As per the NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) report of 2017-18, there are 2.1 doctors per 10,000 people in Odisha as compared to the national average of 8.8 doctors for the same population. For

the same 10,000 population, the total number of nurses and midwives available in Odisha is 7.6 compared to the national average of 17.7. A comparison with the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh reveals that the corresponding density of doctors and nurses per 10,000 populations is 6.7 and 17.9 respectively. New medical college hospitals can help create more healthcare staff needed for improving the healthcare delivery in our state.

Odisha has a total of 12 medical college hospitals of which five are in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. There is almost no tertiary care hospital in 21 out of 30 districts. Patients from these areas are referred for tertiary care to one of the medical college hospitals in other districts or to outside the state. As a result people inhabiting these districts face lots of hardship. Most of these districts are without any medical college hospitals and are also categorized as backward districts. If we take a look at the prevailing Covid-19 situation in Odisha, we have a little over 10,000 Covid beds in the entire state with a population of 4.76 crores. In comparison Andhra Pradesh, has a total of 48,000 (almost 5 times that of Odisha) beds for Covid patients with a popula-

tion of just double that of Odisha at 9.25 crores.

Finally, medical college hospitals can give a significant boost to health and related research. State medical college hospitals can be part of many national and international health research projects. They can also help in generating more information and solution to some problems which are specific to our state.

In neighboring Andhra Pradesh there are 31 medical college hospitals (including 13 government-run MCHs). Every district has at least one medical college hospital whether in the government or private sector. Odisha government has recently announced that seven new medical colleges will be established soon. This is really a welcome step. But we need at least one medical college in each district, especially in the backward districts of western and southern Odisha. Establishment of more medical college hospitals will further boost the health infrastructure besides creating more number of doctors, nurses and other paramedical workforce.

The writer is a Professor of Community Medicine at GEMS Medical College & Hospital in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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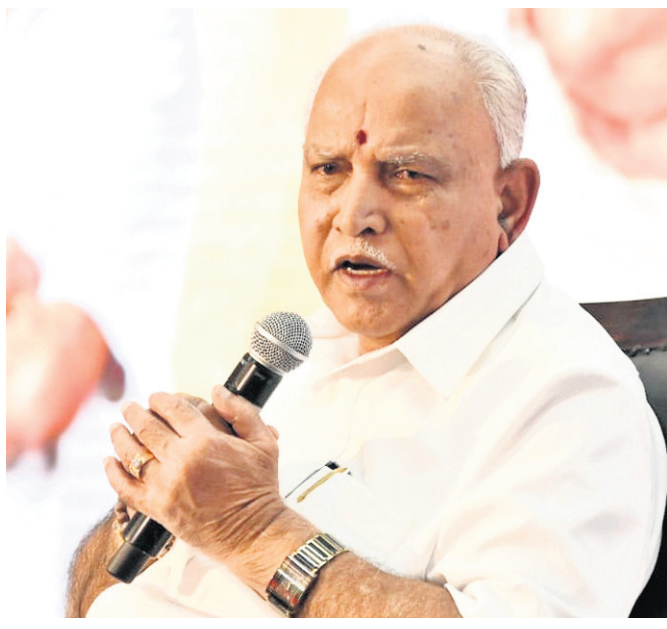
IDIOT syndrome

Sir, Many doctors are baffled by the immense "internet knowledge" of patients and their relatives who blurt out their understanding on the subject through internet with regards to diagnosis, investigations, drugs and treatment. Often it is like the patient taking a second opinion from the doctor after having consulted the primary doctor — the internet. When the addiction to internet propels the users to go for a drug not recommended by a doctor, or discontinue a treatment on their own, then the issue can get complicated. In the process, the fine line between information and interaction, knowledge and experience treatment and management, use and misuse get blurred. Unfortunately, people with Internet Derived Information Obstruction Treatment (IDIOT) syndrome or Cyberchondria are proving to be vulnerable during the Covid pandemic. They are also presenting rare challenges to the physicians. Ironically, people's apprehension of Covid largely stems from disinformation on various social media on the internet. Lakhs of people, experiencing fever and cough, are on a self medicating spree. As a result of their hesitancy to go to the doctor, and excessive dependence on the internet disseminated knowledge, more and more fully blown Covid patients who could have benefited from an early consultation with a doctor are going untreated or are being treated late in the day. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Disgrace to Ayurveda

Sir, The Indian Medical Association (IMA) is seeking action against the controversial yoga guru Ramdev for his reckless comments against allopathic treatment. Earlier too, he had to retract his exaggerated and unfounded claims regarding various issues related to Covid-19 that reek of unjustifiably promoting his company. The latest case of eating humble pie concerns his mocking and vilifying the allopathic line of managing Covid-19, even as healthcare workers and scientists are saving lakhs of patients, risking their own lives. Ramdev was forced to withdraw his pompous statement that questioned the efficacy of allopathic medicine following the Health Minister Harshavardhan's rap as the IMA took objections to the comments that have the potential of misleading the public that is struggling to get proper treatment during the deadly second wave of the pandemic. His long litany of overreach notoriously includes advertising his hollow herbal 'corona kit' to 'cure' Covid-19. An FIR was filed against him for conspiring to sell a fake Ayurveda medicine with misleading claim. N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

BUSY TACKLING COVID, DON'T CARE ABOUT DETRACTORS: YEDIYURAPPA



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, May 27: Breaking his silence over the frequent news stories about a possible change of leadership in the state, Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa Thursday said he was not bothered about those who are making such attempts to dislodge him as he was too preoccupied with tackling the Covid situation in the state.

Yediyurappa's statement assumes significance after speculation was rife in the media for the last two days after Karnataka Tourism Minister CP Yogeshwara and Hubli-Dharwad (West) MLA Arvind Bellad had gone to Delhi reportedly to lobby for Yediyurappa's removal.

After their return Thursday, both leaders stated that their visit was for personal reasons and not to lobby for a change of leadership.

After putting garlands on Jawaharlal Nehru's statue in the

Speculation was rife in the media for the last two days after Karnataka Tourism Minister CP Yogeshwara and Hubli-Dharwad (West) MLA Arvind Bellad had gone to Delhi reportedly to lobby for Yediyurappa's removal

Vidhana Soudha here to commemorate his 57th death anniversary, Yediyurappa told reporters that at present his priority is how to control the rising Covid infections in the rural areas.

"My priority is to focus on the welfare of the people. No other issues are before me. Tackling the pandemic is the primary task... not fo-

cus on anything else," he said.

The Chief Minister stressed that all must come together in a united manner to tackle this deadly virus which has been affecting mankind for the last one year. "This dreaded virus is spreading in the state's rural parts, therefore, I appeal to ministers, MLAs to focus single-mindedly to tackle this pandemic in their region first," he said.

Answering a question, Yediyurappa said that the BJP central leaders know how to deal with any such attempts, if at all they are made. "This time, I think whoever went to Delhi and returned, must have gotten their answers," Yediyurappa remarked.

Replying to another question on whether some leaders from his party were going to Delhi allegedly to seek a change of leadership, he retorted that if someone went somewhere, you (Media) should also know that they were given the right answer and sent back. "So, the only thing now is for us to work together to face Covid at a time when people are suffering and deaths are rising. Legislators and ministers should focus on containing the pandemic. There's no other subject in front of me," he said.

Yediyurappa is arguably the BJP's tallest leader in Karnataka. But the Lingayat strongman is ageing, and at 78, is way past the BJP's unwritten 75-year-limit rule for leaders to hold any decision making positions in the party or in the government.

Ever since Yediyurappa came to power in mid 2019, his younger son, BY Vijayendra's meteoric rise within the party has resulted in disgruntlement among the party leaders. Several have been openly accusing that Vijayendra's interference had been the biggest bone of contention between Yediyurappa and his detractors within the party



Oxygen Express from Odisha reaches Madukkarai railway station in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, Thursday

POCSO Act for misbehaviour during online classes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 27: The Tamil Nadu government will soon invoke the POCSO Act (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) against those who misbehave during online classes.

The state education department will also frame guidelines to regulate online classes in schools to prevent sexual harassment of students. This was announced by Chief Minister MK Stalin in a press statement Wednesday night.

The Chief Minister said that the school education department



will prepare the guidelines in a week and a committee is constituted of the commissioner of school education department, police officials of cyber crime

This comes after students of a reputed CBSE school in Chennai complained against a teacher of the school for misbehaving with them by wearing only a bath towel during the online classes

cyber wing will investigate the complaints received.

This comes after students of a highly reputed CBSE school of Chennai complained against the Commerce teacher of the school for misbehaving with them during online classes by wearing only a bath towel during the classes. The teacher was arrested and remanded in judicial custody under the POCSO Act.

Stalin said, schools should record the online classes and the recordings should be reviewed periodically by committee of parent-teacher associations.

Pollution level in Chennai falls due to strict curbs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 27: The Pollution levels in Chennai have come down as the vehicles are not out on roads following stringent lockdown measures. The air quality in the city has also improved when compared to the pre-Covid days of 2019 May, but less than the May 2020 period when there was a national lockdown.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) at Alandur and Velachery Central Pollution Control Board stations Wednesday (May 26) was respectively 47 and 73, a release from the Central Pollution Control board Wednesday evening said. Air Quality Index is calculated based on the average concentrations of pollutants like Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Ammonia (NH₃), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ozone, PM10 and PM25 measured over a standard time interval.

An AQI below 50 is considered good while 50-100 is satisfactory which may lead to minor breathing problems for some people. AQI between 101 and 200 is moderate with breathing comfort likely among people with asthma, lungs and heart diseases. However the



range of AQI from 201 to 300 is considered poor with breathing discomfort to most people.

