



RAIMA'S REVIEW

Actor Raima Sen explains the reasons behind the popularity and appeal of supernatural genre films

LEISURE P2



MAMATA BACKS HER MOVE

Mamata Banerjee said she skipped the meeting with PM Modi taking exception to presence of Suvendu Adhikari

TWO STATES P7



JAISHANKAR MEETS BLINKEN

EAM S Jaishankar capped two days of whirlwind diplomacy in the US by meeting Secretary of State Antony Blinken

INTERNATIONAL P10

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STATE ORDERS 5K SACHETS OF 2DG DRUG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: The state government Saturday placed an order for 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2DG), the oral anti-viral drug for Covid-19 patients developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories.

The Health and Family Welfare department has placed the order with Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) for purchase of 5,000 sachets of 2DG drugs. The price of 2DG has been fixed at ₹900 per sachet. The drug will be of immense benefit to the people suffering from Covid-19, sources said.

While the product has been soft-launched a couple of weeks ago, the commercial launch and supply of 2DG to major government and private hospitals is expected to commence in mid-June.

The 2DG drug can be administered only on prescription to hospitalised Covid patients suffering from moderate to severe symptoms.

According to a statement issued by the Union government, clinical trial data of the drug shows that the molecule helps in faster recovery of patients hospitalised with Covid-19, and reduces their dependence on supplemental oxygen.

The drug accumulates in cells infected by coronavirus and prevents the growth of the virus by stopping viral synthesis and energy production. Its selective accumulation in virally-infected cells makes this drug unique.

Disaster, pandemic mgmt in curriculum

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: The Council of Ministers headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday passed a resolution to make disaster and pandemic preparedness a part of the curriculum in schools and colleges.

Every student, elected representative, government official, Mission Shakti member and other stakeholders will be trained in disaster as well as pandemic preparedness.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEET

"This is a historic step and will enable and empower our future generations to withstand the vagaries of nature whether it's biological or climatic. Odisha will stand out in saving peoples' lives. It flows from our realisation that community preparedness is key to disaster management," Naveen said.

The world has changed its perception about Odisha's ability to deal with disasters in the course of the last two decades. There was a time when we evoked pity. Today, the Odisha model of disaster management draws global admiration.

"The time has come for us to create a massive knowledge infrastructure in the state that will make everyone a warrior. Today, we are taking a futuristic decision. We will train our people at large on how to deal with



- The Council of Ministers headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday passed a resolution to make disaster and pandemic preparedness a part of the curriculum in schools and colleges
- Every student, elected representative, government official, Mission Shakti member and other stakeholders will be trained in disaster as well as pandemic preparedness

known emergencies and how to respond to situations where the outcome cannot be predicted," read the resolution passed by the panel.

Now, every high school and college student will learn about disaster and pandemic management as part of their curriculum. The government will train every government employee on the fundamental nature of different kinds

This is a historic step and will enable and empower our future generations to withstand the vagaries of nature whether it's biological or climatic. Odisha will stand out in saving peoples' lives

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

of disaster and pandemic management. Government jobs and recruitment will have a mandatory syllabus on disaster and pandemic management.

Similarly, all elected public representatives starting from ward members to Chief Minister will be trained on disaster and pandemic management. Besides, members of the Mission Shakti groups, Vana Surakya Samitis, and other community-based organisations will be equipped with the knowledge required to manage disasters and pandemics.

The Council of Ministers has resolved to undertake systematic and detailed training programmes to equip the citizens with adequate knowledge and skills in disaster and pandemic management and make Odisha a leading state in disaster preparedness - whether it's biological or climatic. The main objective of the resolution is to have a 'Yodha' in every home of Odisha, a statement read.

Petrol price at all-time high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: Petrol price Saturday crossed the ₹100-a-litre mark in Mumbai after the 15th increase in fuel prices this month.

Petrol price was increased by 26 paise per litre and diesel by 28 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase - 15th this month - took petrol and diesel prices to a fresh all-time high across the country.

The price of petrol, which had already crossed the ₹100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, breached the psychological barrier in Mumbai Saturday.

Petrol now costs ₹100.19 a litre in Mumbai and

diesel comes for ₹92.17 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹94.72 (+0.26)
DIESEL	₹92.55 (+0.30)

In Delhi, the petrol price rose to ₹93.94 a litre and diesel to ₹84.89.

This is the 15th increase in prices since May 4, when state-owned oil firms ended an 18-day hiatus in rate revision they observed during Assembly elections in states like West Bengal.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



DOMESTIC FLIGHTS TO COST MORE FROM JUNE 1

NEW DELHI: Flights within the country are set to become costlier as the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has decided to raise the lower limit on domestic airfares from 13 per cent to 16 per cent, which will come into effect from June 1. As per an order by MoCA Friday, "Fare for domestic travel less than 40 minutes of duration will be hiked by ₹2,300 to ₹2,600, which is 13 per cent of the current fare."

Flights with duration between 40 minutes to one hour will have fares at a lower limit of ₹3,300. The fares for such flights were earlier capped by the ministry at ₹2,900. Similarly, for flights of duration between 60-90 minutes airfare will be charged at ₹4,000, 90-120 minutes at ₹4,700, 150-180 minutes at ₹6,100 and 180-210 minutes will cost ₹7,400. Currently, the airfare for flights in the above period is cheaper by ₹300 to ₹1,000. In other words, for instance, a Delhi-Mumbai flight will cost ₹700 more than the current fare. An increase in airfares has been attributed to the capacity of the load factors of the passengers. A sudden increase of coronavirus cases in the second wave of Covid pandemic showed a decrease in domestic air travel.

REMAINING IPL MATCHES IN UAE

NEW DELHI: Indian Premier League's (IPL) remaining matches this season will be held in United Arab Emirates in the months of September-October, the Indian cricket board confirmed Saturday. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Saturday announced to complete the remaining matches of VIVO Indian Premier League 2021 season in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) considering the monsoon season in India in the months of September-October this year," said a statement from the BCCI Saturday. "The decision was taken at a Special General Meeting (SGM) held virtually, where members unanimously agreed to resume IPL," the statement added. The BCCI will also speak to the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding the T20 World Cup scheduled to be held in India in October-November.

Centre to borrow ₹1.58 trn to compensate tax shortfall

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 29: The Centre will borrow ₹1.58 trillion (\$22 billion) from the market to compensate the states for a shortfall in tax receipts this fiscal year, but it deferred cutting taxes on medicines and medical equipments used to treat Covid-19 patients.

This borrowing would be additional to the ₹12 trillion (\$166 billion) it already plans to raise in the fiscal year that started April 1.

India's deadly second wave of coronavirus that killed thousands of people in the last two months is now threatening an economic revival that had begun to take hold since the beginning of the year. The economy is showing signs of distress, such as falling tax collections and slump in sales of a variety of goods, including automobiles.



The Goods and Services Tax (GST), India's biggest tax reform, was introduced in 2017 to replace an array of federal and state duties. State governments were promised compensation through a surcharge on taxes on luxury goods for five years to ensure 14% annual growth in GST revenue.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the media after the meeting with the Goods and Services Tax Council, which she chairs and includes all state Finance Ministers of the country. The outcome of the meet-

ing, which the council's first for eight months, disappointed some of its members and experts, after it deferred reducing taxes on Covid-19 related medical equipments and medicines.

"The council has failed to address major pain points of the industry and the common man resulting from the pandemic," said Rajat Bose, partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, a law firm. Sitharaman said that a committee would be set up to look into reducing rates of various medical equipments and medicines. The committee would submit its report in the coming 10 days, she added.

"GST #COVID19 relief put on hold for lack of compassion by the Union Government," Manpreet Singh Badal, Finance Minister of Punjab tweeted after the meeting. Badal is also the member of the GST Council.

CASTING HIS NET



A fisherman fishing ahead of southwest monsoon at a seaside in Kochi, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

Remains of 215 children found at closed native school in Canada

Kamloops Indian Residential School was the largest of 139 boarding schools set up in the late 19th century

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ottawa, May 29: The remains of 215 children have been discovered on the grounds of a former boarding school set up more than a century ago to assimilate Canada's indigenous people, according to a local tribe.

A specialist used ground-penetrating radar to confirm the remains of the students who attended the school near Kamloops, British Columbia, the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc tribe said in a statement late Thursday.

"Some were as young as three years old," said chief Rosanne Casimir, calling it "an unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented" by school administrators.

Its preliminary findings are expected to be released in a report next month, she said.

In the meantime, the tribe is working with the coroner and museums to try to shed further light on the horrific discovery and find any records of these deaths.



The main administrative building at the Kamloops Indian Residential School is seen in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada, circa 1970

REUTERS PHOTO

It is also reaching out to the students' home communities across British Columbia and beyond.

"My heart breaks for the families and communities impacted by this tragic news," Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett said in a

tweet, offering government support for their "healing as we honour loved ones lost."

The Kamloops Indian Residential School was the largest of 139 boarding schools set up in the late 19th century, with up to 500 students registered and

attending at any one time.

It was operated by the Catholic church on behalf of the Canadian government from 1890 to 1969.

Some 150,000 Indian, Inuit and Metis youngsters in total were forcibly enrolled in these schools, where students were physically and sexually abused by headmasters and teachers who stripped them of their culture and language.

Today those experiences are blamed for a high incidence of poverty, alcoholism and domestic violence, as well as high suicide rates, in their communities.

A truth and reconciliation commission identified the names of, or information about, at least 3,200 children who died from abuse or neglect while attending a residential school. The exact number remains unknown.

Ottawa formally apologised in 2008 for what the commission later termed a "cultural genocide" as part of a Can\$1.9 billion (\$1.6 billion) settlement with former students.

PM CARES' ₹10 lakh for Covid orphans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: On the eve of his government's second anniversary in its second term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday announced a number of welfare measures for children who lost their parents to Covid-19, including ensuring a corpus of ₹10 lakh when they turn 18 and providing for their education.

Chairing a meeting to deliberate on steps which can be taken to support such children, he said they will be supported under the "PM-CARES for Children" scheme.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement that fixed deposits will be opened in the names of such children, and the PM-CARES fund will contribute through a specially designed scheme to create a corpus of ₹10 lakh for

each of them when he or she reaches 18 years of age.

This corpus will be used to give a monthly financial support or stipend from 18 years of age for the next five years to take care of his or her personal requirements during the period of higher education. On reaching the age of 23 years, they will get the corpus amount as one lump-sum for personal and professional use.

While announcing these measures, Modi emphasised that children represent the country's future and the government will do everything possible to support and protect them so that they develop as strong citizens and have a bright future.

The PM said that all children who have lost both parents or surviving parent or legal guardian/adoptive parents due to Covid-19 will be supported under 'PM-CARES for Children' scheme.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.9°C	35.5°C
MIN	28.2°C	27.2°C
Humidity	97%	80%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky

leisure



EMILY BLUNT'S FIRST KISS WAS 'HORRIBLE'

Actress Emily Blunt has described her first kiss as a 'horror show', because she was left needing to wipe her mouth when the kiss was over.

PRIMAL SCREAM PLANS TO REISSUE ITS DEBUT ALBUM

The rock band *Primal Scream* has planned a reissue of its debut album *Sonic Flower Groove*. The album is expected to have an unreleased track as well as new versions of the original songs.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will be very enterprising and industrious today. You make your plans very carefully and execute them perfectly. Despite this, your progress will be very slow. However, Ganesh advises you not to despair and showers his blessings on you.

TAURUS
This is a great day for showcasing your administrative and organizing abilities, says Ganesh. Go all out and put in all you have, at your workplace or in your business. You can be sure of impressing your colleagues and superiors, partners and competitors and gaining their admiration and support.

GEMINI
You had better start sharing your feelings with your family today, says Ganesh. Also, it's time to tell your family about your current financial status. It will help you feel better. Your energy levels will soar and you will approach everything with renewed vigour.

CANCER
Today, you and your soul mate will be rolling in the hay; there will be little time or inclination to do anything else. In fact, you will show such single-minded devotion to the act of rolling as if the future of the world lies in the haystack.

LEO
Try and put on some protective gear today – maybe a suit of armour should do fine, says Ganesh. For, you may find some need for it on this day of mixed fortunes as you miss out the expected and come face-to-face with the unexpected.

VIRGO
Today, you will be aspire to be a master of your own destiny. You have the ability to see through the façade that people put up to shield their true self. You will choose your company wisely and plan for success.

LIBRA
Ganesh feels the day will be beneficial for you when it comes to transactions with the government. But you already expect that. It is more than likely that public servants will have encouraging and optimistic achievements lined up for their efforts.

SCORPIO
Ganesh feels that you may be confronted with vital decisions at work. You will need to trust the opinions of your close friends and peers so that you may take informed decisions. Keep your mind away from negative thoughts and delegate responsibilities accordingly.

SAGITTARIUS
It is not your nature to warm the bench, but you will wake up feeling lazy and laid-back today, says Ganesh. This may be due to the fatigue of some recent endeavours. For a change, you will try and delegate your work and responsibility to those around you.

CAPRICORN
Plans for expanding business may require you to take risks, leaving you in a dilemma on more than one occasion. In such desperate circumstances, following your instincts can lead you to success, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You are loaded with work, but you will be able to complete the pending assignments. It is, however, necessary that you keep on marching ahead otherwise your growth may become stagnant, advises Ganesh. Keep yourself guarded and watch the moves your opponents make to be prepared for any challenge.

PISCES
Today is a day of mixed fortunes. So, while you may not win a gazillion dollars in the daily lottery, you might just end up winning a return air ticket to Timbuktu. No one has really been there, but it is better than nothing.

Raima on appeal of supernatural genre

Mumbai: Actress Raima Sen appears in the new web-show *The Last Hour*, and the supernatural crime drama has kept lovers of the genre happy.

"(It is) the fact of the unknown," says Raima, on what makes the supernatural genre appealing. "We are all intrigued by what we don't know about and what we can't see. So, these shows have kind of a thrill element, curiosity and we always want to know more. So, I think that is why they are popular."

It also gets us thinking," adds the *Parineeta* actress.

"I am happy that *The Last Hour* is doing so well. It's released in 240 countries and I am getting a lot of positive feedback. So, it is a big moment because I have not had a show released on such a large scale before this," she said.

The Last Hour also features Sanjay Kapoor, Shahana Goswami, Karma Takapa, Robin Tamang and Shaylee Krishen. The series follows a mysterious young shaman on the run, protecting a secret gift.



'I'm a fan of my fans'

Mumbai: Actor Kartik Aaryan Saturday shared a video that shows him interacting with his fans on stage.

The video posted on Instagram is of a live performance – possibly a college gig – in an auditorium, where he dances with a girl on the stage. At one point, he goes down on his knees and kisses the girl's hand, and then gives her a hug.

"Is it called Fanception because I'm a Fan of my Fans? Can keep going forever just for this feeling," he wrote.

His post drew 1,785,532 views within a few hours besides fan reactions.

"Jo bechare ab college nahi jate unko kese miloge aap... vo bhi is Covid time main," wrote one user with a weepy smiley.

"@kartikaaryan you are looking handsome in this video and I am in shock to see that video... lots of love from your biggest fan," wrote another fan, with heart emojis.

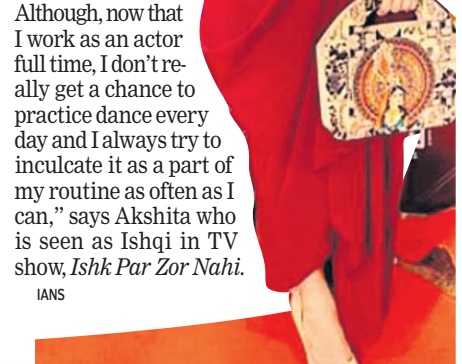


Akshita's way of beating stress

Mumbai: Actress Akshita Mudgal says she is very fond of dancing and uses it as a way to stay happy during these tough times.

"Dancing is the best way for me to reduce stress and anxiety because it causes body to release endorphins – and, of course, when the body feels good, the mind does too," she says.

"I've had always this 'keeda' of dancing in me. I am a trained dancer and excel in various dance forms. Although, now that I work as an actor full time, I don't really get a chance to practice dance every day and I always try to inculcate it as a part of my routine as often as I can," says Akshita who is seen as Ishqi in TV show, *Ishk Par Zor Nahi*.



Friends Reunion trending amongst Gen Z

Even as the sitcom was premiered 25 years ago, it still claims a high degree of relevance among India's first generation of digital natives

AGENCIES
From September 1994 to May 2004, Courtney Cox, David Schwimmer, Jennifer Aniston, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and Matthew Perry starred in the wildly popular sitcom, *Friends*, little did they know that they weren't just shooting a show but were building a universal 'happy place' for generations to come.

Such is their impact, that when the makers decided announced a *Friends Reunion* special, which was released May 27, 2021, Gen Z simply could not contain their excitement. This is evident from the 3.5 times increase in mentions of *Friends Reunion* on dating platform Tinder in April 2021 as compared to April 2020. It is interesting how a show, premiered 25 years ago, is still able to claim such a high degree of relevance among



A screengrab from TV series *Friends*

audiences of each generation, including Gen Z!

Friends is more than just a show for the Indian Gen Z and they are not shying away from high-key stanning in their Tinder bios.

With almost 93 per cent of the mentions in Tinder bios (in April 2021) coming from Gen Z members, it is evident that the

champions of binge watching have left the other generations of *Friends* fans far behind.

Chandler rules on Tinder. When ranked *Friends* characters in order of mentions amongst Tinder members, in April 2021, it was Chandler who bagged the top spot. Then came, Joey, Ross, Monica, Rachel and Phoebe.