Chairman of Tamil Nadu state pollution control board, AV Venkatachalam while speaking to IANS said, Vehicular traffic accounts for 27 per cent of the total emission levels and with the government strictly enforcing the lockdown rules, movement of vehicles has come down leading to the increase in air quality in city limits.

Residents of Chennai city are also of the opinion that there is a healthy feeling in the atmosphere after the lockdown was implemented. Manomani G, a housewife at Anna Nagar (East) while speaking to IANS said, I am an asthma patient and can easily understand the difference in air quality. After the lockdown was implemented and vehicles stopped plying, the quality of air has improved and people like us can understand it as we feel it.

A FIRST IN INDIA Sewage surveillance system for early detection of Covid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 27: Alarmed by the rising Covid-19 cases in Bangalore, the Karnataka government has launched the city-wide sewage surveillance system to track the virus even among asymptomatic individuals at its early stage.

To begin with, it will start from 45 wards in which samples will be collected by next week in order to identify the infection clusters for better resource management, an official statement read.

The system will cover over 75 per cent of Bangalore's nine million population by generating over 90 data points per week signalling the emerging Covid-19 clusters or signalling a Covid-19 clusters exit from an area. We are happy to launch this model in Bangalore, first in India, the statement quoted the Additional Chief Secretary of Urban Development Rakesh Singh



as saying.

According to the statement, the drive is an initiative of Covid Action Collab (CAC) supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Skoll Foundation-supported, an India-wide collaborative of over 300 organisations and networks, who are working together to provide Covid-19 relief and recovery services to the country's most vulnerable communities.

Lease out Centre's vax unit to state govt: Stalin to PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, May 27: Chief Minister MK Stalin Thursday urged the Centre to hand over its vaccine manufacturing facility near here to the Tamil Nadu government on lease to commence vaccine production.

The modern and high capacity vaccine manufacturing facility, the Integrated Vaccine Complex, is lying unutilised, Stalin said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Centre has already invested around Rs 700 crore in this manufacturing unit which is almost complete but has been lying unutilised for want of additional funds.

The recent attempt to find a private partner to run IVC has also not borne fruit as there were no bidders for it. The IVC is in Chengelpet and it is under the Union Health Ministry and the CM visited the facility Tuesday.

It was absolutely necessary to ramp up domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity, which is in sync with the PM's vision of self sufficient India and also mass vaccination is the most potent weapon in the fight against the pandemic, he said. The CM said, "I am very keen that this modern facility must be made functional immediately, in the interest of our state as well our nation."

This would substantially enhance the nation's vaccine production capacity and cater to the vaccine requirements of the country as a whole and Tamil Nadu in particular.

Stalin proposed that the assets of the IVC may be handed over to

The modern and high capacity vaccine manufacturing facility, the Integrated Vaccine Complex, is lying unutilised, Stalin said in a letter to PM Modi

the state government on lease, without any past liabilities and with full operational freedom.

Tamil government would identify a suitable private partner immediately and make all efforts to commence vaccine production at the earliest, Stalin assured.

A suitable financial arrangement for Centre to recover a part of its investment could be subsequently worked out after commencement of operations, he said.

I request your kind intervention to immediately hand over the assets of IVC owned by HBL to government of Tamil Nadu so that the facility can be put to use at the earliest, he added. Stalin thanked the Centre for the support extended to the state in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

DMK leader and MP, TR Bалу told reporters in Delhi that he met Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in this connection and Mansukh Mandaviya (Minister of State, Chemical and Fertilisers) was also present during discussion.

The Centre has said it would revert to the Tamil Nadu government in about a week on the matter, Bалу, flanked by Tamil Nadu Industries Minister Thangam Thennarasu, said.

'Apprehension that we are going Chinese way'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 27: Information Technology industry Veteran V Balakrishnan Thursday criticised the new digital rules, alleging that they appear to be unduly compromising the privacy right of citizens.

The two key issues with the new IT rules relate to user privacy which is a fundamental right and the oversight mechanism lying fully with the executive arm of the government, said the former Chief Financial officer of Bangalore-headquartered IT major Infosys Ltd.

India is one of the large social media ecosystems in the world which is free till now and the apprehension is that we are going the Chinese way, he told PTI.

On being asked about government statement that the new rules are only designed to prevent abuse and misuse of social media, he said that the World Press Freedom Index 2020 produced by 'Reporters Without Borders' ranked India at 142nd out of 180 countries.



"In the last few years we have seen the independence of many institutions getting undermined," said Balakrishnan, who unsuccessfully contested as an Aam Aadmi Party candidate from Bangalore Central Lok Sabha seat in the 2014 general elections.

There is a general lack of trust in the government today, he alleged. With this background the new rules look like unduly compromising the privacy right of citizens as also providing unfettered right in the hands of the executive government. I think these is-

such issues, Balakrishnan said.

In the new digital rules, social media companies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have been asked to identify within 36 hours the origin of a flagged message as well as conduct additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer; nodal



The two key issues with the new IT rules relate to user privacy which is a fundamental right and the oversight mechanism lying fully with the executive arm of the government

V BALAKRISHNAN | IT INDUSTRY VETERAN

contact person and resident grievance officer. According to Twitter, the company is particularly concerned about the requirement to make an individual (the compliance officer) criminally liable for content on the platform, the requirements for proactive monitoring, and the blanket authority to seek information about its users.

This represents dangerous overreach that is inconsistent with open, democratic principles, it said.

The government Wednesday strongly defended its new digital rules, saying the requirement of messaging platforms like WhatsApp to disclose origin of flagged messages does not violate privacy, and went on to seek a compliance report from large social media firms.

"The UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada require social media firms to allow for legal interception," the IT Ministry had said, adding, "What India is asking for is significantly much less than what some of the other countries have demanded."

of the day quote

In the entire state (UP), BJP and RSS men are missing from providing relief to people facing hardships due to the pandemic. Only SP workers are helping people in all possible ways following protocols

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

Therefore, Latur district is getting out of the second wave of the infection. Now, the number of positive cases has declined in the district

AMIT DESHMUKH | MEMBER OF THE MAHA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Why did our government export six crore vaccines between January and March 2021, while vaccinating only 3.5 crore Indians during the same period of time

PRIVANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Major blaze at godowns

Barasat (WB): A huge fire broke out in a building that housed a few godowns in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district in the early hours of Thursday and fire officials were battling the blaze even after 18 hours. Though the spread of flames was contained, pockets of smouldering fire continued to flare up inside the building which housed a vest manufacturing unit. Fire Services minister Sujit Bose said, Bose said he was informed that "two to four people may be inside when the fire broke out."

Arun Mehta new J&K chief secy

Srinagar: The union government decided Thursday to appoint senior IAS officer, Arun Kumar Mehta as the chief secretary of J&K. In a communication addressed to J&K Lt governor, Manoj Sinha, the union Home Secretary, Ajay Bhalla said, "Pursuant to the appointment of Shri B.V.R.Subrahmanyam IAS (CG; 1987) chief secretary, Jammu & Kashmir as officer on special duty in the department of commerce, government of India, it has been decided with the approval of the competent authority that Shri Arun Kumar Mehta, IAS (AGMUT: 1988) will take over as chief secretary, J&K from the date Shri B.V.R. Subrahmanyam relinquishes the charge, and until further orders."

Hungry pregnant woman raped

Jaipur: The rape of a 22-year-old pregnant woman in Jaipur, allegedly by two ambulance drivers who promised to give her food, has evoked protests from the opposition while the National Commission for Women on Thursday took cognisance of the matter and asked the Rajasthan DGP for a fair and time-bound investigation. As per police officials, the woman, who lived with her husband on the footpath in front of SMS Hospital, went out begging for food on May 24. She was lured by an ambulance driver and also brought his friend.

Effect of Yaas intensifying

Patna: After creating devastation in Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, the effect of Cyclone Yaas was visible in several districts of Bihar Thursday and will continue till Friday. Heavy rainfall, with strong winds having speed of 30 to 40 kmph, is currently underway in south, southeast and central districts of Bihar.

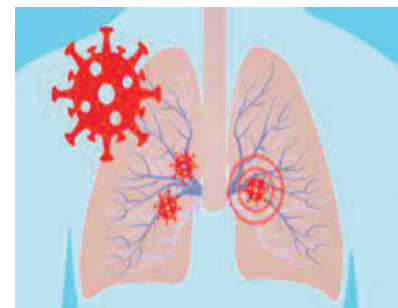


The problem is that the Indian vaccine is available at a cheaper price through the central government, but it is costing more through a global tender

RAGHU SHARMA | RAJASTHAN HEALTH MINISTER

SHOCKING REVELATION

Scientists have identified persistent damage in the lungs of Covid-19 patients at least three months after they were discharged from hospital, and for some patients even longer



Covid 2nd wave on downswing

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 27: India is witnessing a downswing in the second wave of Covid-19 and hopefully it will be sustained even when restrictions are gently, systematically and cautiously relaxed, the government said Thursday.

Addressing a press conference, NITI Aayog member (Health) V K Paul said the country continues to note stabilisation of second wave in most parts, both by the number of cases and positivity rate, and despite a sustained and high overall testing coverage which is "reassuring".

"We are achieving this in face of very significant restrictions in most states in addition to other tools and operations, including testing and Covid appropriate behaviour and vaccination efforts. Nonetheless, it is reassuring that we are on the downswing of second wave and we do hope and believe that it will be sustained even when restrictions are gently, systematically and cautiously opened up," he said.

Health ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said a steady decline in new COVID-19 cases has been recorded in India for the last 20 days, with 24 states witnessing a dip in active cases since the last week. He also said that while COVID-19 testing has increased manifold, a steady decline in weekly COVID-19 positivity rate has been seen since the last three weeks. Paul said the vaccination pace should pick up in July.

Paul said similarly the Serum Institute of India is also ramping

FRESH GUIDELINES

The Centre Thursday directed states and union territories to continue the ongoing COVID-19 guidelines till June 30 and asked them to go for intensive and local containment measures in districts with a high number of cases to check the spread of the deadly disease. In a fresh order, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said strict implementation of containment and other measures has led to a declining trend in the number of new and active cases, across states and union territories, barring some areas in the southern and northeastern regions. "I would like to highlight that in spite of the declining trend, the number of active cases presently is still very high. It is, therefore, important that containment measures may continue to be implemented strictly. "Any relaxation by states and UTs, may be considered at an appropriate time, in a graded manner, after assessing the local situation, requirements and resources," Bhalla said in his order issued to chief secretaries of the states and union territories. He said the guidelines issued April 29 for the month of May will continue till June 30.

up vaccine production from 6.5 crore per month to 11 crore or even more in months to come. Other vaccines in the pipeline are also moving close to increase supplies such as Sputnik, Zydrus and Genova vaccines so steady progress is being made.

DISCIPLINED BIRDS



A gaggle of geese walk in a queue on a deserted street in Guwahati

PTI PHOTO

CYCLONE 'YAAS'

Eight lakh affected in J'khand

AGENCIES

Ranchi, May 27: At least eight lakh people in Jharkhand have been affected by Cyclone 'Yaas', which barreled through the state early Thursday, unleashing copious rain that lashed parts of the state, including Ranchi, and throwing life out of gear in many areas, officials said.

Around 15,000 people have been evacuated and moved to safety, and rescue operations are still underway in East Singhbhum district among other places, as water level in several rivers, including Kharkhai and Subarnarekha, continues to flow above the danger mark.

Cyclone 'Yaas', packing winds of up to 130-145 kmph, whiplashed the country's eastern coasts Wednesday, before losing its force to an extent as it hollered on its destructive path to Jharkhand. One person has been killed due to lightning in Bokaro.

"At least eight lakh people have been affected by the calamity in Simdega, East and West Singhbhum and Saraikela-Kharsawan districts. Around 15,000 people have been evacuated from the vulnerable pockets. Operations are still underway in some areas, amid rising water level in some rivers,"



A bridge at river Kanchi collapsed due to heavy rain

PTI PHOTO

PEOPLE CRY FOR FOOD

Kolkata: Hundreds of people complained that they had to go without food and sleep in the aftermath of cyclone, which has wreaked havoc in Bengal, as their homes lay inundated amid heavy showers that continued to pummel several parts of the state Thursday Cyclone 'Yaas', which made its landfall near Dhamra

port in Odisha, barreled through the neighbouring state and Bengal on Wednesday, causing widespread destruction as it hollered on its path to Jharkhand. Officials said that the administration was trying its best to reach out to people in need, but the inclement weather is impeding relief work in certain pockets.

Disaster Management Secretary Amitabh Kaushal told PTI. RK Jenamani, a senior scientist of IMD, said the cyclone, which

has now weakened into depression, is hovering over south Jharkhand, 75 km west of Jamshepur.

Ramdev vents anger over arrest demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, May 27: Amid the raging controversy over Ramdev's alleged disparaging remarks against allopathy, another controversial video surfaced on social media in which the yoga guru is seen reacting to the demand for his arrest, saying "even their father cannot arrest him".

"They are just making a noise. They keep creating trends like Thug Ramdev, Mahathug Ramdev, Girafath Ramdev and so on," he said responding to #Arrest Ramdev trends on social media. "Arrest to khair unka baap bhi nahin kar sakta Swami Ramdev ko (even their father cannot arrest Swami Ramdev)," he is caught saying in the video. Reacting to the yoga guru's latest video, K S Ravi, a senior doctor and the editor-in-chief of National Journal of Clinical Anatomy, said it shows he is not apologetic at all about making "insensitive" comments about allopathy and allopathic doctors.



"Ramdev's statement is full of arrogance. It shows that he considers himself above law," said Dr Ravi, who is also the president of the Society of Intellectuals. He demanded quick action against Ramdev for his "denigrating remarks" to boost the morale of doctors who are risking their own lives to serve people in the time of Covid. "Ramdev continues to make statements like this because he feels politically protected," said a former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Uttarakhand, who did not want to be named. Citing a video circulating on social media, the IMA had on Saturday said Ramdev has claimed that allopathy is a "stupid science" and "lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines". The IMA also wrote to PM Narendra Modi, demanding that Ramdev be booked immediately under sedition charges for alleged misinformation campaign on coronavirus vaccination and challenging government protocols for its treatment.

Dead man returns home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, May 27: A 40-year-old man presumed dead showed up much to the surprise of his family, a week after they had performed a funeral mistakenly identifying a decomposed corpse as his body.

The goof-up took place after the state-run RK Hospital declared the body of a man named Goverdhan Prajapat, who was under treatment at the hospital, as "unidentified" and later Omkar Lal Gadulia's relatives wrongly took possession of that body at Rajasmand district in Rajasthan.

Gadulia, a liquor addict, had gone to Udaipur without informing his family May 11. He was admitted to a hospital owing to some liver-related problem. Gadulia's family was living with his brother after the coronavirus-induced lockdown, police said. On the same day, Prajapat was



taken from Mohi area to the RK Hospital by an ambulance service arranged by some public representatives. He died during treatment, they said.

"We had got a letter from the hospital authorities that a body was lying unclaimed at the mortuary for three days. We then circulated photographs of the deceased man on various fronts to identify the body," Kankroli police station SHO Yogendra Vyas said.

He said over a dozen people came to the hospital May 15 to identify

the body. Police were informed about it and the family members gave in writing to hand over the body to them without conducting any post-mortem.

The family members wrongly identified the body to be that of Gadulia going by a similar scar on his right hand and appearance, and the police handed over the body without conducting any post-mortem and DNA test.

The body was taken away and the final rites were performed May 15 itself. However, Gadulia returned home May 23 and was shocked to learn that he was believed dead.

Later, the police launched an investigation and identified the body which Gadulia's family had cremated as that of Goverdhan Prajapat.

Meanwhile, the hospital authorities admitted that the whole incident was a goof-up on part of the nursing and mortuary staff.

Sputnik V production to begin soon in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 27: The manufacturing of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine will start soon in India as the country has accomplished technology-transfer to Indian companies, said Dr Vinod K. Paul, chair of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEG-VAC) Thursday.

Paul made the announcement while clearing the myth that the Centre is not doing enough to buy vaccines from abroad. Paul said the Central government has also proactively eased entry of vaccines approved by the US FDA, EMA, UK's MHRA and Japan's PMDA, and WHO's Emergency Use Listing into India in April. He said these vaccines will not need to un-

dergo prior bridging trials as the provision has now been further amended to waive off the trial requirement altogether for the well-established vaccines manufactured in other countries. "No application of any foreign manufacturer for approval is pending with the drugs controller," Paul, Member (Health) in NITI Aayog, further said. Paul said that Sputnik vaccine trials got accelerated and with timely approval, Russia has already sent two tranches of vaccines and "accomplished tech-transfer to our companies that would start manufacturing very soon".

The declaration comes after the developers of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine and Panacea Biotech Monday announced that full-scale production of the doses in India will start this summer.

Liquor to flow freely after 6 years in Chandrapur

The decision to lift the liquor ban in the district - enforced since April 2015 - was taken at a Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 27: In a politically sensitive decision, the Maharashtra government on Thursday revoked the 6-year-old prohibition imposed in Chandrapur district of the Vidarbha region, an official said here.

This reverses the move by the then Bharatiya Janata Party-led regime of chief minister Devendra Fadnis, who has criticised the Maha Vikas Aghadi government's move, terming it as 'regrettable', besides evoking mixed reactions from different sections of society.

Now only two districts - Wardha and Gadchiroli - remain 'dry' in

the state, the former owing to its close connections with Mahatma Gandhi and the latter due to public demand in the Maoist-hit district since 1992.

Justifying the government decision, an official said that it was mainly due to the burgeoning sales of illicit liquor and growing crimes in the district witnessed in the past 6 years, when all liquor licences were cancelled.

However, after the ban, the former BJP-led government had assured to appoint a committee to study issue following a discussion in the state assembly in July 2018.

Set up in January this year, the 13-member expert committee,



headed by retired Principal Secretary Ramanath Jha had submitted its report to the MVA government on March 9, 2021 with its recommendations.

Among the findings were that the prohibition in Chandrapur was largely unsuccessful as it spurred

the sale of illicit liquor which was a health hazard besides rampant blackmarketing and inter-district smuggling of alcohol in the district. The government's potential earning from the sale of legal liquor had been severely hit while anti-social or criminal elements bene-

fited hugely from the prohibition.

Another worrying factor was the increasing involvement of women and children in the illicit liquor trade in the district, it pointed out. As per official data, prior to prohibition, there were 16,132 cases registered between 2010-2014 which shot up to 40,381 between 2016-2019.

While there were only 1,729 cases against women before the liquor ban, they shot up to 4,042 after prohibition was implemented, besides a growing number of children being used for the illicit liquor trade.

This resulted in many public organisations, citizens and locals voting in favour of lifting the ban

on liquor which the Jha Committee accepted and recommended.

The state lost Excise Duty of around Rs.1,606 crore from Chandrapur district in the past five years due to prohibition, besides loss of Rs.964-crore due to a drop in Sales Tax income, resulting in a total loss of Rs.2,570-crore to the state exchequer.