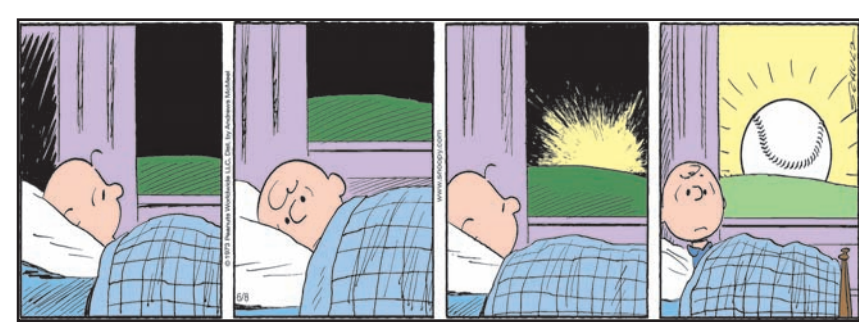
The rest of the cast also features time and again in various Tinder bios, showing how most members of the Tinder community identify themselves with the show's characters.

Here's what some Tinder users have to say:

- Let's be Monica and Chandler in a world full of Ross and Rachel
- Sarcastic like Chandler; innocent like Joey; funny like Phoebe; organised like Monica(not), serious like Ross Rachel is love!
- Waiting for a Joey to come by and say, "how you doing?"
- Looking for Monica, but only coming across Janices.

Note: All data above comes from Tinder profiles or aggregated Tinder app data in April 2021. Items cited are in no particular order.

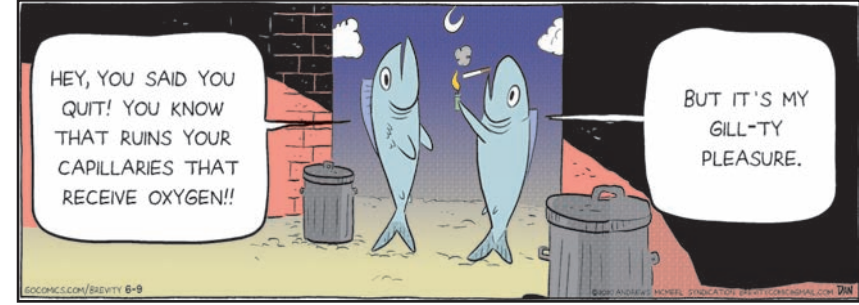
PEANUTS



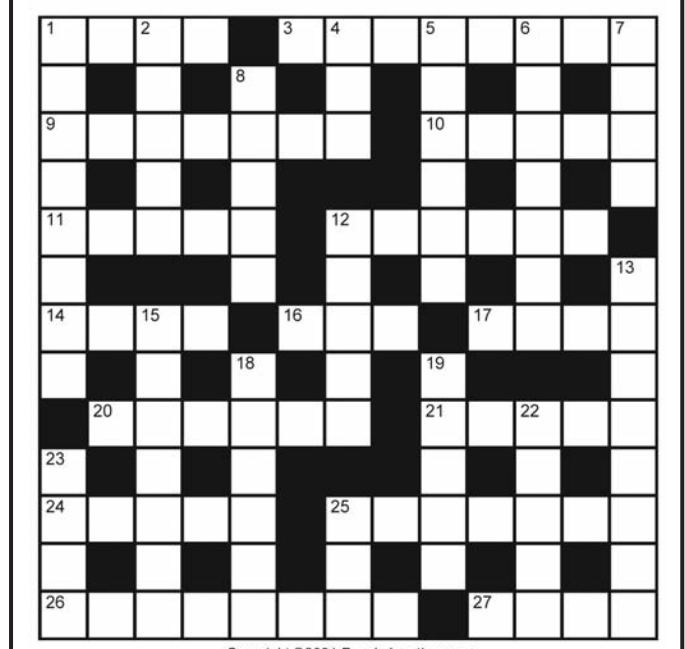
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



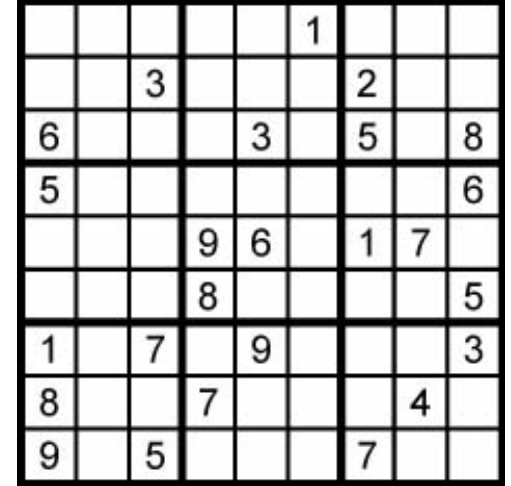
FUN post CROSSWORD



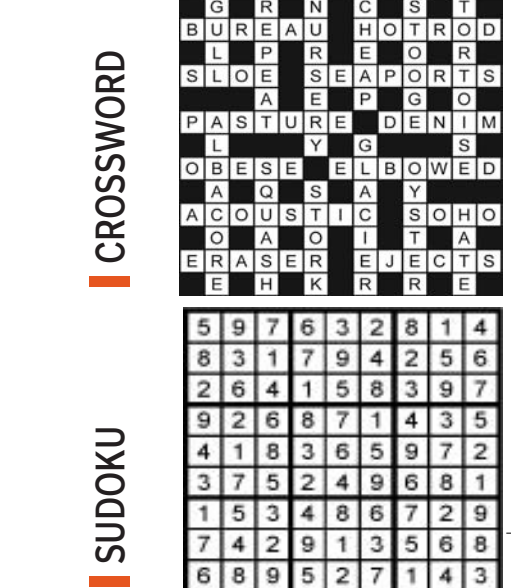
- Across**
- 1 Short run
 - 3 And so forth (2,6)
 - 9 Martinique neighbour (2,5)
 - 10 Similar
 - 11 Cut of beef
 - 12 Theatre ad
 - 14 Wagers
 - 16 Busy airport
 - 17 Paper purchase
 - 20 Pond sounds
 - 21 Laud
 - 24 Venomous snake
 - 25 Get a divorce (5,2)
 - 26 Circus performers
 - 27 Twist
 - 8 Sharp as a tack
 - 12 Broods
 - 13 Highly contagious viral disease
 - 15 Storm warning?
 - 18 Sacred beetle of ancient Egypt
 - 19 Water sources
 - 22 Demolish
 - 23 Hot rock
 - 25 Congeal

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



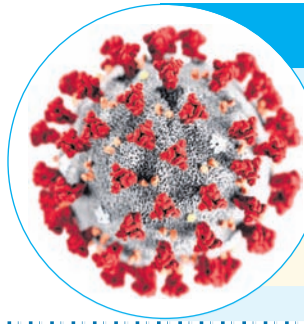
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



BRIDGE SANS TRAFFIC

Naraj anicut bridge in Cuttack wears a deserted look due to the Covid-induced weekend shutdown, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	17,02,63,742	15,21,51,666	35,40,537
India	2,77,29,247	2,51,78,011	3,22,512
Odisha	7,47,143	6,58,646	2,686

KILLER SPRAY



Civic authorities sanitise Old Town area of Bhubaneswar as part of the fight against Covid-19 pandemic

RMRC to study post-vax infection & severity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: Even as the state is witnessing several cases of Covid-19 infection and severity in people who have already taken two doses of the vaccines, the state government has asked the Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) to conduct a follow-up study in this regard.

Health and Family Welfare department additional chief secretary (ACS), PK Mohapatra has written a letter to RMRC director Sanghamitra Pati to this effect.

"Some cases of Covid-19 positive cases are being reported from various districts of Odisha post double doses of the vaccination. In this regard, it is requested that RMRC, Bhubaneswar may carry out a follow-up study to assess the hospitalisation and severity among Covid-19 positive individuals post vaccination as compared to non-vaccinated Covid positive individuals," Mohapatra wrote to the director. The government has been urging people to get vaccinated, maintaining that the vaccine will not only protect one from contracting the coronavirus but also will prevent its progression to a severe form, thereby reducing mortality, he said.

"The findings could provide valuable insight regarding vaccination road map of the state in the coming days," the ACS said.

Requesting the RMRC director to undertake this study on prior-



'Srimandir sanctum' photo goes viral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 29: A photo of the sanctum sanctorum of Srimandir went viral on social media once again, exposing chinks in security arrangements at the 12th century shrine.

The Trinity—Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra—along with Lord Sudarshan on the Ratnabedi (bejewelled throne) can be seen in the viral photograph.

When contacted, Srimandir administrator (Rituals) Jitendra Sahu confirmed the incident, saying Arijit Chandra, a resident of West Bengal, had posted the photo of Ratnabedi on his Facebook account with some captions in Bengali May 27. "We have registered an FIR in this regard with Singhadwar police," Sahu said.

"However, our IT team is investigating to find out whether the photo is a real one. The team's report will decide the future course of action," he added.

The devotee reportedly tagged the photo to the Facebook accounts of eight people, including a senior servitor of Srimandir.



ARIJIT CHANDRA, A RESIDENT OF WEST BENGAL, HAD POSTED THE PHOTO OF RATNABEDI ON HIS FACEBOOK ACCOUNT MAY 27

THE SHREE JAGANNATH TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION HAS REGISTERED AN FIR IN THIS REGARD WITH SINGHADWAR POLICE

THE TEMPLE IT TEAM IS NOW INVESTIGATING TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE PHOTO IS A REAL ONE OR AN EDITED ONE

While the picture is suspected to have been captured with a mobile phone, it is yet to be understood how devotees manage to enter the temple precincts with their mobile phones when phones and cameras are strictly prohibited at the shrine.

Despite round-the-clock tight security and presence of metal detectors at the four gates, the in-

cidents of people being able to take their mobile phones into the temple have raised curiosity among the residents and devotees.

Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), meanwhile, targeted the state government over the alleged security lapse at Srimandir.

"The photos of several sensitive places in Srimandir are going

Gangrape victim gets ₹3.50L aid at NHRC's behest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: The victims of rape or other heinous crimes rarely receive any financial aid under the much touted Victim Compensation scheme. However, some managed to receive the aid after the intervention of courts and rights bodies.

A gangrape victim, a minor girl, from Ganjam district has recently received Rs 3.50 lakh as compensation under the Victim Compensation scheme following the intervention of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The police also arrested the accused persons involved in the heinous crime after being chided by the commission.

According to sources, the eight-year-old girl from Polasara area of Ganjam was raped by some miscreants near her residence October 31, 2018. Later, Congress leader and advocate Nishikant Mishra approached the NHRC seeking the commission's intervention in the matter in November, 2018. Mishra had urged the commission to direct the district administration to immediately arrest the culprits and award financial compensation to the victim's family.

On March 1, 2021, the NHRC issued summons for personal appearance of the Ganjam SP before the commission April 29, 2021. A livid commission also warned SP of criminal action against him.

The SP then provided Rs 3.50 lakh compensation to the victim through the District Legal Services Authority of Ganjam.

Thrust on 5T as CM Naveen completes 2 yrs of 5th term

Over a period of time, there have been visible changes in the attitude and behaviour of government servants at all levels, said CM Naveen Patnaik

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: On completion of two years of the fifth term of his government, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik put forth the report card of his government at the Council of Ministers meeting held here Saturday.

The government had started Mo Sarkar to connect directly with the citizens. Over a period of time, there have been visible changes in the attitude and behaviour of government servants at all levels, he said. Patnaik said his government has been putting sincere efforts for systemic and process-based changes to make administration and service delivery more citizen-friendly and technology oriented.

The state government is giving emphasis on principles of 5Ts—Transparency, Technology, Team work, Time and Transformation. Every department has adopted a transformative agenda and is working relentlessly towards achieving the goals, he said.

Stating that special focus has been given on the development of education and health, the Chief Minister said investment of over Rs 8,500 crore in development of healthcare infrastructure across the state is under progress.

The SCB Medical College and Hospital will be developed as a



great institution with an investment of Rs 3,500 crore while 786 doctors and 5,137 paramedics have been recruited in the last one year, he pointed out.

As education is the key to unravel the full potential of children, transformation of 1,000 high schools has been taken up in the first phase this year.

To prepare the youth for global job market, the government has started the World Skill Centre as part of "Skilled in Odisha" programme. "Our youth will be provided quality skills in every sector so that they can compete with the best in the world."

He claimed that Odisha continues to be a favourite investment destination and the state has attracted some of the biggest investments in the country during the Covid period. Speaking on development of sports, he said over Rs 1,000 crore worth sports development projects have been taken up, including India's largest Hockey

Stadium in Rourkela. On agriculture and farmers' development, he said, "We have kept our promises regarding Kalia scheme by transferring more than Rs 6,118 crore to the farmers' accounts in last one year. With renewed vigour, our government has given strict timelines to complete the irrigation projects." Besides, the Upper Indravati Lift Irrigation project and Lower Indravati project have been inaugurated this year, he mentioned.

Mission Shakti department has been created for women's empowerment. To involve the Mission Shakti groups in various government activities worth Rs 5,000 crore in five years, the CM said.

"To preserve the cultural heritage of our great state, we have launched various projects for heritage conservation across the state in Puri, Konark, Samaleswari Temple, Harishankar-Nrusinghanath temple etc.," he further said.

To strengthen the Panchayati Raj institutions and ULBs, the state has transferred Rs 11,287 crore directly from the Finance Commission grants over last two years. "In spite of all the challenges, we are quite confident that we will emerge victorious in this crisis with the co-operation of the people of the state, and continue to carry forward the good work for the transformation of Odisha," he added.

Urban poor left to beg as lockdown continues

AVIRAL MISHRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 29: It's another morning here and a 26-year-old Heena Sheikh scoots off to her nearest general store but not to buy ration, rather to beg from those who can lend a helping hand to her.

A migrant from neighbouring Chhattisgarh, Heena is one of the many who have borne the brunt of the month-long lockdown clamped in the state including the Capital city. Heena, a hapless mother of four and a widow, used to sell balloons and brooms at traffic signals until lockdown strangled her livelihood.

"My husband passed away recently which brought me immense misery. My eldest son, who is at his tender age of 15, works as a daily wager but he is left with no work. I am left with no other option than to beg for food. Even though some benevolent people buy me daily ration, it becomes hard to stock up the food for weekend shutdowns," Heena lamented.

While the entire state is under Covid-induced lockdown, tales of such misery are many among the urban poor even in the Capital city. With restrictions imposed on most commercial activities, one can wit-



File photo of poor people waiting for dry ration in Bhubaneswar

ness scores of destitute lined up at Master Canteen, KIIT Square, Rupali Junction, railway station and other prominent locations to receive meals and food from benevolent individuals. Even though there is no official data available, individual studies estimate that the state capital has about 10,000 people living below the poverty line. A research study by a group of urban planners also suggested that these figures may increase or decrease given the nature of floating population to the state capital.

In April, when there was only weekend shutdown in City, the

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) had allowed about nine voluntary organisations to distribute food among the poor and destitute.

Moreover, private bodies and individuals were also roped in to reach out to the urban poor during lockdown.

"As per the state government's instructions, we have kept Aahar centres in the city functional. We have also roped in about 40 NGOs that are involved in distribution of food and other essentials among the poor. We have also rehabilitated many destitute at different shelter homes where necessary care is being given," said BMC Deputy

FIGHTING HUNGER AMID PANDEMIC

With restrictions imposed on most commercial activities, one can witness scores of destitute and poor lined up at Master Canteen, KIIT Square, Rupali Junction, railway station and other prominent locations to receive meals and food from benevolent individuals

Even though there is no official data available, individual studies estimate that the state capital has about 10,000 people living below the poverty line

Commissioner, Welfare, Kamalakanta Behera.

However, urban planners and activists here say that the measures taken by the civic authority are not enough. "The condition of poor on city outskirts like Jatni, Mendhashala, Pahala is even worse. No one reaches out to them. Moreover, these destitute have no idea which NGOs are operating in their area and how to contact them. As their means of earning have been shut, they are left with nothing to arrange even one meal a day for survival," said Susanta Behera, a right to food activist here.

SUMMER RITUAL



Jambeswar Mahadeb, a subsidiary deity at Srimandir, being taken to Narendra pond for the ongoing Chandan Yatra in Puri, Saturday

46 kids in Sambalpur test +ve in 3 days

Death toll rises to 2,686 as 35 more patients, including a four-year-old boy, succumb to the disease

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 29: As many as 46 children below 12 years of age tested positive for the novel coronavirus within a span of three days. The children were admitted to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla, said sources.

Meanwhile, a four-year-old boy from Koraput district died of Covid-19. A report from Sambalpur district revealed that as many as 46 children below 12 years of age tested positive in a span of three days. They were admitted to VIMSAR, Burla, an official of the local administration said.

At least 7,188 more people tested positive for Covid-19 in Odisha, pushing the tally in the coastal state to 7,47,143, a Health department official said Saturday.

The death toll rose to 2,686 as 35 more patients, including a four-year-old boy, succumbed to the disease, he said.

Of the fresh cases, 4,026 were reported from quarantine centres and the remaining 3,162 detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, recorded the highest number of new cases at 1,134, followed by Cuttack (690) and Angul (515). Taking to Twitter, the Health



Odisha reported 7,188 new positive cases from 48,649 samples tested Friday. Five fresh fatalities were reported from Angul district, four each in Kalahandi and Rayagada, three each from Jharsuguda, Khurda, Nabarangpur and Sundargarh and two each from Boudh, Jagatsinghpur and Koraput. The state has so far conducted over 1.16 crore sample tests for Covid-19, including 48,649 Friday.

and Family Welfare Department said, "Regret to inform the demise of thirty-five Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Five fresh fatalities were reported from Angul district, four each in Kalahandi and Rayagada, three each from Jharsuguda, Khurda, Nabarangpur and Sundargarh and two each from Boudh, Jagatsinghpur and Koraput.

One patient each succumbed to the infection in Cuttack, Malkangiri, Sambalpur and Subbarnapur, the health department official said.