The Committee also said that many village panchayats, women's groups, religious organisations, lawyers, media and citizens sent nearly 243,627 lakh petitions or appeals to the Collector demanding the ban should be revoked, while only 25,876 wanted prohibition to continue in the district.

of the day quote

My humble tributes to India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru ji on his death anniversary

K C VENUGOPAL | CONG GENERAL SECY IN-CHARGE

Vaccine for people in the age group of 12-18 years is coming soon. We will vaccinate everyone

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

The Covid-19 restrictions in the state will continue till June 15. This is not a lockdown or a curfew. We will strictly follow the restrictions

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Govt extends tenure of RAW and IB chiefs

New Delhi: Research and Analysis Wing chief Samant Kumar Goel and Intelligence Bureau head Arvind Kumar were given a one-year extension in their services, an official order said Thursday. Goel, a 1984-batch IPS officer from Punjab cadre, would continue to be the Secretary of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) for a period one-year beyond the presence tenure which ends June 30, the order said. Similarly, Kumar, an IPS officer of Assam and Meghalaya cadre, will continue to head the Intelligence Bureau for a period of one year after June 30.

Rlys transports 1,195 tons of O₂

New Delhi: Oxygen Express trains delivered 1,195 tonnes of the life-saving gas across India May 26, their highest single-day load so far, surpassing the previous high of 1,142 tonnes transported three days earlier, the Railways said Thursday. Amid the second wave of the coronavirus infection, the Railways has delivered over 18,980 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in more than 1,141 tankers to 15 states on Oxygen Express trains which started operations last month.

Aircraft makes emergency landing

Mathura (UP): A two-seater training aircraft made an emergency landing Thursday on the Yamuna Expressway near here after developing a snag, police officials said. Both the trainee pilot and the instructor were safe after the aircraft landed on the expressway in the afternoon, the officials said.

Naxal surrenders

Raipur: A naxal allegedly involved in the ambush last month in which at least 22 security personnel were killed on Sukma-Bijapur border surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh Thursday, an official said. Bhimsen Vekko (20), a member of the Maoists' 'platoon 13', turned himself in before police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Bijapur district, said a senior police official.

Mysterious blast

Srinagar: A woman and her daughter in J&K's Kupwara district were critically injured Thursday in a mysterious blast. Police said Sara Begum and her daughter, Gulnaza Bano, of Taratpora village in Amargarh area of Handwara tehsil, were cleaning collard greens kept inside a bag when the blast occurred. "Both of them have been shifted to hospital where attending doctors described their condition as critical. The nature of the blast is being investigated," source said.



The people of Lakshadweep deserve a developmental vision that respects their way of life and reflects their aspirations

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

JILTED LOVER THROWS ACID ON BRIDEGROOM

Angry over his girlfriend getting married to someone else, a jilted lover threw acid on the bridegroom at the wedding in Bihar's Lakhisarai district, injuring him seriously, police said Thursday



'New rules to prevent misuse of social media'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 27: IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad Thursday said WhatsApp users have nothing to fear about new social media rules, that are designed to prevent abuse and misuse of platforms, and offer users a robust forum for grievance redressal.

Prasad said that the government welcomes criticism including the right to ask questions. "The rules only empower the ordinary users of social media when they become victims of abuse and misuse," Prasad posted on homegrown micro-blogging platform Koo, and also tweeted.

The government fully recognises and respects the right of privacy, he asserted. "Ordinary users of WhatsApp have nothing to fear about the new Rules. Its entire objective is to find out who started the message that led to commissioning of specific crimes mentioned in the Rules," Prasad added.

The new IT rules require the social media companies to set up an India-based grievance redressal officer, compliance officer and nodal officer "so that millions of users of social media who have a grievance get a forum for its redressal", he said. The obligation to reveal the originator of an offensive message already in circulation relates only to offences relating to sovereignty, integrity and security of India, public order, rape, and child sexual abuse. "That too when other less intrusive measures are not effective," the Minister said. The government Wednesday had strongly defended its new dig-



ital rules, saying the requirement of messaging platforms like WhatsApp to disclose origin of flagged messages does not violate privacy, and went on to seek a compliance report from large social media firms. The new rules, announced February 25, require large social media platforms - defined as those with over 50 lakh users in the country - to follow additional due diligence, including appointment of chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer. The new, tighter regulations for social media firms requires them to remove any content flagged by authorities within 36 hours and setting up a strong complaint redressal mechanism with an officer being based in the country. Significant social media companies will have to publish a monthly compliance report disclosing details of complaints re-

ceived and action taken, as well as details of contents removed proactively. They will also be required to have a physical contact address in India published on its website or mobile app, or both.

Under the rules that would make digital giants more accountable for the content hosted on their platform, companies will have to take down posts depicting nudity or morphed photos within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.

Non-compliance with new IT rules would result in these platforms losing their intermediary status that provides them immunity from liabilities over any third-party data hosted by them. In other words, they could be liable for criminal action in case of complaints. Twitter, in a statement Thursday, has expressed concern over "use of intimidation tactics by the police" after the mi-

GOVT GIVES 15 DAYS TO FURNISH DETAILS

The Centre has written to the OTT and digital media platforms to furnish all their details and compliance status as per the new IT rules within 15 days. In its notice to the platforms, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting said that a total of around 60 publishers and their associations have informed the ministry that they have already initiated the process of formation of self-regulatory bodies under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Codes) Rules, 2021. "There is no requirement for prior registration of digital media publishers with the ministry," it said, adding that one of the new rules provides for furnishing certain information by the publishers of news and current affairs content, and publishers of online curated content, to the ministry. Apart from the details on the websites, mobile apps and social media accounts, the ministry has also sought information on the grievance redressal mechanism.

croblogging platform gave a manipulated media tag to tweets by a BJP leader. Twitter said it is concerned about its employees in India and the "potential threat" to freedom of expression.

Meanwhile, the government demned the statement issued by the microblogging platform as baseless, false and an attempt to defame India.

LAKSHADWEEP CRISIS

Kerala expresses solidarity with island's people

Kerala Speaker MB Rajesh today said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has proposed the resolution in the wake of recent developments in the archipelago

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 27: The Kerala Assembly is likely to pass a joint resolution expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep where the recent actions of the islands' administrator have drawn flak.

M B Rajesh, the newly elected Speaker of the state Assembly, Thursday said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan himself has proposed the resolution in the wake of recent developments in the archipelago. "The government will move the resolution in the ongoing session. I hope the opposition also will not have any objection and they will support it as many of its members have already raised such a demand. So, there is unanimity on the matter," he said.

However, the date of the presentation of the resolution is yet to be decided, the Speaker added.

Soon after assuming the new office Tuesday, Rajesh, also a two-time Parliamentarian, had said the present developments in the archipelago raise concerns. Earlier, Congress legislator Shafi Parambil had sent a letter to the Speaker and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan urging them to move a joint resolution in the House expressing the state's solidarity with



the islanders. "What is happening in Lakshadweep is a cultural invasion to implement the Sangh Parivar agenda of the Central government," the Palakkad legislator alleged in the letter.

The administrator was just an instrument to implement the fascist agenda, he further alleged.

"The Kerala Assembly has been an exemplary platform for anti-fascist struggles," he said, adding that as in the past, a united voice against what was happening in Lakshadweep should be heard from the House on this issue also.

Leaders of ruling CPI(M) and opposition Congress in Kerala have hit out against what they termed as "anti-people" measures initiated by Praful Patel, the Lakshadweep administrator.

However, the BJP's state unit has rejected the charges. The first session of the 15th state assembly began with the swearing-in of newly elected MLAs May 24. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan will present the policy address of the government Friday. The session would conclude June 14.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



Farmers harvest okra in a field in Surat

PTI PHOTO

Govt approves ₹5L assistance to kin of 67 scribes who died of nCoV

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 27: The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has approved financial assistance to 67 families of journalists who lost their lives to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a suo-moto move, the Press Information Bureau under the guidance of Minister of Information & Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar, had compiled and collated the details of journalists who lost their lives due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and started a special drive to provide assistance to their families under the Journalist Welfare Scheme.

In the financial year 2020-21, the Central Government provided such assistance to 41 families of the journalists deceased due to Covid taking the total number to 67. The committee expressed their deep condolences to the families of the journalists affected due to Covid.

India faced 117 cyclones from 1970-2019: Study

A TOTAL OF 7,063 EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS KILLED 1,41,308 PEOPLE DURING THE PERIOD IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH INCLUDED 40,358 (28 PER CENT) DUE TO CYCLONES AND 65,130 (A LITTLE OVER 46 PER CENT) DUE TO FLOODS

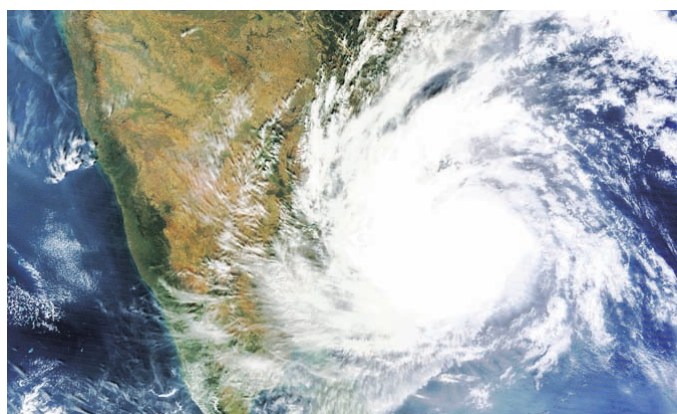
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 27: As many as 117 cyclones hit India in 50 years from 1970-2019 claiming over 40,000 lives, according to a study on extreme weather events, which also states the mortality rate due to tropical cyclones has come down significantly over the past 10 years.

The research paper published earlier this year has been authored by M Rajeevan, Secretary of Ministry of Earth Sciences, along with scientists Kamaljit Ray, S S Ray, R K Giri and A P Dimri. Kamaljit Ray is the lead author of the paper.