The death of the four-year-old boy in Koraput district has forced the local administration to prepare a special strategy for the treatment of coronavirus-positive children. Fifty-three other Covid-19 patients have also died due to comorbidities, he said. Odisha now has 97,271 active cases.

At least 11,954 people were cured of disease Friday, taking the total number of recoveries to 6,47,133.

The state has so far conducted over 1.16 crore sample tests for Covid-19, including 48,649 Friday, and the positivity rate now stands at 6.42 per cent.

Nurse dies of Covid

JATNI: An ad hoc staff nurse of Jatni Community Health Centre (CHC) died due to Covid-19 infection, hospital sources said Saturday.

Jyotismita Ghadei, 22, of Bachharapatna area contracted the deadly virus in line of duty. She had been under treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar since May 22. "Ghadei died while being treated for the virus infection at a hospital in the Capital City Friday," said sources in the Jatni CHC.

"Earlier, Ghadei was working in a hospital in Bhubaneswar. She had joined as an ad hoc staff nurse at Jatni CHC last month," said a health staffer. Sources, meanwhile, claimed that Ghadei had not been vaccinated.



INVITING TROUBLE



Boys playing cricket on Kathajodi riverbed near Purighat in Cuttack, Saturday, even though weekend shutdown was clamped in the city to check the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic

State to strengthen coastal embankments

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: In a bid to protect coastal villages from storm surge during cyclone, the state government has planned to strengthen the coastline by creating saline embankments.

The Water Resources department is preparing a detailed project report (DPR) for strengthening of 480-km long coast and 1,650-km long saline embankments in the state. About Rs 6,000 to Rs 7,000 crore would be spent for this purpose, said department engineer in chief Jyotirmaya Rath here Saturday.

In the first phase, measures will be taken for the construction of a 380-km-long saline embankment at a cost of Rs 1,944 crore with stone packing and plantation drive on the coastline, Rath said.

Coastline of districts like Ganjam, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Puri will be taken up in this phase, he said.

Meanwhile, as per the decision of Cabinet, the Forest and Environment department has been renamed as Forest, Environment and Climate Change department.

The department will now focus on climate change along with forest and environment protection and conservation and act as the nodal agency of state for climate change actions.

The department will also pre-

About ₹6,000 to ₹7,000 crore would be spent on strengthening of 480-km long coast and 1,650-km long saline embankments in the state

pare State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) along with other plan, policy, programmes, project on climate actions and implementation plan in line with the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), 2015.

The action plan will be prepared keeping in view watershed management, coastal zone planning and regulation, fisheries and animal resources development, forestry management, agricultural technologies and practices, transport and health programmes.

The department will also play a lead role in reduction of Green House Gas Emission (GHG) through conservation and enhancement of energy efficiency, with coordination with line departments and organizations. Formulation of policies for promotion of non-conventional alternative sources of energy like solar energy and wind energy will also be dealt by the new department.

Drive-in vaccination by BMC raises eyebrows

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has drawn flak for continuing drive-in vaccination programme despite the state government's direction to desist from it as the scheme is a violation of Central guidelines.

Sources said the BMC had launched drive-in vaccination May 8 for second dose of the jab for 45-plus age group. The drive was carried out at the exit points of the shopping malls like Esplanade, Utkal Kanika Galleria, DN Regalia mall and Symphony mall. However, the state Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department May 19 ordered the civic body to refrain from the service for not implementing Centre's Covid norms.

According to the guidelines issued by the Centre, vaccination sessions should be conducted in places with adequate space for waiting area, vaccination room and observation room so that beneficiaries can wait outside the parking area for 30 minutes to avoid any adverse effects following immunization (AEFI). It has come to the notice of the state government that such guidelines were not being implemented by the civic body while carrying out drive-in vaccination facility at different malls and it ordered BMC to discontinue



The BMC had launched drive-in vaccination May 8 for second dose of the jab for 45-plus age group

The drive was carried out at the exit points of the shopping malls like Esplanade, Utkal Kanika Galleria, DN Regalia mall and Symphony mall

However, the state H&FW department May 19 ordered the civic body to refrain from the service for not implementing Centre's Covid norms

the service.

Instead of complying with the government's order, BMC launched the facility at Fortune Tower and BDA Kalyan Mandap Friday. As per the guidelines, beneficiaries are required to be observed for at least 30 minutes after vaccination. It is being alleged that beneficiaries were seen leaving the place after vaccination without waiting for 30 minutes.

On being asked, assigned officer of Utkal Kanika Galleria Satya Narayan Maharana said, "We are implementing Covid guidelines to

make the drive-in vaccination facility successful. People are being vaccinated while sitting on chairs. Despite having adequate waiting space, people were seen leaving for home soon after vaccination."

When contacted, BMC deputy zonal commissioner Anshuman Rath said "BMC is continuing the drive-in vaccination facility keeping in view the necessity of the situation. The drive is being conducted without flouting the Centre's guidelines. Beneficiaries are made to wait for 30 minutes after vaccination."

Cellphones, ganja seized from Jharpada jail

Bhubaneswar: Six unclaimed mobile phones including one android set, four SIM cards, five mobile chargers, one pen drive, five mobile batteries and 250 grams of ganja were seized during the surprise raid at Jharpada Special jail here. The raid was carried out under the supervision of Prisons DG, SK Upadhyaya. A case has been registered at Laxmisagar police station in this regard. The seized items were handed over to the police for further probe.

Helpline for domestic violence victims

Bhubaneswar: The Women and Child Development department Saturday issued helpline numbers for women facing violence and discrimination during the lockdown. The department said that the aggrieved women can dial 100, 181 or 1098 in such cases while they can also approach the authorities via WhatsApp on 7805006039. They can approach the Women Commission on WhatsApp on 8763543013. It also said that the Sakhi will remain open 24x7 for women in district hospitals.

Noted journalist Basant Das loses battle to Covid-19

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 29: Noted Odia journalist and political analyst Basant Das breathed his last at a private hospital here late Friday night owing to Covid-19 related complications. He was 81.

According to family sources, the octogenarian journalist was found positive for Covid-19 May 16 and had remained in home quarantine. Das was later hospitalised as his condition deteriorated.

A pall of gloom descended on the journalists' community across Odisha following announcement of Das's death early Saturday morning.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his grief on the demise of the acclaimed Odia journalist. "Late Das has earned a name as columnist and political analyst as well. He was active in journalism profession for more than half a

century. He will be remembered for his contribution to the field of literature and journalism," Patnaik said.

The Chief Minister also conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved family and wished that the departed soul rests in peace.

Das was born January 2, 1940 in Maendipur village under Biridi block of Jagatsinghpur district. Das shifted to Cuttack after his primary education and completed his matriculation from Peary Mohan Academy and Graduation from Christ College.

Das had written a book named 'Political History of Modern Odisha', including 16 other popular books like the Odisha Sahitya Academy Award-winning one 'Je Deshe Jai Se Phala Khai', 'Footprints of Eventful Days' and 'The Platinum Jubilee of Odisha Politics'.

PPL gesture to BMC employees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: Keeping in view the efforts of the employees of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) in Covid-19 management in Capital City, Paradeep Phosphates Limited (PPL) donated sanitisers and N95 masks worth Rs 1 lakh to the civic body workers.

The PPL said this would be of great help in keeping the BMC workers away from this virus. Sudhi Ranjan Mishra, Head of Corporate Affairs, handed over the material to Sanjay Kumar Singh, Commissioner of BMC. Singh thanked PPL management for this noble gesture. PPL has extended a helping hand to the community and the government in the battle against the deadly virus and is committed to continue the same in future, said Mishra.

LADY CONSTABLE RAPE

Plea lodged in NHRC seeking compensation



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: A rights activist Saturday lodged a petition before the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) demanding Rs 15 lakh compensation for the lady constable who was sexually abused by the Sub Inspector May 25 night in Balasore.

The activist also urged the commission to direct the Balasore district Superintendent of Police to take stringent action against

the accused official. Meanwhile, accused Bansidhar Pradhan, the officer-in-charge of Gopalpur police outpost was Friday arrested on the charge of raping the constable.

Notably, Pradhan allegedly raped the woman constable when she had been deputed to Gopalpur on special duty before the landfall of cyclone Yaas, May 24. She was resting inside the Gopalpur outpost May 25 night after completing her duty when Pradhan raped her. She attempted to commit suicide but was rescued by others. Later, she met the IG and the SP and lodged a complaint.

The accused was called to Balasore where he was arrested and later sent for medical examination.

732 vax sessions today



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 29: The Health department Saturday said that it has planned a total of 732 sessions for inoculating persons against Covid-19 Sunday in the ongoing vaccination drive against the pandemic.

It also said that it was able to vaccinate 1,05,918 persons in the vaccination drive Saturday. With this, the total number of persons that were covered under the vaccination drive touched 76,05,646 in the state.

The department also said that it has been left with a stock of 5,44,970 doses of Covishield from the Union government quota while a total of 3,99,970 doses of Covaxin received from the Centre are in stock.

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Floodwaters inundate Bhadrak villages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, May 29: A sharp rise in floodwaters in Kansabansa and Gamei rivers in this block in Bhadrak district inundated six panchayats and six villages, a report said.

The floodwaters in these two rivers are rising for the last two days following which Sudarsanpur, Barandua, Narasinghpur, Adhuan, Chudamani, Sasubhuasuni panchayats have been submerged. Even villages like Basathi, Balibindha, Guagaon, Bhairavpur, Gopalpur, Panchirikhi villages under the civic body have been inundated.

Meanwhile, the floodwaters in Subarnarekha in Balasore district started receding after crossing the danger mark at Rajghat at Jaleswar. The floodwaters have started receding following a stop in the rainfall in the upstream in Jharkhand and the Galudih barrages closing its gate. The decline in floodwaters has brought a sigh of relief to the residents who are battling to save their lives and properties.

People are having a harrowing time with floodwaters entering their houses and farmlands. As the floodwaters in Kansabansa are increasing large tracts of land in Jagannathpur and Paduhan panchayats have been submerged. The



A submerged Anganwadi Centre in Basudevpur

OP PHOTO

riparian villages remained marooned while the floodwaters entered houses in low-lying areas.

Fishermen and traders who have been carrying out fish and prawn cultivation in the islets of these two rivers have suffered terrible losses after the floodwaters submerged their ponds and gheries. Moreover, vegetable cultivation on hundreds of hectares near the riverbanks has been damaged.

The house of Narendra Samal in Bhairabpur village has been marooned

after the floodwaters of Gamei river entered the area. Over four feet high floodwaters are flowing in the dumping yard of Basudevpur civic body.

The floodwaters have failed to recede as the excess rainwater from Soro, Simulia in Balasore district and Basudevpur area is discharged into the river. Moreover, the river has failed to discharge its excess water as its mouth remains closed due to rough sea surface. Residents have urged the state government to intervene and compensate the affected people.

Man arrested for killing stray dog

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 29: A 50-year-old man was arrested Saturday for allegedly thrashing a stray dog to death in Kendrapara district, police said.

The incident happened in the Pattamundai police station area of the district Friday, they said.

The accused, Babula Singh – a native of Praharajpur locality, was arrested after the video of the fatal assault on the dog went viral on social media, police said.

Singh was booked under Section 429 of the IPC that deals with mischief by killing or maiming cattle of any value or any animal of the value of ₹50

During interrogation, the accused told the police that the dog had killed two cocks, which provoked him to thrash the animal, they said.

Police took cognisance of the viral video and arrested Singh after verifying the content, an officer said.

Singh was booked under Section 429 of the IPC that deals with mischief by killing or maiming cattle of any value or any animal of the value of ₹50. Further, Section 11(I) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 was imposed on him. A court in the district sent him to judicial custody, said Rakesh Tripathy, the inspector of the Pattamundai police station.

Angul Covid graph rises as police go soft on violators

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, May 29: Covid-19 cases have been on the rise in Angul district and this has been ascribed to the police administration being lenient towards Covid violators during lockdown.

Pandemic-induced lockdown is underway in the state since May 5. There are weekend shutdowns as well. A relaxation of some hours has been given for people to buy essentials. At the same time, the government has asked people to go to shops and markets within walking distance.



These guidelines were seen flouted with impunity in Angul town Friday.

Ahead of the weekend shutdown, people thronged almost all the markets, specifically fish markets in the town. People were seen pushing each other to buy fish at shops. While none seemed to be careful about maintaining social distance, many were seen wearing masks improperly.

Some town dwellers alleged that cops

on duty in fish markets were looking the other way.

“If the district and police administrations don’t take stringent action against Covid violators, the situation will go from bad to worse in coming days,” said Shantanu Kumar Sar, an educationist.

According to some residents, the police department has been short handed since many cops are presently undergoing treatment for Covid-19. This is the reason the police department is not able to perform up to expectation. Taking advantage of this, Covid violators were seen fearlessly roaming around the town riding bikes.

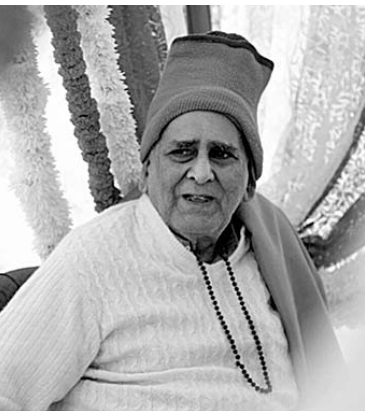
When contacted, Angul SP, Jagmohan Meena, said they are taking action against the violators. “Fines are being collected from them. We have not been short-handed. Angul town police will be asked to conduct raids more frequently in markets,” Meena said.

Angul Sub-Collector, Basudev Satpathy, said the violators are being penalised and made aware of Covid rules and their importance. Yet, reports of markets being overcrowded are arriving. Soon there will be a meeting involving administrative and police officials to find a way out. There will be a magistrate accompanied with policemen at each and every square to deal with Covid violators, Satpathy said.

Angul Saturday reported 515 new Covid cases. With this the district’s case-load has gone up to 31,998, with 6,659 active cases.

Science, spirituality & Swami Chetanananda

DHANADA K MISHRA



I must have been in the last week of December 2001 when I saw my father crying for the first time. It was the annual bhakta sammilani (gathering of disciples) being held in Rajgangpur, Odisha. My father had retired from his position as Dean of Research at Odisha University of Science and Technology (OUAT) in 1993. He had taken sanyas shortly afterwards in 1995 from Swami Vishuddhananda Saraswati in the order of Srimad Swami Nigamananda Paramahansa. For someone with a PhD from the University of California and lifelong pursuit of science as a teacher and researcher of international repute, it was a bit of an odd scene for me. A long line of disciples waited their turn to take leave of their Guru and as each one got up on the stage and prostrated, my father would bless him/her, ask about their wellbeing and say goodbye. Through the process that lasted 2-3 hours, I was stunned to see that tears flowed freely and nonstop down his cheeks! But when his mother passed away in 2005, I don’t remember seeing him cry, at least not in public!

In his book “Wake Up - Searching for Spirituality Without Religion,” well-known neuroscientist, philosopher and spiritualist Sam Harris describes his first experience with the hallucinogenic drug called ecstasy in his early twenties. He felt an expansion of his consciousness in a way that made him feel infinite love and compassion for his companion and, in fact, for all living beings. The experience was so powerful that he spent the next several years searching for the same experience without using the drug. His quest took him to many monks, yogis, gurus in India and Nepal until he became adept at the meditation techniques that would take him to the depth of spiritual experience.

After that moving experience in 2001, I would on several occasions witness

texts like the Upanishads and the Vedanta.

In his autobiography, Swami Chetanananda says in the foreword to his book – “Spirituality is the realisation of self and identification of it with the supreme consciousness. Vedanta explains spirituality using four mahavakyas (aphorisms): Aham Brahmasmi (I am the brahman or the super soul, super consciousness), Tat Twam Asi (Thou art thee, you are Him or the soul itself is the super soul or the creator), Ayamatra Brahman (this Self / Atman is Brahman) and Pranjanam Brahman (Insight is Brahman).” When one takes sanyas, he/she is instructed by the Guru to go on a pilgrimage to the four famous spiritual centres (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri and Rameswaram) and reflect on these four aphorisms to identify oneself with their import which has the power to expand one’s consciousness. Such a profound realisation has the capacity to take one beyond the mundane transitory world of pleasure and pain and instead help one achieve the highest of all goals - spiritual bliss.

“Science and spirituality are twin driving forces in my life. Science seeks truth by reasoning, and so does spirituality. In a way, science and spirituality seek the same divine blessings for a happy life.” It is the essence of my father’s life in his own words.

I feel privileged to have been born to a person who made it possible for me to have an upbringing in which religion, science and spirituality have been in harmonious coexistence. As I peek from the base of Mount Everest with my own fleeting experiments to try and grasp the enormity of the peak at the distance, I feel my father in my heart. I realise that being free of his physical body he has become available to me or anyone seeking him anytime and anywhere. We celebrate his life as we fully understand the message of the Bhagavad Gita that the body is transient but the soul is immortal.

Cough syrup racket busted in Bolangir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 29: Police Saturday busted an interstate cough syrup smuggling racket and seized 14,400 bottles from a truck in Kandagada forest under Turekela police limits in Bolangir district. The cops arrested two persons for their involvement in smuggling of cough syrup bottles worth over ₹20 lakh.

One of the arrested persons is the driver of the truck and a resident of Karnataka, while the second one is a resident of Khujenbahal under



Turekela police limits.

The police were tipped-off that a truck with a consignment of Asciril cough syrup bottles was passing through

Kandagada forest. A team was formed and it raided the forest and seized the truck. Upon carrying out a search, they found 14,400 cough syrup

bottles in 90 cartons. As the driver and another occupant of the truck couldn’t produce any valid documents to prove their innocence, they were arrested.

In a press release, Bolangir SP Kusalkar Nitin Dagdu informed that the accused were planning to sell the cough syrup bottles through local retailers at inflated prices.

The police also seized some tablets and ₹13,000 in cash from the accused. A detailed investigation is underway to find out if others are involved in the racket.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JHUMPURA

No.1426

Date:12.05.2021

Detailed Tender Call Notice No 01/BDO, Jhumpura 2021-22

The Block Development Officer, Jhumpura invites sealed percentage rate tenders in a single cover system on behalf of Govt of Odisha from registered and eligible class of Civil Contractors of the State PWD(R&B)/ Water Resources/ Rural Works/ MI/ CPWD for the following works eventually to be drawn up in the PWD F-2 forms in conformity with the detailed tender call notice.

Sl. No.	Name of the work with location	Scheme	Est. Cost (in Rupees)	Amount put to Tender (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender Document in (Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Time of Completion
1	Construction of Boundary Wall at Kasia UGME School under Malda	OMBADC	1075000	960379	6000	"C" & "D"	3 Calendar Months
2	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Jhumpura Nodal UP School under Jhumpura GP	OMBADC	1087000	945271	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
3	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Solagoda Nodal School under Khuntapada GP	OMBADC	1087000	949066	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
4	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Mananda U.G.M.E.School under Chouthia GP	OMBADC	1087000	949066	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
5	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Khuntapada UP School under Khuntapada GP	OMBADC	1087000	949066	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
6	Construction of Boundary Wall at Naradapur High School under Naradapur GP	OMBADC	1105000	986891	6000	"C" & "D"	3 Calendar Months
7	Construction of Toilet and Boundary Wall at Rajabasa UGUP School under Balibandha GP	OMBADC	1102000	963544	6000	"C" & "D"	4 Calendar Months
8	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Andharikhaman U.G.U.P. School under Arasala GP	OMBADC	1560000	1367888	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
9	Construction of 2 No of Addl. Class Room at Podasimulia U.G.U.P. School under Badaneuli GP	OMBADC	1620000	1429924	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
10	Construction of 2 No of Addl. Class Room at Baria U.P. School under Baria GP	OMBADC	1620000	1429924	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
11	Construction of Addl. Class Room at Amlanigoda UGUP School under Nischintpur GP	OMBADC	1620000	1428674	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
12	Construction of 2 Nos. of Addl. Class Room at Asanpat UP School under Asanpat GP	OMBADC	1620000	1429924	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
13	Construction of Addl. Class Room, Toilet and Boundary Wall at Siribahal UGUP School under Balibandha GP	OMBADC	1662000	1454077	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
14	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Tolakbahal Nodal UP School under Gumura GP	OMBADC	1635000	1425860	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
15	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Manoharpur UGUP School under Nischintpur GP	OMBADC	1810000	1596424	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
16	Construction of Addl. Class Room, Toilet and Boundary Wall at Sitarampur UGUP School under Badadumuria GP	OMBADC	1892000	1649303	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
17	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Balarampur Nodal UP School under Nahabada GP	OMBADC	1897000	1663418	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
18	Construction of Addl. Class Room (2 Unit) and Toilet (1 unit) at Mukteswar Nodal UP School under Malda GP	OMBADC	1897000	1615381	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
19	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Gundunia Nodal UP School under Gundunia GP	OMBADC	1897000	1663418	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months
20	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Dhabaleswar UP School, Barkhandia under Khuntapada GP	OMBADC	2095000	1848272	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
21	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Kanjipani UGUP School under Nahabada GP	OMBADC	2340000	2062245	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
22	Construction of Addl. Class Room at Panchayat High School under Nahabada GP	OMBADC	2480000	2185447	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
23	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Balibandha Nodal UP School under Balibandha GP	OMBADC	2572000	2255634	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
24	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Bhaluka UGUP School under Jhumpura GP	OMBADC	2707000	2379112	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
25	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Toilet at Nayagarh UGUP School under Nayagarh GP	OMBADC	2707000	2379112	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
26	Construction of Addl. Class Room (3 Unit) and Boundary Wall at Mangaleswar ME School under Kutugaoan GP	OMBADC	2830000	2431821	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
27	Construction of Addl. Class Room and Boundary Wall at Kankana UGUP School under Nischintpur GP	OMBADC	3255000	2867806	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
28	Construction of Addl. Class Room (4 Units) and Toilet (1 Unit) at Chouthia Nodal UP School under Chouthia GP	OMBADC	3517000	2996673	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
29	Construction of Addl. Class Room (4 Units) and Toilet (1 Unit) at Tukudih UP School under Tukudih GP	OMBADC	3517000	2996673	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
30	Construction of Addl. Class Rooms at Panchayat High School under Nahabada GP	OMBADC	3720000	3280361	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
31	Construction of Addl. Class Rooms at Jhumpura High School under Jhumpura GP	OMBADC	3720000	3280361	6000	"B" & "C"	6 Calendar Months
32	Construction of Gram Panchayat Level Federation (GPLF) at Basantapur under Basantapur GP	GPLF	1400000	1032943	6000	"C" & "D"	6 Calendar Months

Block Development Officer, Jhumpura

Terms and Conditions

- Cost of tender paper:** The tender specification can be obtained from the office of the Block Development Officer, Jhumpura on Payment towards the cost of Tender papers as mentioned above(non refundable) in shape of Bank Draft or Demand Draft only (no other modes will be entertained) drawn in favour of Block Development Officer, Jhumpura in any nationalized bank having its branch at Jhumpura on any working day from 13.05.2021 to 28.05.2021 for the above work.
- Sale of Tender Papers:** The tender documents will be sold from 13.05.2021 to 28.05.2021 at Block office, Jhumpura between 07.00 A.M. to 01.00 PM on working days only.
- Date of receipt and mode of submission of tender paper:** The tenderers have to submit the sealed tender papers in complete shape through registered post/ speed post only by directly sending to the BDO, Jhumpura in his official postal address. The last date of receipt of tender paper is 28.05.2021 up to 1 PM. The undersigned will not be responsible for postal delay if any or non receipt of the papers in time. The Tenderers must prescribe the name of the work / Project on the sealed envelope.
- Date of opening of Tender Papers:** The tender paper shall be opened on 31.05.2021 at 09.00AM in the presence of tenderers or their authorized representative having written authorization for the purpose and the tender committee.
- Documents to be attached:** The following documents to be furnished with the tender papers failing which the tender will be liable to rejection.
 - An affidavit regarding “Bid Security Declaration”
 - Self attested copy of Contractor Registration Certificate.
 - Self attested copy of PAN card and certificate of GSTIN.
 - Original Money receipt granted by BDO, Jhumpura towards cost of tender paper.
 - Attested copy of caste certificate issued by competent authority in case of SC, ST contractors desirous of availing preference.
 - The bidders have to Produce an original affidavit in support of authenticity of documents including EMD, etc attached with the tender papers.
 - Affidavit as regards the facts of availing award work without submission of EMD/ ISD/ during the current financial year in case of Engineer Contractors desirous of availing exemptions of EMD otherwise their tender papers will be liable for rejection.
 - Joint venture consortium agreements are not allowed to participate in tender.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri/Smt. _____, “X” Class Contractor, Son/Daughter of Sri _____, A/P/O - _____, Dist. _____, solemnly affirm that myself submitting this “Bid Security Declaration” as an Affidavit in favour of Block Development Officer, Jhumpura in lieu of Bid Security for the Work _____ vide Tender Call Notice No. _____, Dated: _____, with stipulation that if I withdraw or modify my bids during period of validity etc., I will be suspended for the time specified in the tender documents and as per the clause of the F-2 Agreement of P.W.D.

Signature of Contractor:

- Shortfall of any required documents is liable for rejection.
- Additional performance security deposit:** The affidavit in lieu of APS will be submitted by successful bidder for the cost of less coated in percentage of the amount put to tender before signing of the agreement of the contract (vide works dept letter no. - 13286 date -07.09.2017 Govt of Odisha works department). As per Official Memorandum No 4559 Dated 05.04.2021 of Works Department Govt of Odisha modification to APS will be followed as detailed below.

Sl. No.	Range of difference between the Estimated cost put to tender and Bid amount	APS to be deposited by the successful Bidder
1	Below 5%	No APS
2	From 5% and above and below 10%	50% of Difference between Estimated put to Tender and Bid Amount
3	From 10% and above	150 % of Difference between Estimated put to Tender and Bid Amount

- Submission of more than one tender paper by a bidder for a single work will be liable for rejection of all such tender papers.
- The block development Officer, Jhumpura reserve the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof other details can be seen in the bidding documents.
- If the rate quoted by the bidder is more or less than (14.99% less) of the tendered amount, then such a bid shall be rejected or the tender shall be finalized basing on the merits of rest bids. But if more than one bid is quoted at 14.99 % (Decimal up to two numbers) will be taken for all practical purposes) less than the estimated cost, the tendered accepting authorities will finalize the tender through a transparent lottery system where all the bidders/ authorized representatives, the concerned BDO and tender committee will remain present.

Block Development Officer, Jhumpura Block

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JHUMPURA

CORRIGENDUM

Order No. 1527

Dated: 28.05.21

Due to COVID-19 PandemicPeak situation and severe cyclonic storm “YAAS”, the advertisement for the Tender has not been widely published. So, the last date of sale and receipt of tender paper has been extended up to dated 17.06.2021 during official working hours. The date of opening of tender paper ison Dated 21.06.2021 at 11.00 AM for the Detailed Tender Call Notice No 01/ 2021-22 of BDO, Jhumpura vide Notice No 1526 Dated 12.05.2021. All other terms and conditions of Detailed Tender Call Notice No 01/ 2021-22 of BDO, Jhumpura are remain unchanged. The tenderers who have already purchased tender papers for the projects vide Detailed Tender Call Notice No 01/ 2021-22 of BDO, Jhumpura are remained valid.

Block Development Officer, Jhumpura

FOCUS GOVERNANCE

STATE'S BALANCING ACT



If Big Tech has been able to gain so much influence over people's lives, then these same technologies could be much more dangerous in the hands of governments

For over a century, the size and role of the state has been a hotly debated issue, and is so once again in the wake of COVID-19. Should governments involve themselves in ever more areas of social and commercial life, or does more government necessarily mean less freedom and more waste?

On one side are libertarians, who regard governments as at best incompetent and inefficient, and at worst a threat to individual liberty. This is the intellectual tradition of Friedrich A Hayek and Milton Friedman, and of political leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Ranged against them are statisticians, who think government is inherently benevolent and seek to expand its powers to influence society and the economy. This is the view of Fabian socialists and central planners, contemporary politicians such as US Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and European political parties like Greece's Syriza, Italy's Five Star Movement, and Spain's Podemos. But today, new digital technologies and organisational structures can enable states to balance policy effectiveness with citizens' freedom. Governments can be both big and small, generous and frugal, and deeply involved in people's lives while stopping short of meddlesome intrusion. This is particularly important during crises such as the current pandemic, when the state must play a crucial role.

In past two decades, internet, social media, smartphones, and cheap computers and software have enabled private-sector firms to do more with less, thereby upending entire sectors from media and music to retail and travel. That revolution is now coming to the state. Governments around the world increasingly have access to technologies – as well as to accompanying organisational models such as delivery skunkworks, policy labs,

and behavioral-insights units – that profoundly alter the potential scale and scope of what they can achieve. For good or ill, policymakers can now build a vast state apparatus quickly and at low cost.

These developments have three major implications for how the state functions. For starters, governments can potentially deliver services better, faster, and at lower cost. If Amazon, Google, and Facebook can harness big data to provide a huge number of customers with a seamless and efficient experience, while relentlessly seeking to improve it, surely governments can do the same for their citizens. In India, for example, the federal government gave over one billion citizens a unique digital identity in just over five years at a cost of less than \$1 per person.

More worryingly, governments can also use digital tools to gain greater control over their citizens, monitor them more closely, and accrue more power. If Big Tech has been able to gain so much influence over people's lives, then these same technologies could be much more dangerous in the hands of governments. For example, the Chinese government's Social Credit System uses digital technologies

to track citizens' and businesses' interactions and transactions, and assigns them a rating that combines Western-style credit scores with more expansive and intrusive reputational scores based on their public and private behaviour. These ratings have real consequences for people's access to employment, finance, and social services, as well as their freedom to travel.

Then there is the question of how governments should view and manage the private sector's use of such tools and technologies. Policymakers must decide how to regulate immensely powerful digital platforms, and how to engage with large and small firms to stimulate innovation and drive inclusive growth. Although digital technologies are recent inventions, the question of how to balance government effectiveness and individual liberty is far older. In 1936, John Maynard Keynes noted that, "The authoritarian state systems of today seem to solve the problem of unemployment at the expense of efficiency and of freedom." But, he added, "it may be possible by a right analysis of the problem, to cure the disease whilst preserving efficiency and freedom." Meeting this challenge will re-

quire governments to adhere to four key principles. First, states must be responsive to citizens' needs. In designing and delivering public services, they need to work outside-in, from the perspective of the people who use them, rather than inside-out, from public officials' viewpoint. Countries like the Netherlands are doing this in areas such as social care.

Second, the state must be inclusive, and balance the interests and needs of different groups of citizens. In designing social-security and employment laws, for example, governments must weigh the needs of employers against those of job seekers. This is the goal of Denmark's "flexicurity" system, and of experiments with universal basic income schemes around the world.

Third, states need to experiment. They should constantly test new initiatives in pilot programmes to reduce the risk of failure, evaluate them, and then scale up the ones that work. The UK has done this in education and criminal justice through the Behavioural Insights Team and the What Works foundations.

Fourth, states must be entrepreneurial. That means proactively engaging with new technologies and firms, regulating them in innovative ways, and cultivating them so that they flourish. Examples include the UK's regulatory sandbox approach to fostering the fintech and autonomous-vehicle sectors.

With the world reeling from the pandemic and struggling to address complex systemic issues such as climate change, it is vital that we return to the fundamental question of politics: how a government should be. If we don't ask it – and ask it often – we risk ending up with a government we would never choose.

The writer is Director of Centre for India & Global Business at Cambridge Judge Business School.

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GOVERNMENTS CAN ALSO USE DIGITAL TOOLS TO GAIN GREATER CONTROL OVER THEIR CITIZENS, MONITOR THEM MORE CLOSELY, AND ACCRUE MORE POWER



Jaideep Prabhu

You must abstain from thinking about someone when you cannot think well of him.

THE MOTHER



Our Worried Friends

India's foreign minister was till Saturday on a visit to the United States. The first half of his trip was apparently not very productive because the person he had come to meet, the American secretary of state (which is his title for foreign minister) had to go to the middle east on an urgent visit. In the meantime, our S Jaishankar met with the Indian teams at the United Nations and other such meetings. He also had an interview with Trump's former National Security Advisor Gen HR McMaster. The general, who is familiar with India and has visited it, spoke about radicalism in the region and how extremism had hurt Pakistan. He then asked Jaishankar: "I wanted to ask you about how you see political developments in your own country. You are not a partisan person. You have served with great distinction across many administrations. There is concern in the midst of the pandemic about some of these Hindutva policies that could be undermining the secular nature of Indian democracy... and are India's friends right to be concerned about some of these recent trends?"

Jaishankar first corrected McMaster to say that he was actually partisan: "Let me clarify something. I served multiple administrations when I was a civil servant. I am today an elected member of parliament. Do I have a political viewpoint and political interest? Of course I do. Hopefully I will be able to articulate the interest that I represent." He then says he will give two replies, a "straight political answer" and a "slightly more nuanced societal answer". His straight political answer is that India had "votabank politics" in the past but no longer because democracy had deepened under the Bharatiya Janata Party. This had happened through "broader representation in politics and in leadership positions and in civil society of people, of people who are much more confident about their culture, about their language, about their beliefs. These are people who are less from the English speaking world, less connected to other global centres." Jaishankar says there is nothing to be concerned about because there is no problem and that this set of people he is referring to are "judged politically harshly and it is often used to create a certain narrative."

His nuanced societal answer is that the BJP government does not discriminate, Jaishankar says, because they gave extra rations to people in the pandemic and put money in people's Jan Dhan accounts without separating them by religion.

We should perhaps be thankful to Jaishankar that India so far has not decided to give their entitlements to the poor based on what religion they are. But while we are thankful we should also note that Jaishankar did not actually answer what was asked. McMaster's question was framed around the word Hindutva and its policies. What are they? They are introduction of religion into citizenship. The United Nations and the European Union and members of the United States Congress have expressed disappointment and alarm at India's Citizenship Amendment Act.

The United States International Commission on Religious Freedom's report for 2021 has identified laws in India that criminalise conversion, especially of women to Islam. These laws are the BJP's Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019, Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantraya Adhyadesh, 2020, Uttar Pradesh Vidhi Viruddh Dharma Samparivartan Pratishedh Adhyadesh, 2020 and Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021. The USCIRF report (which recommends sanctions against India) says that while these laws "target interfaith marriage in particular; several other states prohibit conversion based on vague criteria, including force, inducement, allurement, coercion, fraud, or misrepresentation. These anti-conversion laws are too often the basis for false accusations, harassment, and violence against non-Hindus that occur with impunity. In 2020, for example, mobs—fueled by false accusations of forced conversions—attacked Christians, destroyed churches, and disrupted religious worship services."

India under Modi has spent a lot of energy in drafting laws that go after minorities. The Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill, 2017 punishes cow slaughter, which is ostensibly an economic crime, with life in jail. No other economic crime carries a life sentence. More than half of all arrests under the National Security Act in Uttar Pradesh in 2020 were for cow slaughter. This is a law that allows preventive detention, meaning the government locks up people without any crime. Muslim men are the only community for whom divorce is not a civil wrong but a criminal one. This is the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019. It criminalises a non-act. Triple talaq in one sitting is not lawful in India. If I say talaq to my wife three times, our marriage does not end and it is not a crime. If a Muslim man says it to his wife, their marriage does not end but it is a crime.