Earlier this month, the western coast witnessed the fury of Cyclone Tauktae which hit the Gujarat coast as an extremely severe cyclonic storm, leaving a trail of destruction in several states killing nearly 50 people.

Currently, the eastern part of the country is facing 'very severe cyclonic storm' Yaas which bat-



tered the Odisha and West Bengal coasts Wednesday before moving deeper into the country. The study states that the number of deaths due to cyclones has come down significantly in the last two decades, whose latter years have witnessed much improvement in the IMD's weather forecast abilities.

In 1971, the study said, four trop-

ical cyclones developed in the Bay of Bengal within a period of about six weeks --- from the end of September to the first week of November.

Of these, the most destructive one struck the Odisha coast on the early morning of October 30, 1971 and caused very severe damage to life and property, according to the

study. About 10,000 people were reported to have lost their lives, and more than one million rendered homeless, it said.

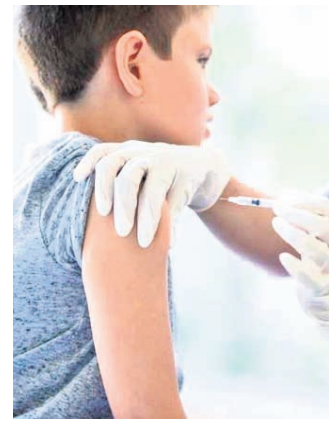
In 1977, two tropical cyclones developed over the Bay of Bengal during November 9-20, out of which the second one (Chirala cyclone) which was a very severe tropical cyclone with a wind speed of the order of 200 kilometres per hour along with tidal waves 5 metres high, hit coastal Andhra Pradesh, the study says. The estimated mortalities were around 10,000 and total damage to infrastructure and crops was more than \$25 million. The decade from 1970-1980 alone recorded over 20,000 mortalities due to cyclones.

"Overall, the analysis showed that the mortality rate associated with tropical cyclones decreased by almost 88 per cent in the last decade (2010-2019) in comparison to the earlier decade (2000-2009) despite the significant increasing trend of

severe tropical cyclones during the post-monsoon season over Bay of Bengal," the paper states.

India Meteorological Department Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said the reasons for fatalities during cyclones have changed over the years with improvement in IMD's forecast abilities. Earlier, storm surge was the major reason behind fatalities, but now deaths are caused mostly by the collapse of a tree or a house now, he said.

The storms produce strong winds that push the water into the shores, which can lead to flooding. This makes storm surges very dangerous for coastal regions. But over a period, the forecast as well as the response to these events have changed considerably, he said, adding people are now evacuated from low-lying areas with prior warnings. Cyclones also bring in thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rains which also prove fatal, he said.



international



France has a role, a history and a political responsibility in Rwanda. It has a duty: That of looking history in the face and recognising the suffering that it inflicted on the Rwandan people by favoring silence over the examination of truth for too long

STRANDED INDIAN FRONTLINERS REQUEST ENTRY INTO UAE

Indian frontline workers, who have contributed to the UAE fight against the Covid-19 and are currently stranded due to the ongoing flight ban, have urged authorities for their return to the Gulf nation



of the day quote

We drew attention to how our Western partners addressed this situation in the context of some kind of Russian linkage. All explanations have already been provided in relation to this

The next seven days in Victoria will be very challenging, and of course we are very mindful of the distress and the difficulty that this will impose upon people right across Victoria

Such strikes raise serious concerns of Israel's compliance with distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law

Michelle Bachelet | HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UN

US' 'Indo-Pacific strategy' will lead to division, chaos: China

The comments come a week after a US Navy guided-missile destroyer sailed through the Taiwan Strait May 19, challenging China's claims over the area as Beijing claims Taiwan is part of its mainland

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, May 27: China's military today criticised the Biden administration for continuing the Trump era "Indo-Pacific strategy", saying the US should not form "cliques" or provoke "new Cold War" featuring bloc confrontation.

No strategy should instigate countries to establish selective and exclusive military alliances, to gang up or to create the "new Cold War" featuring bloc confrontation, and the zero-sum game will only lead to more division, antagonism and chaos, Senior Colonel Tan Kefei, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defence, said at an online press conference.

He made the remarks while responding to a question that US President Joe Biden has continued to promote the "Indo-Pacific strategy" formulated by his predecessor Donald Trump to deter China and made frequent military provocations against Beijing.

The Chinese navy, which rushed its ships to pursue the American warship, accused the US of resorting to provocative moves.

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement, "The ship's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Senior Colonel Tan did not directly refer to the Quadrilateral alliance or Quad comprising the US, India, Australia and Japan while accusing Washington of forming cliques.



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"We believe that its purpose is to enhance trust, reduce misgivings, manage crises, and prevent conflicts. The US side should not, on the one hand, claim to put up new defence hotlines, while on the other hand keep ramping up military deployments in the Asian Pacific region, frequently conduct close-in reconnaissance on China, and even deliberately initiate dangerous circumstances where aircraft and vessels nearly collide," he said.

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Johnson brushes off ex-aide's claims

AGENCIES

London, May 27: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson Thursday brushed aside allegations from his former chief aide that his failings had caused tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths from Covid-19, saying "some of the commentary" bore no relation to reality.

Dominic Cummings, who was Johnson's right-hand man until late last year, delivered a withering attack on his former boss during seven hours of testimony before a parliamentary committee Wednesday, casting Johnson as incompetent, disorganised and unfit to be the prime minister.

With almost 128,000 deaths, the United Kingdom has the world's fifth highest official Covid-19 toll, far higher than the government's initial worst-case estimates of 20,000. Cummings said the government's ineptitude and delay had led to many more deaths than necessary.



Asked if that accusation was true, Johnson said: "No, I don't think so, but of course this has been an incredibly difficult series of decisions, none of which we've taken lightly. We've followed to the best we can, the data and the guidance that we've had."

BURNING VESSEL

Lanka fears oil spill from container ship



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Colombo, May 27: Sri Lankan authorities fear a possible oil spill from a Singaporean container ship on fire off the country's western coast as the upper deck of the vessel was completely destroyed, officials said Thursday.

The fire, which broke out May 20 on the MV X-Press Pearl, was beyond control and spreading inside the vessel anchored 10 nautical miles off the main Colombo port, reports dpa news agency.

Firefighters are trying to control the fire around the engine room and prevent an oil spill, as the vessel has nearly 300 tonnes of fuel in its tank, navy spokesman Indika Silva said.

But Sri Lankan authorities, including the Marine Environmental Protection Authority (MEPA), were preparing to mitigate damage in the event of an oil spill.

"There is a possibility of an explosion occurring in the ship as the fire continues. We have put in place oil spill management plans

to control damage from an oil spill," MEPA general manager Turney Pradeep Kumara said.

Debris and chemicals have already fallen into the sea and washed ashore in areas up to 20 nautical miles away from the container ship.

Residents have been strictly warned not to collect items washed ashore, but many of them ignored the warnings and were seen collecting the items.

The vessel, registered under the Singaporean flag, was en route from the Indian port of Hazira to Singapore, via Colombo, with 1,486 containers, most of them carrying chemicals, including 25 tonnes of nitric acid.

Tuesday, the Sri Lanka Navy said it had rescued 25 crew members from the cargo ship.

Two injured Indians among the rescued had been hospitalised for treatment, according to the Navy.

The distressed container ship had a crew who are Philippine, Chinese, Indian and Russian nationals.

SHORT TAKES

Evacuation after eruption scare

Goma: The risk of further eruptions from volcano Nyiragongo led DR Congo authorities to order the evacuation of parts of the city of Goma Thursday, causing an immediate exodus of tens of thousands of people, an AFP correspondent said. "Current data on seismicity and the deformation of the ground indicate the presence of magma under the urban area of Goma, with an extension under Lake Kivu," the local military governor General Constant Ndima said in a broadcasted public address.

Prez, PM freed after resigning

Mali: Mali's ousted interim president and prime minister have been freed after they were detained by the military and later resigned, an aide to the vice president said Thursday. Interim president Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane were arrested and taken to a military base outside the capital Monday, triggering a crisis in the West African country and drawing threats of sanctions from major powers. The two men resigned from their posts while in detention Wednesday.

HK changes electoral law

Hong Kong: Hong Kong's legislature Thursday passed a bill amending electoral laws that drastically reduces the public's ability to vote and increases the number of pro-Beijing lawmakers making decisions for the city. The new law empowers the city's national security department to check the backgrounds of potential candidates for public office and sets up a new committee to ensure candidates are "patriotic." The number of seats in Hong Kong's legislature will be expanded to 90, with 40 of them elected by a largely pro-Beijing election committee.

Over 150 drowned in boat capsized

Kano: More than 150 people were missing and feared drowned in northwest Nigeria Wednesday after an overloaded boat ferrying passengers to a market sank in the Niger River, local officials said. The boat was travelling between central Niger state and Wara in northwest Kebbi state when it went down, National Inland Waterways Authority local manager Yusuf Birma told reporters. "The boat capacity was not up to the 180 passengers it carried," Birma said.

AGAINST ASSAD



A girl, with her face painted with the colours of the Opposition flag, looks on during a demonstration against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and presidential elections, in the opposition-held Idlib, Syria

SC sends pleas to Constitutional Bench

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, May 27: Nepal's Supreme Court Thursday sent all the 19 petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives and rejection of Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba's claim by the President for the post of prime minister to the Constitutional Bench.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Cholendra Shumsher Rana who had assigned the 19 writs to his bench ordered at the end of proceedings that the writs be sent to the Constitutional Bench, the Himalayan Times reported.

Hearing of the writs by the five-member bench led by the CJ has been scheduled for Friday.