India uses a 12-gauge shotgun firing birdshot into protesters in only one state. In no other state in India except Kashmir is the so-called pellet gun used on crowds. It has blinded and wounded thousands, including infants nowhere near the protest.

I could go on but you get the picture. These are the things that India's friends are concerned about. They are new laws that are the gift to us of Hindutva which is why McMaster used that specific term. Jaishankar replied to McMaster without using the word Hindutva once and without referring to any of the laws that India was getting pulled up for around the world. The reason he ran away from the debate of course is that there is no defence. Obfuscation and avoiding the issue was the only way to respond to the accusation, which is a correct one, that India was harming itself and its own people through Hindutva.



Aakar Patel

India under Modi has spent a lot of energy in drafting laws that go after minorities

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Gig workers: Genesis, problems, possibilities

Significant strides in information technology, increasing usage of smart-phones, dissemination of digital literacy and modes of digital payments have accelerated creation of a new breed of workers. Occupying a space between informal and formal workforce, they are termed as 'gig workers' and are a product of a technology-platform based service ecosystem. The potential for the Indian economy has been brought out recently in a report titled 'Unlocking the Potential of Gig Economy in India' published by the Boston Consulting Group. The report estimates the gig economy has the potential to serve 90 million jobs (roughly 30% of India's non-farm workforce) and add up to 1.25% incrementally to GDP growth.

An ideal gig worker is an individual with the flexibility and option to choose when to work and for whom to work. He works for a fixed time, in lieu of pre-negotiated wages/fees. The interface, between a worker and his client, is enabled by a technology platform. It is a self-regulating and self-rewarding ecosystem, where earnings are proportional to the number of hours put-in by the gig worker. In the past, the Jajmani system created a framework of patron-client relationship. Within this personalised framework, largely suited to a rural, agrarian economy, various kinds of service-providers parted with their skills and rendered requisite services over generations, in exchange for goods through a barter system.

In a modern urbanised economy, the technological platforms perform the role of a match-maker between a patron and a service provider. This is best captured by functionalities offered by taxi aggregators Ola and Uber. Similar potential in India is spread across sectors such as oil and gas, healthcare and beauty, construction, retail. According to a rough estimate, there are around 200 million blue/grey collar workers in India, who in a way are potential gig workers. The number of workers registered on various digital platforms comes to 10-15 million. These numbers are indicative of the immense scope that exists for scaling up. For this, certain fundamental issues relating to skilling, financial inclusion and capacity-building need to be addressed.

The first issue is bridging the skill divide. It is a fact that students emerging out of formal education or vocational ecosystem are mostly not 'employable'. The poor quality of pedagogy and training, requires such platforms to invest substantially in upgrading skill sets of those who seek onboarding onto the respective platforms. This indicates the limitation of the skill-modules being undertaken by government under various sponsored schemes - Prime Minister Kaushal Vikash Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana and a plethora of other programmes being run by various ministries. It calls for close coordination with such tech-platform aggregators with respect to

devising an appropriate skill curriculum, aligned with demands of the market. This will ensure quality outcomes, avoid duplication of efforts and rationalise out-go with respect to time and resources.

The other related issues are the requirements of re-skilling and up-skilling of existing workforce. This has the potential to be a game-changer, as it will facilitate transition of a large majority of unskilled and semi-skilled workers into more aspirational gig work space. A well designed curriculum, qualified trainers and a credible certification system will have a critical role to play.

The second issue is with respect to supply-side information asymmetry. For instance, there is a huge shortage of good quality welders in the country, and the job commands a substantially higher wage vis-a-vis a normal B.Tech graduate. Outreach programmes aimed at exposing students, dropouts and their parents to myriad opportunities in various sectors will help them in taking informed decisions. This will ensure a matching between the demand for various job-roles and supply of trained and adequate manpower. Sectors like health and wellness, construction, retail and logistics are going to be significant job-generators.

The third aspect relates to providing access to capital. Many in the gig economy space are aspiring micro-entrepreneurs. They would need an initial financial support to equip themselves with tools for de-

livering services. As most of the workers hail from economically disadvantaged segments, it is imperative that banks and financial institutions support and financially handhold them. Schemes like MUDRA, Start-Up and Stand-up India can be leveraged for this purpose. The wide network of Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes patronised by public sector banks can be used for capacity-building of prospective workers. Creating an appropriate business model, along with imparting training in rudimentary book-keeping, digital technologies and soft-skills will enable them to boost their earnings and also better equip them negotiate various regulatory and legal landscapes.

In times to come, gig workers will come to play an important role in India's economic landscape. Therefore, it is also imperative to devise appropriate intervention strategies for their welfare, create a reliable database. Flexibility of timing sets women free from the rigidity of 10-5 routine. It will foster greater women participation in labour force. Recognising the potential of the sector; the government has taken a decision to collect information and extend social benefits like ESIC to such workforce. As we go along, the gig worker is going to be a distinct 'technological class', beyond the Marxist binary of bourgeoisie and proletariat.

The writer is ex-IRS and CEO, Livelihood Alternatives.



Sambit Tripathy

AS WE GO ALONG, THE GIG WORKER IS GOING TO BE A DISTINCT 'TECHNOLOGICAL CLASS', BEYOND THE MARXIST BINARY OF BOURGEOISIE AND PROLETARIAT

WISDOM CORNER

We are here and it is now. Further than that, all human knowledge is moonshine. HL MENCKEN

Courage is fear holding on a minute longer. GEORGE S PATTON

Appearances are a glimpse of the unseen. ANAXAGORAS

WORDSWORTH

Neurocinematics

In essence, this is the study of the way watching films affects the human mind. The term was invented in a paper by Uri Hasson in 2008, which showed that some films exert considerable control over brain activity and eye movements but that this depended – as one would expect – on their content, editing, and directing style. The paper suggested that this work, using magnetic resonance imaging, could lead to a fusion between film studies and cognitive neuroscience and suggested the name neurocinematics for it. In February 2010, research by Professor James Cutting and his team at Cornell University was widely reported. They measured the length of every shot in 150 high-grossing Hollywood films released between 1935 and 2005. The more recent the film, the more likely it is that the pattern of duration of shots matches the attention span of its audience. This pattern, known as the 1/f rule or pink noise rule, had been deduced in earlier studies of volunteers working on tasks. It seems that, through experience, film editors have intuited the formula. The term has appeared a number of times online but only rarely in print. As yet, it's a niche formation and may not survive.

Digital divide

Sir, The state higher education department directed all the higher educational institutions to go for online classes from June 1. No doubt the department on its part is instrumental in facilitating the imparting of knowledge which is evident in policymaking. It would be nice if the government could provide the infrastructure, prepare the battlefield and then call on the foot soldiers. A case in point is, when rumour about a lockdown was heard on social media, students from rural areas flocked to urban areas for fear of lack of accessibility in case of online classes or exams. Education is kind only to the affluent. The pandemic has brought that up close and personal. It is really a time of crisis for all. Be it the virus affecting our immediate families, the loss of near and dear ones, the isolation we have to go through, the turmoil of frontliners, the struggles of many to look for their next meal, the worries of the daily wagers, the agonies of the business person – these are all gnawing pains. In spite of the sinking ship, the teachers are still orchestrating the choir amidst the storm. The amount of work that teachers are expected to do from home, while multitasking with household chores, tending to their children and aged parents' needs is a tough call. Add to that the problem of arranging for digital technology despite the lack of resources, and we have an insensitive system in place. The teacher by and large is an epitome of dedication, sincerity and punctuality. This is a time-bound profession that requires respect before order. It is understood that Covid is an unprecedented crisis of our lifetime and it is rather difficult for the government to handle such a situation, let alone be prepared for it.

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Wrong precedent

Sir, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has not distinguished herself by skipping the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, held to assess the damage caused by Cyclone Yaas and to discuss relief measures. Though Banerjee was present at the venue of the review meeting, she was guilty of not receiving the Prime Minister. Banerjee also kept the PM waiting for 30 minutes before presenting a sheaf of papers containing the state government's assessment of the cyclone damage but walked out of the meeting within minutes, stating that she had to attend other official work. This is the second time in a week that Mamata has turned her back on the PM, setting a wrong precedent.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Mamata defends her move, slams recall of CS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 29: A day after the row over cyclone Yaas review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday said she skipped the meeting taking exception to presence of the opposition leader and asked union government to withdraw its order recalling Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay to Delhi.

She alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were trying to create problems for her government at every step as they were yet to come to terms with the BJP's defeat in the assembly elections.

Banerjee said she was ready to touch Modi's feet if told to do so for the sake of West Bengal's growth and development.

"Because you (Modi and Shah) cannot digest BJP's defeat in (Bengal), you have started creating problems for us from day one. What is the fault of the chief secretary? Recalling the chief secretary amid the Covid crisis goes on to show that



MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

the centre was indulging in political vendetta," the feisty TMC supremo asserted.

Caught in the crossfire between the state government and the centre, the chief secretary attended the duty Saturday and accompanied the chief minister at an aerial survey of the cyclone-ravaged Purba Medinipur.

The meeting was earlier between PM-CM and later I found in the revised programme it was the big BJP party and me alone.

"Why weren't the opposition leaders in Gujarat and Odisha called for meetings during the PM's visit to those states on cyclone?" she questioned.

"I had thought that the PM had landed in a state and we had met him as per the constitutional obligation and courtesy. But, later it spiralled

into a controversy and there are several leaders of the ruling party who kept on tweeting to tarnish my own and my CS's image," Banerjee said.

"If the PM asks me to touch his feet to help Bengal, I am ready to do that, but please do not insult, humiliate me like this. I have no problem. I appeal to you to end this political vendetta, withdraw this letter (calling back CS); allow him to work for Covid-infected people, cyclone-affected people. We are working like a team and we want to continue that," Banerjee said at a virtual press conference.

She said when everybody in her government is fighting against Covid-19, the central government instead of helping them, was cre-

If the PM asks me to touch his feet to help Bengal, I am ready to do that, but please do not insult, humiliate me like this. I have no problem. I appeal to you to end this political vendetta, withdraw this letter (calling back CS); allow him to work for Covid-infected people, cyclone-affected people. We are working like a team and we want to continue that

Left govt decided on 80:20 for Muslims and Christians: IUML



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 29: The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the second biggest ally in the Congress-led UDF said Saturday that it was the Left Government in 2011 which came out with the government order under which 80 per cent of the merit-cum-means scholarships went to the Muslim community and 20 per cent to the Christian community (Latin Catholic and converted Christians).

Speaking to the media, senior IUML legislator P.K. Kunhalikutty said it was the Left government which came out with the order and they are now spreading canards that it was the UDF government in 2015 which decided on this.

"This is nothing but covering up of facts and all what the then UDF government (2011-16) did was to go forward with the order which the Left government first came out in 2011. The Left is now trying to put the blame on us," said Kunhalikutty.

But veteran CPI-M leader and former State Minister Paloly Mohammed Kutty said the Left government then, which he was a part (2006-11), said the then Congress government (2011-16) came under duress from the IUML and it was they who had done this and the Left government had no role in it.

A division bench, headed by Chief Justice S. Manikumar gave the order on a public interest litigation Friday, directing that the scholarships should be distributed on the basis of the population of the communities.

The Kerala High Court ordered to cancel the 2015 state government order under which 80 per cent of the merit-cum-means scholarships went to the Muslim community and 20 per cent to the Christian community (Latin Catholic and converted Christians).

However the Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference Saturday welcomed the verdict and opined that it's not against any one particular community and the benefits should go to all the minority communities.

Incidentally it was Mizoram Governor and former state BJP President P.S. Sreedharan Pillai who last year for the first time

IN KERALA, OF THE 3.34 CRORE PEOPLE, THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY ACCOUNTS FOR 88.73 LAKH WHILE THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION STANDS AT 61.41 LAKH

had gone on record to say that Cardinal George Alencherry, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, had shared his concerns that 80 per cent of the funds for the minority community are going to 'one particular community and the Christian community is getting just 20 per cent.

In Kerala, of the 3.34 crore people, the Muslim community accounts for 88.73 lakh while the Christian population stands at 61.41 lakh.

However if the apportionment is going to cover all the Christians, then the new ratio will see the Muslims getting 60 per cent and Christians 40 per cent. But if it is going to be applicable in the present form to only the Latin and converted Christians, then the present 80:20 ratio will continue.

Welcoming the new judgment, veteran Kerala Congress opposition legislator and former State Minister P.J. Joseph said that if need be, let a new survey be conducted to find out who all can get the benefits of this.

Meanwhile, the Pinarayi Vijayan government has decided not to do anything in haste and it has asked the Law department to study the new order in detail and with the Assembly now in session, the first signs of a renewed tussle between the ruling Left and the Congress led UDF on this can be expected, starting from Monday.

However the Kerala unit of the BJP has welcomed the new order and its senior leader George Kurian said this was what the BJP has always been battling for; that the apportionment should be based on the population.

Media should not propagate baseless news: KPCC chief

In the past few days, the media here was speaking of a new letter written by Ramachandran to Sonia Gandhi about his inability to work as the party was divided among factions in the state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 29: Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President Mullappally Ramachandran asked the media here Saturday not to spread baseless news about him and the Congress.

Ramachandran said that as soon as the recent Assembly poll results came out and the United Democratic Front (UDF) did not perform well, he submitted a detailed report to All India Congress Committee (AICC) President, Sonia Gandhi.

"We were not able to perform well in the recent state Assembly elections and I have taken full responsibility for the party's failure. Along with my report, I had informed Congress President Sonia Gandhi of stepping down as the party's Kerala unit President. I had mentioned that I will remain as the state unit President till alternate arrangements are made and it should happen at the earliest. During my tenure, I received full support of Sonia Gandhi and unconditional support from Rahul Gandhi as well," Ramachandran added.

In the past few days, the media here was speaking of a new letter written by Ramachandran to Sonia Gandhi about his inability to work as the party was divided among factions in the state.

"Let me make things clear, the



so called second letter of mine is not at all true. I have written no such letter at all. Moreover the media here on Friday was talking about me not attending the first UDF meeting after the recent state Assembly elections. I attended such meetings by virtue of being the state Congress President. Since I have already informed about my decision to quit as the party's state unit President, it would not be correct on my part both politically and morally to take part and therefore, I did not," said Ramachandran, a former Union Home Minister during the UPA regime.

"Then there was a factually incorrect report that I had boycotted the Ashok Chavan committee looking into the defeat of the party. I told Chavan that I will be sending the copy of the report that I had sent to AICC President and I don't have anything more to add or take back from that report and this can be considered as my statement," he added.

He told the media that their assessment of affairs of the Congress in the state was totally wrong.

Kerala extends lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 29: The Kerala government Saturday announced one more week extension of the statewide lockdown till June 9, to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, with some relaxations to perform essential activities.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced the extension of the shutdown at a press conference here.

"Although prevalence of the disease is declining significantly in the state, we have not yet reached a stage to remove restrictions. The lockdown will continue in all districts from May 31 to June 9," the chief minister said.

The state has been under lockdown since May 8 following the sharp rise in coronavirus cases.

The chief minister also announced withdrawal of "triple lockdown" in Malappuram district, where the number of cases was high.

However, the general lockdown will continue in the district along with other districts in the state.

The government had earlier extended statewide lockdown twice - May 16 and May 23 - after reviewing the situation.

Vijayan said the average test positivity rate (TPR) in the state for the last three days is less than 20 per cent in all the districts except Thiruvananthapuram (20.21) and Palakkad (23.86).

In Malappuram district, the TPR has decreased from a peak of 31.53 per cent May 23 to 17.25 per cent.

In this context, the triple lockdown in the district will be withdrawn from May 30 but the lockdown will continue, the chief minister said.

He said there are 212 LSG bodies in the state with TPR above 30 per cent and 17 with TPR above 50 per cent. Special inspections will be carried out at these local bodies,



THE CHIEF MINISTER ALSO ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWAL OF "TRIPLE LOCKDOWN" IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT, WHERE THE NUMBER OF CASES WAS HIGH

he said. As per the new lockdown guidelines, some concessions will be given to perform essential activities.

All industrial establishments (including coir, cashew, etc) can function with minimum employees not exceeding 50 per cent of total strength. Shops and units supplying raw materials (including packaging) to industrial establishments may be open till 5 pm Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Banks will remain open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with extended timings till 5 pm.

Shops selling education books, textiles for weddings, jewellery and footwear will be open till 5 pm Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Vijayan said more vaccine stock is expected in the first week of June and the vaccination drive will be intensified as per the availability. "We intend to do maximum vaccinations by June 15.

Vaccination of inmates of old-age homes, those above 45 years of age in tribal colonies and bedridden patients will be done as soon as possible," he said.

Kerala logged 23,513 new cases of Covid-19 today from 1,41,759 sample tests with a test positivity rate of 16.59 per cent. Meanwhile, 198 recent deaths were confirmed today as caused by Covid and the related toll in the state is now 8,455.

Vijayan said one of the main objectives behind the lockdown was to bring down the number of active cases in the state below 2.5 lakh, thus keeping in mind the number of patients that can be accommodated by the state's healthcare system.

"We could avoid a crisis that the second wave of Covid created in other parts of the country. There is no shortage of ICU beds, ventilators and oxygen. We could provide necessary treatment to all those who got infected in Kerala," he said. Vijayan said the number of hospitalised patients and the test positivity rate must further reduce in order to announce unlocking.

"Use of ICU beds should be less than 60 per cent (currently 70 per cent) and the average TPR for three consecutive days should be less than 15 per cent (presently 18 per cent). At the same time, there should be a seven-day reduction in the total number of active cases and the number of new cases," he said.

SIGH OF RELIEF



People wade through a waterlogged area in the aftermath of Cyclone Yaas, at Raidighi Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas district

Huge swathes of farmland swamped after cyclone

AGENCIES

Kolkata, May 29: More than 96,000 hectares of agricultural land has been inundated in parts of an eastern Indian state hit by a powerful storm this week, a year after the coastal region was ravaged by a super cyclone.

Cyclone Yaas swept in from the Bay of Bengal Wednesday, triggering storm surges that broke through embankments in West Bengal state, particularly hitting hard the ecologically sensitive Sundarbans delta that stretches into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Initial assessment by the West Bengal government showed that water had entered around 96,650ha of land that had standing crops, a state official said.

Fresh flooding was reported from many areas during high tides as the embankments have been left with gaping holes, West Bengal's fisheries minister Akhil Giri said.

In the Sundarbans, still reeling from the damage wrecked by Cyclone



Amphan last year, residents said wide swathes of farmland and fresh water ponds used for small-scale fisheries had been inundated.

The area is stinking with rotten fish and movement has become extremely difficult because of stagnant water, said Kanai Halder, a resident of Raidighi in the Sundarbans, where spurs and dykes meant to hold back floodwaters have been damaged.

With climate change pushing

up sea surface temperatures, the cyclonic storms that barrel in from the Bay of Bengal have become fiercer and more frequent, particularly in the last decade, according to researchers.

Halder said the damage caused by Yaas appeared more significant compared with last year's storm, because of the scale of sea water ingress, which often renders farmland temporarily unfit for cultivation.



It is clear that the Modi government's lack of planning and incompetence are responsible for the shortage of oxygen that devastated lives in the second wave. Now, it's time for them to answer to the public

PRİYANKA GANDHI | GENERAL SECRETARY, CONGRESS

EARLIEST SURVIVING HINDU PAINTING UNVEILED IN MUMBAI

In an epochal event marking the revelation of the lost traditions of ancient Indian art, the earliest surviving Hindu painting, photographed and digitally restored by Benoy K Behl, was unveiled before a global audience



of the day quote

Due to the covid pandemic there won't be celebrations in the state. Currently Goa is under curfew and the government is taking utmost care and precautions to contain its spread

PRAMOD SAWANT | CM, GOA

Considering how the economic condition of people living in cities has been hit because of coronavirus, the BJP government is urged to waive off interest on any kind of fines and arrears in the bills of house tax and water tax

AKHILESH YADAV | PRESIDENT, SAMAJWADI PARTY

The university should take up projects that would address the problems of the community around it. The varsity, its teachers and students should work together for value addition and contribution to the GDP of the region

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

INDIA LOGS LOWEST DAILY RISE IN COVID CASES AFTER 45 DAYS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: The single day rise in coronavirus cases was recorded at 1,73,790, the lowest in last 45 days, taking India's total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,77,29,247, according to the Union health ministry data updated Saturday.

The daily positivity further declined to 8.36 per cent, remaining below 10 per cent for five consecutive days, while the weekly positivity rate dropped to 9.84 per cent, it said.

The death toll climbed to 3,22,512 with 3,617 fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Also, 20,80,048 tests were conducted Friday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of Covid-19 in the country to 34,11,19,909, the ministry said.

The active cases have further reduced to 22,28,724, comprising 8.04 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 re-

The daily positivity further declined to 8.36 per cent, remaining below 10 per cent for five consecutive days, while the weekly positivity rate dropped to 9.84 per cent

covery rate has improved to 90.80 per cent, it said.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,51,78,011 while the case fatality rate stands at 1.16 per cent, the data stated.

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

It went past 60 lakh September 28, 70 lakh October 11, crossed 80 lakh October 29, 90 lakh November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore May 4.

Delhi issues first global tender for Covid vax

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 29: Amid a shortage of Covid-19 vaccines across the country, the Delhi government has issued its first global tender for 10 million doses of vaccines, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Saturday.

"We have rolled out global tenders. All our efforts are on but other states that went for it so far did not receive encouraging results," Kejriwal said while inaugurating the drive-through vaccination centre in Chhatrasal Stadium at Model Town Saturday.

He added, "We have floated the tendering and are hopeful, it will be great if any company comes to us. But I think most of the renowned vaccine manufacturers in the world



want to talk to the central government. Let's see how successful the state government becomes."

The Chief Minister added that the Delhi government has started

drive-through vaccination centres for 45 and above age groups and the same facility will be provided to people aged between 18-44.

"The Delhi government has

started a drive-in vaccination facility here at the Chhatrasal Stadium. People can come here in their cars, motorcycles, some are even on foot, and can be vaccinated here. The vaccination is free at this centre. Right now, this has been initiated for those above the age of 45 years because there is no vaccine for those below the age of 45 years. As soon as adequate vaccines arrive, vaccination for those below the age of 45 (18-44 years) will also be started."

The Delhi government will accept an offer or expression of interest through e-mail by 5 pm June 7.

According to Delhi government's health bulletin issued Saturday, Delhi reported 1,141 positive cases and 139 deaths, while the daily positivity rate remained below 2 per cent.

SHORT TAKES

Death toll rises in hooch tragedy

Aligarh: Twenty two people have died so far after consuming illicit liquor in Aligarh, with five more persons succumbing Saturday. However, locals say the number may rise further. Aligarh police have registered three cases and arrested six persons in this case. Several officials including the district excise officer have been suspended. The district administration has however said that all deaths are not related to spurious liquor but there are other reasons as well. The matter is under investigation.

7 of 2 families perish in crash

Thane: At least 7 persons including 3 women from two families were killed when the slabs of the upper floors of a 6-storied building crashed in Ulhasnagar late Friday night, and a search continues for some more feared trapped in the rubble, officials said here Saturday. The tragedy struck the 26-year-old Sai Shakti Building with 29 flats, in Nehru Chowk area of the town, and it's the second such incident in less than a fortnight. Around 9 pm, locals said that there some sudden rumbling sounds, vibrations and then the massive slabs from the living room areas of the building suddenly crashed down.

CRPF DG gets charge of NIA

New Delhi: Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Director General Kuldeep Singh was Saturday given additional charge of National Investigation Agency (NIA) chief as the incumbent DG of the anti-terrorist agency is to retire at the end of this month. The Ministry of Home Affairs assigned the additional charge to Singh, a 1986-batch West Bengal cadre officer.

Illegal casino busted, 5 held

Gurugram: The Gurugram police have busted an illegal casino running in a house at Sushant Lok Phase-1 and arrested five people, including a German Embassy official. "We have received a tip-off Friday evening regarding the illegal gambling which was running in the basement of a house for the past one month. A raid was conducted during which five people were found gambling using colourful chips and cards. These chips were used as a transaction currency and the actual cash payment was made the next day," Karan Goyal, Assistant Commissioner of Police (DLF), told IANS.

SHEPHERD'S STRUGGLE



A shepherd with his flock of sheep and goats, after crossing over the snow covered Rohtang Pass, near the Atal Tunnel Rohtang North Portal

Tauktae after-effects

Barge spills oil, sparks concerns

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Palghar, May 29: Twelve days after the devastating Cyclone Tauktae grounded a barge near Palghar coast, fresh concerns have cropped up following an oil-spill reported from the huge vessel, locals and fisherfolk said here Saturday.

The fishing community is worried as oil is reported to be leaking from the Barge GAL Constructor that was stuck in the rocky shores off Vadrai May 17 with 135 people on board.

While all crewmen were saved by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard battling extreme weather conditions in the Arabian Sea during those three harrowing days, a new problem has emerged now with oil seeping out of the stranded vessel, 12 days after it hit the ground.



Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti Palghar President Manendra Arekar said that the barge had more than 80 tonnes of diesel, grease and other lubricants on board, which is now being seen on the sea waters, posing a huge threat to the marine life and livelihood of the fisherfolk.

"There is usually a ban on all fishing activities from May 31-July 31 owing to the breeding season of the marine life during the monsoon. Thousands of fishermen here depend on the sea for their survival. People have complained about the odour of oil emanating from the fish," Arekar told mediapersons today.

Though nearly a fortnight has elapsed since the barge hit the rocky sea bottom here, he said the concerned authorities and the vessel owners and contractors have taken no steps in the matter.

According to an official, the Satpati Coastal Police Station has been approached by the vessel owners-contractors to examine and take up containment measures while the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board has been apprised of the situation.

Paediatric wards being set up in anticipation of third wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, May 29: Paediatric wards and neonatal care units are being set up at Covid centres in Himachal Pradesh to prepare for a potential third wave of the pandemic, a senior state official said Saturday.

Recently, some experts have warned that the next wave of Covid-19 may affect children more while others have said there is little reason to believe this theory. However, experts concur that there is a need to improve paediatric Covid services in the country.

Keeping in mind the possible third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Himachal Pradesh government is working to protect vulnerable children on priority and improve paediatric Covid services in the state, Special Secretary (Health) Nipun Jindal said.

A protocol in this regard was shared with districts and medical colleges May 3, he said.

It is being ensured that special newborn care units (SNCUs), pediatric high dependency units (PHDUs), neonatal intensive care units (NICU) and pediatric intensive care units (PICU) are made functional on a pri-



ority basis, he added. Jindal said the health department is taking serious and focused steps to ensure that vulnerable children are taken care of during the pandemic.

All chief medical officers, principals of medical colleges and medical superintendents of district and civil hospitals and medical colleges have been directed to ensure that every dedicated Covid hospital has a paediatric ward and newborn unit. This can be done by either augmenting the existing facilities or

earmarking beds, he said.

The earmarked beds should preferably have oxygen support, he added.

Currently, there are 224 SNCU beds in 16 Covid facilities across the state, Jindal said.

Jindal said directions have been issued to ensure emergency triage and treatment services for newborns and children at all levels.

Directions have also been issued to make all non-functional equipment in SNCUs functional at the earliest, he said.

FCI BRIBERY CASE

CBI nabs 4 officers, recovers ₹3Cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Saturday said that it has arrested four officials of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in a bribery case and recovered cash to the tune of ₹3.01 crore during searches.

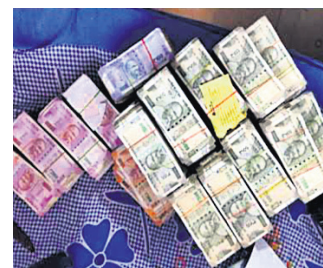
A CBI spokesperson said that the agency arrested Harish Hinonia, Divisional Manager, Arun Shrivastava, Manager (Accounts), Mohan Parate, Manager (Security) and Kishore Meena, Assistant (Grade-I) of the FCI in ₹one lakh alleged bribery case.

The CBI official said that the agency sleuths conducted searches at six places in Bhopal at the official and residential premises of the accused.

During searches, cash of ₹3.01 crore, 387gms of gold jewellery and 670gms of silver articles or jewellery and also certain documents were recovered.

The said cash amount was allegedly kept in different envelopes, some of the bundles marked or written with names, dates and amounts etc.

"Some cash amount was allegedly found in heavy safety vault or chest which was concealed in the



wooden almirah. A Note Counting Machine was also found," the official said.

He said, "A diary was recovered containing the alleged records including cash amounts obtained, date, name, etc."

He said that a case was registered on a complaint against Shrivatsava posted as Manager (Accounts), FCI Divisional Office in Bhopal on the allegations of demanding bribe of ₹1.5 lakh for releasing the pending bills of the complainant's company for January February and March at ₹50,000 per month.

It was also alleged that the accused demanded ₹70,000 each for the new bills to be submitted.

"CBI laid a trap and caught the accused while demanding and accepting the bribe of ₹1 lakh from the complainant," he said.

GHAR GHAR AUSHADHI YOJANA

Rajasthan govt to distribute over 30 crore medicinal plants

A BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT BY CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT, THE MASSIVE PLANT GIFT CAMPAIGN IS INTENDED TO BOLSTER THE BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLANTS AND PEOPLE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, May 29: Nurseries of the Rajasthan Forest department are developing hundreds and thousands of medicinal plant saplings that shall soon be gifted to state residents as part of state government's 'Ghar Ghar Aushadhi Yojana'.

The mega scheme plans to reach out to all 1,26,50,000 families residing in the state (according to census 2011), extending them an opportunity to take home saplings of the four selected medicinal herbs, namely Tulsi, Aswagandha, Giloy and Kalmegh.

In the five-year duration of the scheme, each family shall be entitled to receive 24 saplings, starting with eight saplings in the first year, that aggregates to more than 30 crore saplings.

These plants have been native to Rajasthan and have traditionally been used as health supplements and in herbal medicines. As part of the campaign the plant saplings will be provided with information on their upkeep and proper use.

"Rajasthan is rich in biodiversity and is home to several medicinal plants. The Ghar Ghar Aushadhi



Yojana of the state government will help in conservation of this natural wealth and help people understand the importance of herbs and plants around them for health," said Sreya Guha, Principal Secretary Forest and Environment Department, Rajasthan.

Several of the state government departments are contributing to make the scheme a success. While the Forest Department is the nodal department for the scheme, district level task forces have been constituted in all districts under their respective District Collectors to ensure due implementation at

ground level. The scheme will be monitored by state level committee headed by the state chief secretary.

A fund of ₹210 crore has been sanctioned by the state government for the five-year scheme, of which ₹31.4 crore will be spent in first year for distributing more than 5 crore saplings among half of the households in state.

Probably India's largest medicinal herb promotion programme, the Ghar Ghar Aushadhi Yojana of Rajasthan government arrives at a time when humanity is grappling with a pandemic.

national

of the day quote

The nature of war is changing and it is important to engage adversaries in all domains, like land, sea, air, space and cyber. It is for this reason that the jointness among the three services is far more important than in the past

KARAMBIR SINGH | NAVAL CHIEF ADMIRAL

The SC struck down the OBC reservation in local government body elections. The state government's review petition has been rejected. It happened because of unpardonable negligence of the state towards the issue

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER, MAHARASHTRA

Odisha faced the brunt of the cyclone while Bengal was largely spared, but she is asking for ₹20,000 crore. She did not attend the review meeting with the Prime Minister at Kalaikunda as she did not want to elaborate on this unrealistic demand

DILIP GHOSH | BJP PRESIDENT, WEST BENGAL

SHORT TAKES

DRDO's 500-bed hosp inaugurated

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday inaugurated the Defence Research and Development Organisation's 500-bed Covid hospital in Jammu to ramp up the healthcare infrastructure to effectively deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Of the total 500 beds here at Bhagwati Nagar Centre, 125 would be Intensive Care Unit beds, while others would be a set of Covid beds with 24 hours oxygen facility.

MLA demands arrest of Randeep Hooda

Ballia: Senior BSP leader and MLA Umashankar Singh Saturday demanded immediate arrest of actor Randeep Hooda over his alleged objectionable comments against party supremo Mayawati, after a video clip of him making the remarks nine years ago resurfaced. "The BSP leader is revered by crores of people in the country and actor Randeep Hooda has hurt their sentiments by making such humiliating remarks," said Singh. Hooda is presently facing a social media storm over the nine-year-old video in which he's seen making derogatory comments against BSP chief Mayawati.

ASF continues to wreak havoc

Aizawl: The African Swine Fever (ASF) continued to wreak havoc in Mizoram, killing 4,650 pigs and piglets in a little over two months, an official said Saturday. The ASF outbreak has caused a loss of ₹18.60 crore to the farmers of the state, said Dr Lalhmingthanga, the Joint Director (Livestock Health) at the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science Department. The dreaded pig disease has spread to nine districts -- Aizawl, Lunglei, Mamit, Serchhip, Lawngtlai, Khawzawl, Hnahthial, Siahla and Champhai.

Five cops booked for flouting norms

Bhuj: A case has been registered against a police sub inspector and four constables in Kutch district of Gujarat for allegedly violating Covid-19 guidelines during a birthday party, officials said Saturday. The case was registered at Anjar police station Friday night after a video of the incident that had occurred two weeks back, surfaced on social media platforms, they said.



Now the country has enough #Remdesivir as the supply is much more than the demand. So we have decided to DISCONTINUE the Central Allocation of Remdesivir to States

MANSUKH L MANDAVIYA | UNION MINISTER

WIFE OF OFFICER KILLED IN PULWAMA JOINS ARMY

Twenty-seven months after she lost her husband in an anti-insurgency operation in south Kashmir's Pulwama, 29-year-old Nitika Kaul Saturday donned the army uniform after completing a one-year rigorous training in Tamil Nadu



CITIZENSHIP ISSUE

'Centre's latest move back door entry of CAA'

The Friday notification lists Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians as the communities that will be allowed. The applications will have to be submitted online

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: The Centre's move to verify and approve citizenship applications from members of minority communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh living in five Indian states reveals the government's "fascist character" and is a way to give a "back door entry" to the CAA-2019, the Left parties alleged Saturday. The Centre Friday issued a gazette notification granting powers under existing rules to au-



thorities in 13 districts of Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab to accept, verify and approve citizenship applications from members of minority communities hailing from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

With the Centre yet to frame rules under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, which was fiercely protested against by various sections, the order has been issued under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship Rules, 2009.

"Subterfuge. Rules under CAA 2019 not framed, yet the Central govt issues gazette notification to implement it. Petitions challenging Constitutional validity of CAA continue to remain unheard. Hope SC takes this up promptly & stops back door implementation," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said in a Tweet.

CPI general secretary D Raja alleged the move "completely exposes the fascist character" of the present government.

He said there were huge protests against the CAA 2019 before the agitators relented because of the coronavirus pandemic, while some protests earlier were "ruthlessly crushed".

"It (the latest citizenship move) shows the insensitivity of a government if it pursues its political agenda at a time when thousands are dying every day due to a pandemic. This exposes the government as insensitive, anti-people and anti-democracy," he said.

Dipankar Bhattacharya, CPI-ML general secretary, questioned as to how such an order can be passed when the CAA rules are still not in place.

"In election rallies, BJP leaders were 'distributing' citizenship like they deposited those ₹15 lakh in every account. Now they are asking for applications from refugees! So if you're an undocumented citizen, you now become a refugee! By the way, are the CAA rules in place?" he asked.