As many as 30 petitions, including the one by the Opposition alliance, were filed at the Supreme Court, challenging Friday's House dissolution.

NEPAL HOUSE DISSOLUTION



President Bidya Devi 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 Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, heading a minority government.

She rejected the bids of both embattled Prime Minister Oli and

the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Nepali Congress President Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership, saying the "claims were insufficient."

The Constitution envisages a five-member Constitutional Bench that is led by Chief Justice Rana. The members of the bench are selected by Rana.

Jaishankar arrives in US for dialogue with Biden admin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, May 27: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived here Wednesday for a series of meetings with senior US officials during which they are expected to review the progress made in bilateral ties in the first 100 days of the Biden administration and lay the groundwork for the future.

During his three-day stay here, Jaishankar is scheduled to meet his American counterpart, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake



Sullivan, along with other key members of the Biden administration.

It is the first visit by a senior Indian minister to the US after President Joe Biden assumed office

ISSUES IN LIGHT

- Covid-19 relief
- Efforts to strengthen Indo-Pacific cooperation through the Quad
- Enhanced UN and multilateral cooperation
- Shared regional security and economic priorities

January 20. The defence secretary will be meeting Friday with Jaishankar, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters at a news conference.

"The defence secretary is meet-

ing with the external affairs minister, will continue discussions that the two held in New Delhi in March and will continue the robust bilateral defence and security relationship between our two countries. We are looking forward to having him here at the Pentagon and hosting him for a good set of talks," Kirby said.

"It will be a continuation of the discussion, the very productive discussions that we had when we were in New Delhi a month or so ago," he said, referring to Defence Secretary Austin's India visit in March.

UN takes new step towards international cybercrime treaty

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

United Nations, May 27: The UN General Assembly adopted Wednesday by consensus a resolution proposed by Russia to draft a treaty against cybercrime by 2023, an initiative viewed with suspicion by Western nations who fear it could restrict free expression.

Starting in January the committee will hold at least six sessions of ten days alternating in New York and Vienna until the presentation of "a draft convention to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session" in September 2023, according to

the resolution. Russia's attempts to regulate the use of cyberspace in an international treaty have been strongly opposed in recent years by the United States, Europeans and human rights NGOs.

They see the Russian move as a way to muzzle the Internet, restricting its use and freedom of expression on social networks.

"With the idea of a global convention, the Russians want to impose restrictions on the Internet," said a Western diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity.

A restrictive treaty could make it easier to block access to the Internet and strengthen control



over its users in some countries, experts fear. The resolution adopted Wednesday stresses that "information and communications technologies, while having enormous

potential for the development of States, create new opportunities for perpetrators and may contribute to a rise in the levels and complexity of crime."

Called 'Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes,' the resolution - co-drafted with Equatorial Guinea - focuses on the work of a special committee launched in 2019

Cyberspace is often a prolific arena for espionage, blackmail, misinformation and aggression, often at the initiative of states or other groups.

To date, there is only one binding international instrument on cybercrime, the Convention on Cybercrime, also known as the Budapest Convention, which entered into force in 2004.

Unlike the global text envisaged by Russia, this convention has only a regional scope. It serves as a reference for European countries developing legislation on cybercrime and as a framework for international cooperation among signatory states.

If a new text is approved, it could eventually render the Budapest Convention obsolete, critics of the Russian initiative say.

business

of the day quote

It is imperative the Banks frame a clear OTS (one time settlement) policy for all borrowers who have provided personal guarantee under NCLT and recovery process that is systematic so as to ensure no arbitrary decisions are taken

S RAVI | CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Bosch's Phantom Edge is a powerful ecosystem designed to be leveraged for industries that are jump starting their digital journey. RBI's vision is to provide smart solutions for the globe and Phantom Edge is a step in that direction

DATTATRI SALAGAME | PRESIDENT AND MD, RBI

VAP revenue de-grew last fiscal because of the complete shutdown in Q1, which impacted the hotels, restaurants and cafe segment (20% of organised sector revenue). This fiscal, we expect it to rebound on the back of increased home consumption and continuing food-delivery services even in regions seeing lockdowns

ANU SETHI | SENIOR DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

SHORT TAKES

Nice Tuan handed ₹1.5 million fine

Shanghai: The Chinese market regulator has asked Alibaba-backed Nice Tuan to suspend its operations in Jiangsu province for three days and fined it 1.5 million Yuan (\$235,302) for failing to take action over product dumping practices and pricing fraud. The State Administration for Market Regulation said in a statement on its website that the community group buying service provider had failed to correct wrongdoings in some areas since it was fined by the regulator in March, despite company claims of active rectification.

'Open markets from June 1'

New Delhi: About 80 per cent of traders in the national capital want the Delhi government to lift the lockdown after June 1 and allow the markets to open with "stringent conditions", a new survey has said. Conducted by the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), a traders body in Delhi, the survey's respondents included nearly 560 organisations across various industries including, hotel and restaurant, as well as beauty and wellness associations in the capital.

Ford India declares 'no production days'

Chennai: Ford India, the subsidiary of US auto-maker Ford, Thursday said it would observe 'no production days' May 28 and 29 following a demand from a section of workers to suspend operations at its facility near here. The announcement comes on a day when some employees at the plant located in Maraimalai nagar demanded suspension of production by boycotting the lunch served to them, citing high prevalence of Covid-19.

IRB Infra posts 37% drop in Q4 profit

New Delhi: IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd Thursday reported a 36.84 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹97.45 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021. The infra firm had clocked a ₹154.32 crore net profit during the year-ago quarter. Its total income during the January-March 2021 quarter rose to Rs 1,650.40 crore from Rs 1,634.80 crore in the year-ago period.



We request that the Central government should issue necessary instructions to all the state governments to declare apparel exports as essential services and exempt them from shutdown

A SAKTHIVEL | CHAIRMAN, AEP

'CAN BUY 2MT OF IRANIAN CRUDE'

Barat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) Thursday said it can buy up to 2 million tonnes of crude oil from Iran if sanctions are lifted and terms are attractive. BPCL Director (Finance) N Vijayagopal said his company used to buy 2MT a year of crude oil from Iran before sanctions halted imports



RBI flags risk of bubble in Indian equity markets

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 27: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Thursday said the sharp rally in the domestic equity markets despite an estimated 8 per cent contraction in GDP in 2020-21 poses the "risk of a bubble".

In its annual report for 2020-21, RBI noted that India's equity prices have surged to record highs, with the benchmark index Sensex crossing the 50,000 mark January 21, 2021 to touch a peak of 52,154 February 15.

This represents a 100.7 per cent increase from the slump just before beginning of the nationwide lockdown (since March 23, 2020) and a 68 per cent rise over the year 2020-21.

"This order of asset price inflation in the context of the estimated 8 per cent contraction in GDP in 2020-21 poses the risk of a bubble," RBI said.

It also noted that the widening gap between stretched asset prices relative to prospects for recovery in real economic activity has emerged as a global policy concern.

The stock markets are mainly



driven by money supply and foreign portfolio investor (FPI) investments, the apex bank said.

Also, economic prospects contribute to movement in the stock market, but the impact is relatively less compared to money supply and FPI, it added.

According to RBI, the liquidity injected to support economic recovery can lead to unintended consequences in the form of inflationary asset prices, thus providing a reason that liquidity support

cannot be expected to be unrestrained and indefinite.

It, therefore, suggested that there is a need for calibrated unwinding once the pandemic waves are flattened and real economy is firmly on the recovery path.

The apex bank said the rise in equity prices from 2016 to early 2020 was mainly supported by a drop in interest rates and equity risk premium (ERP) with increase in forward earnings expectations contributing to a lesser extent.

'Health crisis can be more pervasive for economy'

NEW DELHI: Compared to financial crises, a health crisis can be more pervasive, persistent and debilitating in its impact on the real economy, as per the RBI annual report for 2020-21. "Letting down the guard is perilous; it is best to prepare for future waves," the report said. It added that private investment is the missing piece in the story of the Indian economy in 2020-21; reviving it awaits an environment in which "animal spirits" are rekindled and entrepreneurial energies are released so that backward and forward linkages and multipliers prepare the ground for a durable investment-driven recovery. The report said 2020-21 will go down in history as the year of the Covid-19 pandemic break in the life and ethos of humanity.

Housing demand to reach pre-Covid level after FY'23, says Crisil



AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 27: Improved affordability and continuing work-from-home will increase demand for residences by an average 5-10% (in terms of area) on-year in India's top six cities this fiscal. But two of these: Mumbai and Pune, could see demand contracting because of a higher base of last fiscal, while the rest should see a rebound on a low base, Crisil said Thursday.

However, absolute demand will catch up with pre-pandemic levels only after fiscal 2023. The demand in the first half of this fiscal will be impacted by the second wave of the pandemic. Nevertheless, healthy recovery is expected in the second half, much like the previous fiscal, the ratings agency said.

That said, established developers with well-managed balance sheets would grow faster than the industry, consolidate their presence, and sustain their credit profiles.

Affordability has improved by up to 30% in the six cities during the past five years because of low interest rates, moderate price correction and reduction in stamp duty (especially in Maharashtra in fiscal 2021), CRISIL Research's proprietary Minimum Annual Household Threshold Income, or MAHTTMI, index city shows.

On the other hand, capital values have bottomed out and are likely to stabilise with a slightly upward bias this fiscal because of

Demand in Bangalore, Hyderabad, NCR and Kolkata is set to rise 40-45% this fiscal, propelled by better affordability and lower base. In contrast, the MMR and Pune will likely see a contraction of 10-20% this fiscal, after a 5-15% growth last fiscal

ISHA CHAUDHARY, DIRECTOR | CRISIL RESEARCH

rising raw material and construction-labour costs.