ABP-C Voter Modi 2.0 Report Card

Govt's vax management, export decision flayed



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 29: The Covid-19 second wave, since April, overwhelmed the health care system, leading to short supply of medical oxygen, essential drugs and left many people struggling to get hospital beds for their treatment. The worries of people were also multiplied, due to the severe shortage of vaccines amid the deadly second wave and warning of a looming third wave.

The devastation caused by this deadly viral infection, has also impacted the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government with regard to the Covid vaccine management adopted to combat the lethal virus, along with its decision to export vaccines to needy countries amid the pandemic.

According to the ABP-C Voter Modi 2.0 Report Card, 44.9 per cent people, both in urban and rural areas, think that the Modi government has appropriately handled the Covid vaccine management amid the pandemic. Breaking down this number reveals that 50.6 per cent people in urban areas are of the opinion that the government has properly handled the Covid vaccine, while 42.4 per cent in rural areas also think in the similar way.

But 46.5 per cent people in rural areas think the government did not appropriately handle the Covid vaccine management, which assumes significance in the back-

drop of reports stating the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic affected the rural areas on a much larger scale, in comparison with the first wave last year. Even according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the virus making in-roads in rural areas of the country, is a big concern.

Many political leaders have hit out at the Centre over its decision to export Covid vaccines to other countries, instead of prioritising inoculating its own citizens. According to the C Voter-ABP News survey, 47.9 per cent people, in both urban and rural areas, seem to agree with the Modi government's decision to export Covid vaccines. This includes 54.5 per cent people in urban areas and 45.1 per cent in rural areas, which do not see any fault in the government's decision to export vaccine.

However, 34.5 per cent people, which includes 29 per cent urban and 36.9 per cent rural, did not agree with government's decision to export vaccines. People who had nothing to say on this policy decision were 17.5 per cent, which includes 16.5 per cent in urban areas and 18 per cent in rural areas.

Chaos during drive through vax campaign

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gurugram, May 29: People in the 18 plus age group on two wheelers created a ruckus at the 'Drive Through Vaccination' drive in Gurugram Saturday after they came to know that the campaign was being held only for car occupants. The drive, which was organised by the district health department in association with Park+ and MGF Mega city mall, was held at the mall's parking lot.



The protesters alleged that they queued up outside the mall since early morning and were not informed at that time that the drive was organised only for car owners

The 18 plus age group people who reached the vaccination venue on two wheelers held a protest for around half an hour starting at around 11 after they were denied entry inside the mall premises as the vaccination drive was organised only for those coming on four wheelers.

"It was the first 'Drive Through Vaccination' drive for the first dose of Covishield for 18+ age group of people which was organised at the MGF Mega City Mall parking lot Saturday located on the Mehrauli-Gurugram Road in Gurugram. During the drive only 500 free slots were available on a first come first serve basis," a health official said.

The protesters alleged that they queued up outside the mall since early morning and were not informed at that time that the drive was organised only for car owners.

PASSING PARADE



A Passing out Parade (POP) held at Indian Naval Academy (INA), Ezhimala in Kanpur

PTI PHOTO

Upload data of children orphaned by Covid: NCPDR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) has asked all states and union territories (UTs) to upload data of children who have lost either one or both parents to Covid-19 on its portal.

Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani had Tuesday said as many as 577 children across the country were orphaned after their parents succumbed to Covid-19, citing reports of states and union territories from April 1 till March 25.

The announcement by the apex child rights body comes a day after the Supreme Court directed all district officers across the states/UTs to fill data related to children who have lost either one of both parents to Covid within 24 hours on the Bal Swaraj portal under the 'Covid Care' link.

Bal Swaraj is an online tracking portal of the NCPDR for children in need of care and protection.

"Keeping in view the current situation of Covid-19, the



Commission has extended the use of this portal for tracking children who have lost both parents or either of them... and provided a link under the name of 'Covid Care' on this portal for filling of data of such children by the concerned officer/department," the NCPDR said in a letter to all principal secretaries of the states/UTs Women and Child Development Department.

The NCPDR said the login ids of district child protection officers for uploading the data and filling up the forms of social investigation report and individual child care plan as provided by the commission have been issued.

The login ids for all principal secretaries for uploading of data on the portal concerned with the state government have also been issued.

O2 CONCENTRATORS CASE

KALRA GRANTED BAIL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 29: A Delhi court Saturday granted bail to businessman Navneet Kalra arrested in a case for alleged hoarding of oxygen concentrators.

Judge Arun Kumar Garg directed Kalra not to contact anyone to whom he sold the oxygen concentrators. The Delhi Police have opposed Kalra's bail plea in the court stating that his intention was to cheat persons in vulnerable condition and make profit. The court, while granting bail, imposed three conditions on him he will not tamper with the evidence in the case, make no attempt to influence the witnesses and he will also join the investigation whenever required.

Kalra was granted bail subject to personal bond of ₹1 lakh and two sureties of the like amount. The police had cited report from medical devices testing laboratory, and argued that the seized oxygen concentrators were useless and in fact, harmful for the persons using it.

Kalra's counsel argued that no



purpose would be served by keeping his client in pre-trial detention as no more recoveries have to be made from him. The court had earlier dismissed Delhi police plea seeking five days police custody of Kalra in the case.

Kalra was on the run after the seizure of 524 oxygen concentrators from three restaurants -- Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege & Ju -- owned by him, but later he was arrested by the police. Four employees of Matrix Cellular company, including its CEO and vice

president, who were also arrested, were granted bail in the same case. Kalra bought oxygen concentrators from Matrix Cellular which imported them.

A case was registered against Kalra May 5 under Section 420 (cheating), 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. The case was also registered under Essential Commodities Act and Epidemic Diseases Act.

'Indigo dye extract can protect eyes from laser radiation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: Scientists have found that natural indigo dye, extracted from leaves of a plant of the bean family, is capable of protecting human eye from harmful laser radiation.

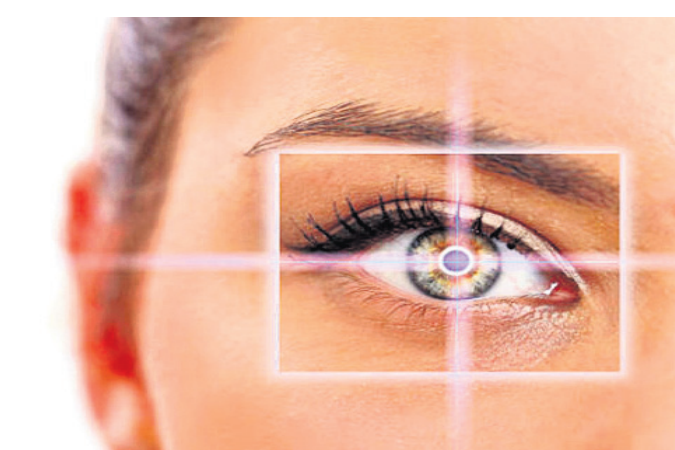
It can be used to develop optical limiters for weakening potentially harmful radiation and protecting the eyes and sensitive optical devices from accidental damage in an environment where lasers are in use, the Department of Science and Technology said in a statement Saturday.

Researchers from the Raman Research Institute (RRI), and Kensi School and College, Bengaluru,

studied the optical properties of natural indigo dye and found that it can protect human eyes from harmful laser radiation. The study, funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, was published in the journal 'Optical Materials'.

The researchers extracted the dye and stored it in a refrigerator below 4 degrees Celsius to preserve its natural properties.

Their study on how much it absorbed light at different wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum showed that the absorption is maximum in the ultraviolet region of the spectrum, at a wavelength close to 288 nanometres, and in the visible region, close



to 660 nanometres. The absorption is comparatively

high for the green light as well. "Indigo absorbs light because

The team found that when they increase the intensity of the laser pulse, the dye absorbs more light. That is, it is more opaque to higher intensity light. Scientists refer to such materials as an 'optical limiter'

of molecular absorption bands. The maximum absorption wavelength can vary over several nanometers depending on the dye's solvent and concentration," ex-

plained Reji Philip, a professor at RRI and a co-author of the study.

The absorption's variation with wavelength indicated that chlorophyll, an organic compound that takes part in photosynthesis, is present in the dye.

The researchers wanted to study whether the organic dye showed additional absorption when the input light intensity is high.

Optical limiters are useful in weakening the potentially harmful radiation emitted by powerful lasers and protecting both eyes and sensitive optical instruments.

"Making a prototype optical limiter using natural Indigo is the next logical step, followed by a commercially viable product," Reji said.

international



Covid vax production across the world should be ramped up. To overcome the pandemic, we need to provide access to sufficient vaccines, medicines and tests for all, including the poorest countries
ANGELA MERKEL | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

DENMARK LAUNCHES DIGITAL COVID PASSPORT

The Danish government has launched its new digital "corona passport", an app named Coronapas, in a bid to facilitate travel within the EU this summer



of the day quote

The medicines' (Pfizer-BioNTech vax) regulator had received the necessary data to authorise the vaccine for younger teens. EU's decision needs to be approved by the European Commission and individual national regulators

MARCO CAVALERI | VACCINE STRATEGY MANAGER, EMA

Spacefaring nations (like China) must minimise the risks to people and property on Earth of re-entries of space objects and maximize transparency regarding those operations

BILL NELSON | NASA ADMINISTRATOR SENATOR

We are living many crises and our way to revive our economic life and restore some Lebanese social and culture norms forces us to think of greater ways for immunization in shorter periods

HAMAD HASSAN | HEALTH MINISTER, LEBANON

HK organisers lose appeal to hold Tiananmen vigil

Beijing, May 29: Organisers of an annual vigil to commemorate the Chinese Communist government's bloody crackdown on student-led pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989 said Saturday they had lost an appeal to hold this year's rally. The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China planned to hold a candlelight vigil in Victoria Park next Friday. This marks the second year that Hong Kong police have banned the vigil, citing coronavirus restrictions. "We have to apologise to the public. Hong Kong Alliance can no longer organise the candlelight

vigil this year in a lawful manner. We will stop promoting the vigil, said Richard Tsoi of the alliance to the press. "On that day, we won't, as an organisation and members of Hong Kong Alliance, appear and join." Tsoi said he believed Hong Kong people would still commemorate the June 4 crackdown on pro-democracy activists in a peaceful manner. Samuel Chu, who runs the Hong Kong Democracy Council in Washington, re-tweeted an image of Tsoi making his statement, writing, "We will light a candle for you and all of Hong Kong. Hong Kong's Security Bureau issued a statement warning people not to take part in illegal assemblies or violate the national security



law imposed on the territory by Beijing. Liawu Ka-kei, senior superintendent of the Hong Kong Island Region, told a news conference that the police welcomed the appeal board decision, also urging the

people but also pose a serious threat to the life and health of all citizens, jeopardising public safety, and affecting the rights of others," he said. Liawu said the police would adopt a zero-tolerance approach and take resolute action against anyone who violated the law. The security law combined with coronavirus restrictions have cleared the city's streets of protesters after anti-government demonstrations plunged the financial hub into turmoil in 2019.

We have to apologise to the public. Hong Kong Alliance can no longer organise the candlelight vigil this year in a lawful manner. We will stop promoting the vigil
RICHARD TSOI | MEMBER, HONG KONG ALLIANCE

Palestine condemns Israel's settlement expansion plan



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ramallah, May 29: The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned Israel's settlement expansion, saying that authorities in the Jewish state recently approved the construction of 560 new units south of the West Bank city of Bethlehem. "Construction of new units aims at expanding the settlements that were built on Palestinian citizens' lands in the area," the Ministry said in a statement sent to Xinhua news agency Friday.

The statement warned that the expansion of settlements in the area of Bethlehem in the West Bank "will isolate Palestinian towns and villages from each other and turn them into isolated islands in an ocean of settlements".

The Foreign Ministry held the Israeli government responsible for the settlement expansion and the seizing of Palestinian lands, and warned of its disastrous consequences for the chances of making peace. The Palestinians, who claim all of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and a majority of the international community consider the settlements a violation of international law and a hurdle to peace.

More than 6,00,000 Jews live in about 140 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Jaishankar meets Blinken, affirms strong Indo-US ties

India has faced border incursions by China and a clash with fatalities over the last two years, during which Washington backed New Delhi

AGENCIES

New York, May 29: Amid the Covid-19 pandemic ravaging India and the rising global tensions, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has capped two days of whirlwind diplomacy in Washington by meeting Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin as they sought to deepen the ties between their countries.

His meetings Friday with the two cabinet officials and earlier with national security officials and Congressional leaders signalled the high priority the two countries gave to strategic cooperation. With those leaders and business groups, Jaishankar also discussed the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic and the joint efforts to fight it.

In a tweet after meeting Jaishankar, Blinken tweeted that they discussed the "India-China border situation", although Jaishankar and State Department Spokesperson Ned Price made no mention of that topic. India has faced border incursions by China and a clash with fatalities over the



last two years, during which Washington backed New Delhi. "As friends, we will work together to address these areas of shared concern," Blinken added mentioning also regional security and economic priorities, US Covid-19 relief efforts, and support for Afghanistan, from where the US is scheduled to pull out its troops after a 20-year deployment. Jaishankar tweeted after their discussions with Blinken, "Today's talks have further solidified our strategic partnership and enlarged our agenda of cooperation." With Lloyd he had "a comprehensive conversation about further developing our strategic and

defence partnership (and) Exchanged views on contemporary security challenges," Jaishankar tweeted. US spokespersons said after the separate meetings on Friday that the leaders pledged to continue to deepen ties between the two countries. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said that Blinken "reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to deepening the US-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership". He added that "a shared commitment to combating the climate crisis and enhancing multilateral cooperation" was another topic in their talks.

'SL faces worst marine ecological disaster from burning cargo vessel'

AGENCIES

Colombo, May 29: Sri Lanka's apex environment body said Saturday the country was facing its worst marine ecological disaster triggered after a Singapore-flagged cargo ship caught fire near the Colombo beach, fuelling severe environmental concerns.

The cargo vessel - MV X-PRESS PEARL - was carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port on May 20 when it caught fire some 9.5 nautical miles away from the port of Colombo.

The firefighting effort on May 21 was assisted by the Indian coastal guard vessels and an aircraft, in addition to the Sri Lanka Navy and Air Force. Apart from the 325 metric tonnes of fuel in its tanks, the vessel was loaded with 1,486 containers carrying about 25 tonnes of hazardous nitric acid.

Darshani Lahandapura, Chairperson of the Marine Environment Pollution Authority (MEPA), said that according to the available information so far this would be the worst marine ecological disaster in the island nation. "With the available information so far, this can be described the



AGENCIES

worst disaster," she said. The plastic beads floating in the waters covering the affected coastal area are badly affecting the marine ecology in the respective areas, she said.

Lahandapura said the fishing breeding points and mangroves around the Negombo Lagoon, a major tourist attraction, were very sensitive and the resultant pollution could affect them.

She said an explosion was heard from the ship wreck last night. According to a statement issued by the ship's owners in Singapore, "by 9.45 am Sri Lanka time today, the vessel's hull remains structurally intact, as do the bunker tanks, and there has been no loss of oil into the port's waters. The Sri Lankan Navy has also confirmed that there have been no oil sightings since the fire began".

The Sri Lanka Air Force dropped fire dousing material this morning. Authorities say the fire was under control and the possibility of ship's sinking was less.

SHORT TAKES

Israel extends int'l travel ban

Tel Aviv: The Israeli government has extended an ongoing travel ban to seven countries, including India, until June 13, according to a joint statement. The statement issued Friday by the Ministries of Health and Transport and the Prime Minister's Office also lists Ukraine, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Turkey, Xinhua news agency reported. Israeli citizens and permanent residents who want to travel to one of these countries must apply to an exceptions committee.

22K jail inmates found Covid +ve

Bangkok: A total of 22,101 lodged in jails across Thailand have been infected with Covid-19, a government official confirmed. In a statement Friday, Veerakit Harnpariphan, deputy director general of the Department of Corrections under the Ministry of Justice, said the inmates were in 15 prisons located in the capital Bangkok and other areas, reports Xinhua news agency. Of them, 15,445 people are currently being treated in hospitals and field hospitals, Veerakit said.

Knife attacker arrested in France

Paris: A knife attacker, who was on the large after stabbing a policewoman in France, has been arrested, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced. "The gendarmes neutralised the individual suspected of stabbing the municipal policewoman in Chapelle-sur-Erdre. Thanks to them and thoughts for the gendarmes injured during this arrest," Darmanin tweeted Friday night. The attacker was arrested shortly after 1 pm after an exchange of fire with gendarmes who sought after him.

Senates block legislation

Washington: US Senate Republicans have blocked a legislation to establish an independent commission to investigate the violent January 6 Capitol riot that claimed the lives of five people. The senators Friday voted 54-35 on the House-passed bill, falling short of 60 votes needed to get it over an initial hurdle, reports Xinhua. Six Republican Senators joined the Democrats voting to advance the legislation, which was more than expected, but four fewer than the 10 needed to overcome a filibuster for it to advance.

Great Barrier Reef protection to be enhanced with new barge



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Canberra, May 29: The protection of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia is expected to be enhanced with a barge to be built at a cost of A\$5 million (\$3 million), the Queensland state government announced.

The 19-metre vessel, based in Townsville, is designed to carry a small excavator, earthmoving machinery or 4WDs, and a rigid hulled inflatable, Xinhua news agency quoted the state government as saying. With a cruising speed of 20 knots, the floating ranger station

is expected to operate up to 270 days a year and provide overnight accommodation for seven rangers, and up to 24 for day trips.

The barge will play an important role alongside other initiatives aimed at protecting the reef, by supporting rangers to undertake extended patrol and infrastructure management duties, including protecting marine area and island national park.