Says Isha Chaudhary, Director, CRISIL Research, "Demand in Bangalore, Hyderabad, the National Capital Region (NCR) and Kolkata is set to rise 40-45% this fiscal after plunging 25-45% last fiscal, propelled by better affordability and lower base. In contrast, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune will likely see a contraction of 10-20% this fiscal, after a 5-15% growth last fiscal, with end-users concluding transactions to benefit from lower stamp duty."

The pandemic has amplified the divergence in the performance of financially prudent and leveraged developers.

Established ones with a strong track record of timely delivery increased their market share to 25% last fiscal from 21% in fiscal 2020 as they recovered faster in the second half and maintained, or even exceeded, pre-pandemic sales

Paytm plans largest IPO worth \$3 billion



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 27: Digital payments giant Paytm is planning to come out with an initial public offer (IPO) worth \$3 billion later this year, according to sources. The proposed IPO, if successful, would be the largest such offer. Coal India's ₹15,200 crore-IPO in 2010 is the country's largest one till date.

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The SoftBank and Alibaba-backed company is looking at raising about \$3 billion (over ₹21,700 crore) at a valuation of well over \$25 billion, the sources privy to the development said.

The fintech major's board is expected to meet on Friday to discuss the IPO proposal, they added. Paytm declined to comment on the matter.

A number of young businesses in the country, including Policybazaar, Nykaa, Delhivery and Mobikwik, are also reportedly firming up plans to launch their IPOs.

In April, food delivery platform Zomato filed preliminary papers for an IPO with capital market regulator Sebi to raise ₹8,250 crore.

YAAS AFTERMATH

'State faced no disruption in steel production, O₂ supply'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 27: The steel plants located in Angul, Kalinganagar and Rourkela in the state faced no disruption in steel production and medical oxygen supply due to cyclone Yaas, said the steelmakers.

Earlier, Union Ministry of Steel held meeting with all major steel players May 23, along with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, in order to ascertain the likely impact of cyclone Yaas on steelmaking and on oxygen production.

The steel makers said that they took all measures to ensure that power failures do not take place due to cyclone.

It was also planned that tem-



porarily for two to four days, the states which were dependent on Kalinganagar and Angul plants of Odisha would draw from TATA Jamshedpur plant.

It is confirmed that no power disruption was experienced by any steel plant located in the aforementioned places. TATA representatives, who have plants in Odisha have confirmed that there

has not been any impact of cyclone Yaas on the LMO production on the Tata Steel plants.

Dispatch of LMO from all the attached oxygen plants in Kalinganagar, Jamshedpur and Angul continued as usual without any disruption.

There was a reduction in tankers reaching Kalinganagar as the same were diverted to Jamshedpur. This was as per the contingency plan because of the impending cyclone.

SAIL plants at Durgapur, Burnpur and Rourkela were also well prepared. The SOP for handling such situations was reiterated to all concerned. Similarly, JSPL and JSW who have plants in Angul and Jharsuguda were also well prepared and did not face any disruption during cyclone Yaas.

BIZ BUZZ

Truecaller partners with MapmyIndia, Factchecker

New Delhi: Truecaller partnered with MapmyIndia and FactChecker to further improve the Covid Healthcare Directory feature. This feature was launched for all Android users in April and with the new associations it will continue to provide easy access to a large set of updated information. MapmyIndia, the leading location-based IoT platform in India, brings over 60,000 Covid-related points of interest including all vaccination centers, Covid designated hospitals, test centers and so on. Users can access details and a location map by tapping on the MapmyIndia banner inside Truecaller.

SBI General Insurance to help cyclone-affected people

Bhubaneswar: SBI General Insurance put a foot forward for their customers affected by cyclone Yaas. The team at SBI General has set the SOPs in motion and has set up a task force to manage queries and claims on a fast-track mode. Customers can claim via calling the company's toll-free number 1800 102 1111 or SMS <CLAIM> to 561612, or can send details on customer.care@sbigeneral.in. They can also visit claims intimation section on www.sbigeneral.in. The company has reached out to a panel of surveyors to avoid any loss of time in the claim settlement process.

Lockdowns led to 12% fall in liquor sales in FY21: CIABC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 27: Nationwide lockdowns that were necessitated due to the Covid-19 pandemic impacted sales of IMFL (Indian made foreign liquor) products across India in 2020-21 with overall sales dropping by 12 per cent, according to CIABC, the apex body of the Indian alcoholic beverage industry.

Though the sales picked up in the second half of 2020-21 in most parts, the States which imposed high Corona cess and other taxes after the first wave of Covid-19 showed poor recovery.



The total sales of IMFL products in 2020-21 was 305 million cases (9 litres each) which is nearly 12 per cent below the previous year, says the data compiled by the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC).

After an extremely poor first quarter (April-June 2020-21) due to Covid lockdowns, sales showed positive trend on an all India basis, improving through each quarter, and finally ending the year with a robust performance in the fourth quarter (January to March 2021), said the apex body of the Indian alcoholic beverage industry.

While the liquor sales fell by a whopping 42 per cent in Q1 of the last fiscal, it declined by 9 per cent in Q2 and 1 per cent in Q3, before showing a recovery of 6 per cent in Q4. The top five states in terms of recovery in sales were Maharashtra, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

'APAC's banks better placed to cope with climate risks'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Singapore, May 27: Climate change and related government policies expose Asia-Pacific banks to physical climate risks, as well as risks that stem from sudden changes in asset values as economic priorities shift, according to Moody's Investors Service in a new report.

New standards and regulations will increase compliance costs for banks, while engaging in or facilitating activities with a significant negative environmental impact can inflict reputational damage on banks and tarnish their brands.

"Asia-Pacific economies with weak infrastructure are particularly vulnerable to physical climate risks, which can hurt banks' asset quality because a natural disaster can damage borrowers' assets or disrupt their cash flow. Many banks

New standards and regulations will increase compliance costs for banks

Legal and reputational risks are increasing for banks in Asia-Pacific as governments advance guidelines and regulations for sustainable financing

Large, diversified banks in the developed economies of Singapore, Australia and Japan, along with major pan-Asia Pacific banks, are better positioned to cope with climate risks and preserve their credit strength

Governments' sustainable development goals will also create financing opportunities for banks

in the region also face asset risks from large exposures to sectors



susceptible to carbon transition risks," said Alka Anbarasu, a Moody's Vice President and Senior Credit Officer.

In addition, legal and reputational risks are increasing for banks in Asia-Pacific as govern-

ments advance guidelines and regulations for sustainable financing and disclosure requirements related to climate risks. Meanwhile, investors are increasing pressure on banks to stop financing carbon-intensive projects, the report said.

YELLOW SUBMARINE UNEARTH GOLD



Rulli outwits De Gea in goalkeepers' showdown as Villarreal scrape past Manchester United via sudden death to claim their maiden Europa League title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gdansk (Poland), May 27: The penalty shootout was going badly for Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea in the Europa League final, beaten by every Villarreal player who stepped up to the spot. At 11-10, it got dramatically worse.

The shootout — after a 1-1 draw following extra time — went on so long that all of the outfield players took penalties, meaning De Gea and Villarreal goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli were the 11th men up. Rulli sent his penalty into the top corner, but De Gea's lacked power and was stopped by the Villarreal keeper.

As Rulli lay on the grass after his save, the entire team ran over and piled on top of him. It was an upset to savor as Villarreal — a team from a city of about 50,000 people — secured the first major trophy in the 98-year history of the club by beating one of European soccer's giants.

It also secured a lucrative Champions League spot for next season rather than playing in the new third-tier Europa Conference League after Villarreal only finished seventh in the Spanish league.

And it stopped an English sweep of the two big European competitions before Chelsea and Manchester City play the Champions League final Saturday.

For Villarreal coach Unai Emery it was a record fourth Europa League title, and it offered a measure of redemption after he was fired by Arsenal last season.

Emery was hoisted aloft by his players before they received their medals. He won three Europa League titles in a row with Sevilla from 2014-16 and lost the 2019 final



with Arsenal against Chelsea.

Villarreal's win also ensured that United went a fourth consecutive season without a trophy for the first time since the 1980s and left its manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer still looking for his first title. United's last silverware was the Europa League in 2017.

Asked if United's season — runner-up in the Premier League and now the Europa League — could be considered a success, Solskjaer said bluntly: "No."

The marathon shootout had more excitement than the entire 120 minutes of the game. United dominated

the early possession but it was Villarreal which made the breakthrough. Gerard Moreno pushed past Victor Lindelof at a free-kick in the 29th minute and strained to prod Daniel Perejo's cross past De Gea in the United goal.

United equalised at a set piece when Edinson Cavani reacted quickest to knock the ball in after Marcus Rashford's low shot was deflected following a corner. A video review ruled the Uruguayan onside for his sixth goal of the season in the Europa League, all of them in the last four games.

United could soon have had a second, if not for Rashford scuffing a shot wide when one-on-one with Rulli. Another missed chance followed when Torres blocked a Cavani header.

When the game went to extra time, United's hopes of repeating a 2-1 come-from-behind win over Bayern Munich 22 years ago to the day in the Champions League final began to fade. Villarreal looked the fresher team in extra time as Solskjaer — the substitute goal-scoring hero in 1999 — held back all but one of his substitutions until the second half of extra time. Solskjaer brought on two penalty specialists, Juan Mata and Alex Telles, for the shootout. They both scored but that meant little against Villarreal's perfect 11 penalties from 11 players.

Rulli had come close to saving a couple of previous penalties, including when Luke Shaw's kick eased in over his outstretched hand. De Gea seemed to try mind games. He approached some opponents to talk to them as they prepared to shoot, and made Villarreal's 10th penalty taker, Pau Torres, wait while he strolled over from the sideline.

But in the end it was De Gea who had to trudge back toward his teammates to be consoled after his miss.

We worked hard this season and I think we deserved to win. We are going to enjoy each moment but above all we are going to prepare for the next season to prepare in the Champions League

UNAI EMERY

That's football for you. Sometimes it's decided on one kick and that's the difference between winning and losing. Got to ...taste this feeling and make sure you don't get it again

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER

Spanish media hails historic achievement

MADRID: Spain's media are celebrating Villarreal's 'historic' Europa League victory Thursday after the Spanish side defeated Manchester United in the final in Gdansk. A Spanish media that is often split between the Real Madrid-Barcelona rivalry was united in supporting Villarreal and it's a theme that continues Thursday as they mark their triumph. 'MARCA', a Madrid-based publication, lead the way with a headline of 'It's not yellow, it's gold!' on their front page, alongside a picture of the Villarreal players celebrating with the trophy on the pitch in Poland. And it's a similar theme for MUNDO DEPORTIVO, the Barcelona paper. Their front page simply reads 'historic' next to a picture of Villarreal hoisting the trophy aloft. AS, meanwhile, label Villarreal 'heroic champions' in a front page that is shared with the news that Zinedine Zidane will be stepping down as Real Madrid manager.



Bruno breaks down in tears

GDANSK: Bruno Fernandes was reduced to tears after Manchester United's agonising penalty shootout defeat against Villarreal in the Europa League final and he was not alone in looking heartbroken. Paul Pogba removed his silver medal immediately after being presented with it on the podium during the trophy ceremony and hung his head, while Marcus Rashford hid his face in his shirt and was a picture of misery as he sat on the bench reflecting on the shock loss. The images come in sharp contrast to the comments of Paul Scholes, who claimed on BT Sport after the game that defeat "doesn't hurt" many of United's players. Talisman Bruno played an inspirational role in getting United to Gdansk, having scored five times and assisted four from his nine games in the Europa League this season — but he was unable to make an impact in the showpiece match and was left sobbing after they fell at the last hurdle.

'Racial slurs' against Rashford

LONDON: Marcus Rashford put his emotions on full display after Manchester United's agonising defeat in the Europa League final against Villarreal, before later revealing he had suffered online racial abuse. The striker pulled no punches, stressing that "close was not good enough" as United failed to win their first trophy under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Rashford then took to social media just over an hour after the final whistle and said: "At least 70 racial slurs on my social accounts counted so far. For those working to make me feel any worse than I already do, good luck trying." He then went on to reveal that one of the users who had sent him "a mountain of monkey emojis" happened to be a school teacher. Rashford wrote: "I'm more outraged that one of the abusers that left a mountain of monkey emojis in my DM is a maths teacher with an open profile. He teaches children! And knows that he can freely racially abuse without consequence..."

'You'll never walk alone!'

GDANSK: Alberto Moreno showed old rivalries never die by sending a message to Liverpool fans after getting the better of Manchester United. In the aftermath of the victory, the Spaniard took to Instagram for a live stream, where in one section emphatically screamed "Vamos, You'll Never Walk Alone! You'll Never Walk Alone!" into the camera in a clear nod to his former side Liverpool after beating their bitter rivals. After returning to the changing rooms, Moreno once again sent a message to Liverpool fans. In the clip, he takes aim at losing finalists United, saying: "For all the fans of Liverpool, Vamos! (Come on), Manchester United, get out, get out Manchester United, get out! You'll never walk alone, siempre (always) Liverpool, in my heart."

Scholes left red-faced after his pre-match predictions backfire

MANCHESTER: An over-confident Paul Scholes was left red-faced Wednesday evening after he saw all three of his bold predictions on Manchester United fail to come to fruition as his former side slumped to defeat in the Europa League final. Speaking before kick-off, United legend Scholes was very confident his former club would win the final "comfortably" against a side he deemed inferior. "You're playing Villarreal here," Scholes told BT Sport. "You're playing a team that finished seventh in a really poor La Liga. Think of Real Madrid and Barcelona, how bad have they been? Manchester United should win this game comfortably." While the former midfielder was sure United would win, he clearly underestimated how good Villarreal boss Unai Emery was at winning this competition. Speaking of Spurs loanee Juan Foyth, Scholes had said: "Foyth was a bad centre back at Tottenham, now he's playing right back, how can Rashford not destroy him?!" His final prediction was made at the halftime, as he expected United to score two or three to close the match, which also went wrong.



Man United players console David de Gea after shootout



Villarreal coach Unai Emery is hoisted by his players

Super League rebels will not accept UEFA 'coercion'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, May 27: Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus strongly criticized UEFA for opening disciplinary cases against them over their roles in trying to launch a European Super League, saying they won't accept being pressured by the European football body.

The three clubs also defended their attempt to remake European football, saying the sport is headed for an "inevitable downfall" unless there are major reforms. The three clubs are the remaining holdouts among 12 founders of the failed Super League and have refused to renounce the project. They released a statement Tuesday, a day after UEFA said it had opened proceedings against them for "a potential violation of UEFA's legal framework."

Its statutes include a section on "prohibited groupings" of clubs or leagues forming without UEFA's permission or outside its control. The proceedings could lead to the clubs being banned from the Champions League. "Barcelona, Juventus and Real

Madrid, all of them more than a century old, will not accept any form of coercion or intolerable pressure, while they remain strong in their willingness to debate, respectfully and through dialogue, the urgent solutions that football currently needs," the clubs said.

"Instead of exploring ways of modernizing football through open dialogue, UEFA expects us to withdraw the ongoing court proceedings that question their monopoly over European football," they said. "Either we reform football or we will have to watch its inevitable downfall."

The three clubs expressed their "absolute rejection of the insistent coercion that UEFA has been maintaining towards three of the most relevant institutions in the history of football." "This alarming attitude constitutes a flagrant breach of the decision of the courts of justice, which have already made a clear statement warning UEFA to refrain from taking any action that could penalize the founding clubs of the Super League while the legal proceedings are ongoing," the clubs said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mary Kom, Sakshi in Asian meet finals

DUBAI: The Olympic-bound MC Mary Kom (51kg) and former Youth World Champion Sakshi (54kg) were among three Indian women boxers who stormed into the Asian Championship finals after notching up exciting victories in their semifinal bouts here Thursday. While six-time World Champion Mary Kom prevailed 4-1 over Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg, Sakshi upstaged top-seeded Kazakh Dina Zholaman 3-2. The 38-year-old Mary Kom will next face Kazakhstan's Nazym Kyzaibay, a two-time world champion, for her sixth gold medal at the continental showpiece. It was a memorable tournament debut for Lalbuatsaihi (64kg), who outboxed Noura Almutairi of Kuwait to such an extent that she decided to concede the bout in the second round. Next up for her is Milana Safronova of Kazakhstan. However, the Tokyo-bound duo of Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) along with Monika (48kg) and debutant Jaismine (57kg) settled for bronze medals.

Indian challenge ends at Qualifiers

PARIS: India's top player Sumit Nagal could not make a hat-trick of Grand Slam main draw appearances following a straight-set defeat in the second round of the French Open Qualifying event here. The Haryana youngster crashed out of the Clay Court major with a 3-6, 6-6 loss to Alejandro Tabilo from Chile, last night. With the defeat of the 23-year-old from Jhajjar, India's challenge has ended in the Qualifiers. Ramkumar Ramanathan, Prajnesh Guneswaran and Ankita Raina have already exited from the tournament. Now India will be represented through Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan in the men's doubles main draw.

Djoko in semis

BELGRADE: World No.1 Novak Djokovic eased past Argentina's 96th ranked Federico Coria in straight sets to reach semifinals of the Belgrade Open Thursday. Djokovic beat Coria 6-1, 6-0 in just 56 minutes to record his 952nd career win as a professional. This put him fifth on the all-time list for match wins in the Open Era, ahead of Argentine great Guillermo Vilas (951). Djokovic will now face either compatriot Dusan Lajovic or qualifier Andrej Martin. Djokovic improved to 18-3 in the season. He is seeking his third final of the year after winning the Australian Open and falling in the final of the ATP Masters 1000 event in Rome.

Zidane quits Real

MADRID: Zinedine Zidane is stepping down as Real Madrid coach, again. The club said Thursday the Frenchman is leaving his job, a few days after a season in which Madrid failed to win a title for the first time in more than a decade. The club said Zidane "decided to bring an end to his current spell" as Madrid's coach. Zidane had a contract through June 2022. Zidane left the club for the first time after leading Madrid to one of its most successful runs from 2016-2018, with three consecutive Champions League titles. In his two years and five months in charge, Madrid won a total of nine trophies.

Bettiol wins Stage 18 of Giro d'Italia 2021



AGENCIES

Rome, May 27: Alberto Bettiol of Team EF Education-Nippo provided a masterclass on how to win from the breakaway with a solo

victory on stage 18 of the Giro d'Italia into Stradella, Thursday.

The Italian rider hunted down Frenchman Remi Cavagna of Team Deceuninck-QuickStep, who had earlier escaped from a big breakaway big group with only 20km to go. Interestingly, Bettiol finished the stage 18seconds ahead of the French rider.

Bettiol attacked several times, most importantly on the final climb of the day to distance, first, Nicolas Roche (Team DSM) and then Cavagna to win his maiden race on home soil and take his team's first stage of this year's race. Roche would go on to finish third on the stage after Simone Consolini (Cofidis) overtook him just ahead of the line.

The maglia rosa group allowed the break to establish a 15-minute lead with Egan Bernal (Ineos Grenadiers) enjoying a relatively stress-free day and maintaining his lead over Damiano Caruso (Bahrain Victorious) after the longest stage (231km) of the race.