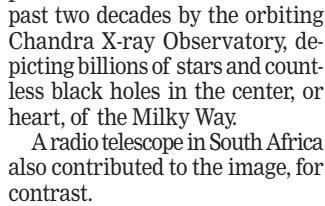
Environment Minister Sussan Ley said the barge would help prioritise the key conservation and rehabilitation activities. "Enhancing the resilience of our amazing islands and reefs through activities such as controlling invasive pests, re-planting native vegetation to support species like seabirds and turtles and trialling the application of reef rehabilitation techniques is a task our rangers are uniquely placed to do," Ley said.

BEING ONE WITH NATURE



An Atlantic Puffin is seen in the rain on Skomer Island, off the coast of Pembrokeshire, Wales, Britain

NASA releases new picture of Milky Way's 'downtown'



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Canaveral, May 29: NASA has released a stunning new picture of our galaxy's violent, super-energised "downtown." It's a composite of 370 observations over the past two decades by the orbiting Chandra X-ray Observatory, depicting billions of stars and countless black holes in the center, or heart, of the Milky Way. A radio telescope in South Africa also contributed to the image, for contrast.

Astronomer Daniel Wang of the University of Massachusetts Amherst said Friday he spent a year working on this while stuck at home during the pandemic. "What we see in the picture is a violent or energetic ecosystem in our galaxy's downtown," Wang said in an email. "There are a lot of supernova remnants, black holes, and neutron stars there. Each X-ray dot or feature represents an energetic source, most of which are in the center." This busy, high-energy galactic center is 26,000 light years away.

His work appears in the June issue of the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. Launched in 1999, Chandra is in an extreme oval orbit around Earth.

UK urges G7 to secure 'green' global economic recovery

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, May 29: UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak has called on the G7 member nations to continue working together to secure a green and sustainable global economic recovery. Sunak made the remarks at a virtual meeting Friday ahead of the in-person G7 Finance Ministers' summit in London June 4-5, reports Xinhua news agency.

The G7 should ensure that tackling climate change is prioritised in economic and financial policy, according to a statement from the UK Treasury.

Sunak also pressed for efforts to ensure that global financial markets play their part in the transition to net zero, such as improved climate-related financial disclosures and



The G7 supports strategic investments to diversify production bases, working with industry, international organisations, regional bodies, and other governments to target funding effectively, the communique said

CLARION CALL

The G7 should ensure that tackling climate change is prioritised in economic and financial policy, according to a statement from the UK Treasury

UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak pressed for efforts to ensure that global financial markets play their part in the transition to net zero, and support for the development of international sustainability-related financial reporting standards

The G7 Trade Ministers said in a joint communique that they are committed to continuing their collective work to drive forward global trade in support of the global recovery efforts from the pandemic

support for the development of international sustainability-related financial reporting standards, according to the statement. Following their virtual meeting Thursday and Friday, the G7 Trade Ministers said in a joint communique that they are committed to continuing their collective work to drive forward global trade in support of the global recovery efforts from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We agree to advance key issues including trade and the environment, trade and health, and digital trade and to ensure that global trade serves as an engine for inclusive economic growth," the communique said.

The countries said that they are united with the aim of delivering as many safe and effective vac-

cines as fast as possible, to as many people as possible across the world and will prioritise discussions and support work at the World Trade Organization in identifying solutions to expand global vaccine production and distribution.

The G7 supports strategic investments to diversify production bases, working with industry, international organisations, regional bodies, and other governments to target funding effectively the communique said.

The G7 includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US. The UK holds the G7 presidency this year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will host the G7 leaders for a summit in Cornwall in South West England next month.

business

of the day quote

The Airbus A320 is an integral part of our fleet and growth story, and this particular aircraft is, indeed, special. It mirrors the maturity that Vistara has achieved in the Indian aviation industry in a short span of time, continuing to steadily grow in scale, size and operational assets

LESLIE THNG | CEO, VISTARA

By shifting conversations to focus on the working environments that best suit employees' needs moving forward, organisations can ensure that their employees feel they are being heard and that they have the autonomy and tools to do their jobs effectively

KEITH JOHNSTON | VP AND GROUP RESEARCH DIRECTOR, FORRESTER

Massive investment is made in the highways sector in India. Without compromising on quality, we need to reduce the cost of construction of roads and bridges

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Centre grants NPNT to 166 green zones

New Delhi: Centre Saturday said it has granted permission of "No-Permission-No-Takeoff" (NPNT) compliant drone operations at 166 additional green zones. Accordingly, the approved sites allow drone usage up to 400 ft 'Above Ground Level' (AGL). "These zones are in addition to the 'Sixty-Six' green zone sites approved earlier. The list of the approved green zone sites can be accessed from the Digital Sky Platform."

PMAY creates 1.2 cr job opportunities

New Delhi: The Centre's flagship housing programme - Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - has created over 1.2 crore employment opportunities, said Grant Thornton Bharat's 'Affordable Housing in India' report. The report cited that these employment opportunities so far were created through forward and backward linkages across 21 sectors. Besides, the report said that these sectors include 250 auxiliary industries like steel, brick kilns, cement, paint, hardware and sanitary amongst others.

PNB to divest stake in Canara

New Delhi: Punjab National Bank (PNB) will divest its stake in Canara HSBC OBC Life Insurance Co, the lender said Saturday. The city-headquartered state-owned bank had acquired a stake in the life insurer post amalgamation of the erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce into itself last fiscal year. "The bank intends to divest its stake in Canara HSBC OBC Life Insurance Co. Ltd, an associate of the bank, at an appropriate time depending upon market conditions and available options," PNB said.

NBCC, Suraksha get more time

New Delhi: Financial creditors of embattled Jaypee Infratech have decided to give more time to state-owned NBCC and Suraksha group to submit their final bids to acquire the realty firm through the insolvency process. The two-day voting process, which began May 27, to decide whether a further extension should be given to both the contenders concluded Friday evening. Sources said that members representing 98.54% of the voting rights gave their assent to the proposal.



The economy has not suffered as much this year amid the second wave of Covid-19 as compared to last year when there was complete lockdown

TARUN BAJAJ | REVENUE SECRETARY

AMAZON PRESSED FOR RACIAL EQUITY REVIEW

Amazon should review how it is addressing racial justice and equity after a shareholder proposal on the topic won strong backing, New York state's top pension official said Friday

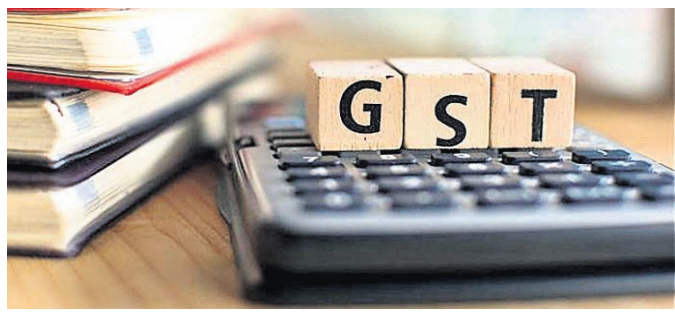


Industry welcomes GST Council's decisions

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 29: India Inc. has largely welcomed the decisions taken by the GST Council Friday to exempt Covid relief items from duty and easing compliance burden for taxpayers but said the measures stopped short of giving complete exemption to taxpayers from late fee payment and also missed out on providing zero rating of Covid supplies.

Industry body FICCI said that the Council's decision providing relief on import of Covid-related items and Black Fungus drug were a welcome move, and now GoM recommendations would be awaited to see what action is proposed on GST rate for other medical supplies for Covid including that for



vaccines and ventilators.

"We welcome the decisions announced by the GST Council. We appreciate the government's efforts in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic and enabling better access to medical products and solutions to the country and are happy that some of the key asks from FICCI

have been considered," Uday Shankar, President, FICCI, said.

"We eagerly look forward to the report of the Group of Ministers formed for consideration of further reductions in GST rates on Covid-related essentials. A quick decision on this front will help us attain self-sufficiency in this need of

Industry body FICCI said that the Council's decision providing relief on import of Covid-related items and Black Fungus drug were a welcome move

hour. At this juncture we cannot afford to lose further time," he added.

The GST Council on Friday extended relief on import of Covid-related relief items, if purchased or meant for donating to government or any other relief agency, by exempting it from the Integrated Goods and Services Tax till Aug. 31, 2021. Also, the drug required for treating Mucormycosis fungal in-

fection, has been included in list of items exempted from IGST.

Furthermore, the Council also recommended amnesty scheme to reduce the late fee and provide some relief to the small taxpayers. However, FICCI recommended a waiver from the late fees and interest to provide maximum benefit to taxpayers hit hard by pandemic disruptions.

The decision regarding extension of due dates of various compliances under GST laws for the month of May and June, 2021 will also provide a big relief to the taxpayers during this difficult time. Also, the announcement regarding optional return filing for 2020-21 for taxpayers with a turnover less than ₹2 crore will provide a further respite to the smaller companies.

French cos pledge support for India's health infra

As part of the French Solidarity Mission initiated by the French Government and implemented by the Embassy of France in India, majority of these funds have been committed to purchase and install at least 20

French oxygen generator plants in Indian hospitals

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 29: The Indo-French Chamber of Commerce & Industry (IFCCI) has raised over EUR 6.1 million (Rs 55 crore) from French companies based in India to support its ongoing fight against the Covid pandemic.

As part of the French Solidarity Mission initiated by the French Government and implemented by the Embassy of France in India, majority of these funds have been committed to purchase and install at least 20 French oxygen generator plants in Indian hospitals.

Eight of these oxygen plants have already been delivered and installed in Indian hospitals including Military Hospital in Palam,



Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Raja Harish Chandra Hospital, Ambedkar Nagar Hospital among others. The remaining will arrive in India within a few weeks.

Each oxygen plant sourced from French company Novair supplies non-stop oxygen to a 250-bed hospital for 10-12 years, ensuring greater healthcare autonomy to hospitals who have been catering to thousands of critical patients, IFCCI said in a statement.

In addition, IFCCI has been working with Business France to procure approximately 600 oxygen concentrators from France due to arrive in the next few days. It is also working closely with Caggepmini to develop a mobile app and website which would serve as a common resource pool for sharing information about plasma donors, oxygen cylin-

ders and concentrators for IFCCI's members and extended networks.

Donations were received from more than 50 companies including Caggepmini, Amundi - SBI Mutual Fund, Saint Gobain, Air Liquide, CMA-CGM, Dassault Aviation, Societe Generale, Accenture, Atos, Pernod Ricard, BNP Paribas, Safran, Sanofi, Moët-Hennessy, L'Oréal, EDF, Airbus, Naval Group, Alstom, Total, Orano, ADP, Renault, Hermes, Roquette, Engie, Credit Agricole, Sopra Steria, Serdia Pharmaceuticals, Thales, Air France, Michelin, Schneider Electric, ARaymond, bioMerieux, Legrand, NRB Bearings, Dassault Systemes, BIC Cello, Amadeus, Emballiso, TNP Consultants, Idemia, Phosphera, Robertet, Velan, Evolis, Monin, Sonepar, Armor Group, Technique Solaire, Soufflet, Link, Radiall, Precia Molen and Helma.

New e-filing portal to be mobile friendly: I-T Dept

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: The Income Tax Department on Saturday said it will launch June 7 its new portal e-filing 2.0, which will be mobile friendly, have pre-filled ITR form and simplified utility.

"Income Tax Department will launch its new e-filing portal http://incometax.gov.in on 7th June 21. It will replace the existing portal of the Department http://incometaxindiaefiling.gov.in," the I-T department tweeted.

Giving the salient features of the "e-filing 2.0 portal", the I-T Department said there will be a "all new mobile app" and taxpayers will have a step-by-step guidance with user manuals and videos.

Besides, multiple options for on-portal tax payments, multiple options for login, helpdesk support and chatbot are the features in the portal.

E-filing services will be unavailable from June 1-6. "If you have to submit any response or avail any service please do it before or after these dates," it said.

The e-filing portal is used by the taxpayers to file their income tax returns (ITRs) and also to raise complaints seeking refunds.

Taxmen use it to issue queries, notices, get responses from the taxpayer and to communicate final orders like assessments, appeals, among others, on the taxpayers' dashboard.

2nd wave to stunt rural demand, impact overall growth

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 29: Covid's second wave is expected to stunt rural demand, consequently, marginally dampening India's 2021 growth prospects. According to economy observers, heavy impact of pandemic in rural areas as well as rise in healthcare and other associated costs will slow down rural demand.

Significantly, this will impact sectors ranging from two-wheelers, tractors, cement and consumer durables amongst others.

"Agricultural production will remain robust but rural consumption may get impacted due to spread of Covid," India Ratings' Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said.

As of now, India suffers from a massive spike in Covid-19 in-

fections.

The latest spike has brought in record number of patients, thereby, impeding healthcare infrastructure's ability to deal with the surge.

Consequently, the situation has forced state governments to implement local lockdowns and travel restrictions which have started to slow down economic activity.

"Rural demand may be dented given the high health expenses related to Covid-19," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA.

"However, a normal monsoon will be a palliative over the remainder of the year."

In terms of growth impact from a slower rural demand, Emkay's Lead Economist Madhavi Arora said factors such as better adapted firms and policy response, stable financial conditions, vaccine drive,

COVID IMPACT



pent-up demand release and robust global growth spillovers create growth buffers.

"Assuming Covid-19 peaks in May'21 and restrictions ease by Q2FY22, we mark down our FY22 GDP forecast to 9.9 per cent from 11 per cent earlier, with a further

downward bias."

Besides, any impact on agricultural production will flare-up inflation dashing hopes of any policy easing as well as credit growth of the sector.

BIZ BUZZ

ICICI Prudential brings in retirement solution

New Delhi: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance introduced an innovative retirement solution by combining two variants of its popular 'Guaranteed Pension Plan', which offers a guaranteed return on investments.

This solution provides customers with increasing regular income that doubles after five years and triples after the 11th year, thereby shielding them against the rising cost of living. The customer-centric retirement or annuity products offered by the company have enabled it to grow the annuity business segment by 120% in FY 2021. Annuity products enable customers to plan for their retirement and are available in two variants i.e. Immediate and Deferred Annuity. The Immediate Annuity option enables customers to start receiving regular income immediately by paying a one-time premium. The deferred annuity option gives customers the flexibility to start receiving income in the future, for instance closer to their retirement.



ASUS launches convertible gaming laptops

Bhubaneswar: ASUS Republic of Gamers (ROG) today announced the availability of a new lineup featuring the latest AMD Ryzen™ 5000 H-Series Mobile Processors in India.

Designed to boost your productivity and take your gaming experience to the next level, the new range of laptops include ROG Flow X13, which comes with a detachable eGPU (XG Mobile) support, ROG Zephyrus Duo 15 SE, ROG Zephyrus G15 and ROG Zephyrus G14. Resonating the philosophy of 'Compact is the new Impact', the latest gaming lineup offers versatility to the gamers by unlocking various possibilities of the laptop gaming scenarios. These gaming PCs come with the latest and powerful AMD Ryzen 9 5900HS and Ryzen™ 9 5900HX processor and NVIDIA GeForce GPU, bolstering the gaming experience of the consumers. These machines are engineered to give esports players and enthusiasts an uncompromising gaming experience in competitive tournaments.



Local lockdowns to dent automobile MoM wholesale numbers

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 29: Automobile wholesale numbers are expected to decline on a MoM basis due to localised lockdowns by states and supply-side issues said Motilal Oswal Financial Services. According to the MOFSL report, in May inquiries were significantly lower than normal levels, except in 'Tractors'.



"While a strong order book and ongoing preference for personal mobility would support PVs, strong demand for 2Ws seems unlikely on high inventory in the system and severe impact of the second Covid wave on rural and semi-urban markets," the report said.

"Wholesales are expected to decline MoM due to the impact of localised lockdowns by states and supply-side issues."

Besides, it said that 2W demand continues to remain subdued, with dealer inventory at 30-60 days.

"Demand momentum in PVs is expected to resume once the lockdown is lifted as inventory levels are below normal (less than 30 days), with a waiting period of 6-8 weeks in fast selling models. Demand for M&HCVs remains strong in the Infrastructure segment (considering inquiries in the current market), while the same in the Cargo segment has slowed down."

HMSI resumes production in a phased manner

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 29: Two-wheeler major Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has recommenced production at its plants in a phased manner. The company has manufacturing plants in Manesar (Haryana), Tapukara (Rajasthan) and Vithalapur (Gujarat).



"We are gradually resuming production operations following all Covid-19 compliance and lockdown guidelines by respective state governments," said Atsushi Ogata - Managing Director, President & CEO, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India.

"While there are visible signs of recovery in the country, we will continue to monitor the situation very closely and are moving forward with safety and well-being of all our stakeholders as a top priority."

Besides, the company announced support package for dealers under lockdown.

Accordingly, the company shall bear full interest cost of dealer's inventory under complete lockdown for 30 days or more.

Rural demand may be dented given the high health expenses related to Covid-19. However, a normal monsoon will be a palliative over the remainder of the year

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

Oz 'lack a finisher' 'Managed isolation' for India before WTC

PONTING WARY OF AUSTRALIAN LINE-UP, WHICH DOESN'T HAVE DHONI OR HARDIK TYPE PLAYER, GOING INTO FORTHCOMING ICC WORLD T20



Glenn Maxwell (R) and Marcus Stoinis are among the names suggested by Ricky Ponting for the finisher's role for Australia at the T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, May 29: Former captain Ricky Ponting feels Australia lacks a finisher in the mould of former India skipper MS Dhoni or all-rounder Hardik Pandya despite the abundance of experienced players ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Ponting also feels that unearthing a reliable middle or lower-order batsman who can keep wickets could kill two birds with one stone. "The spot they (Australia) have always been worried about is that finishing role. It's a very specialist position to be able to go in with three of four overs to go, with 50 runs needed and be able to do it," Ponting was quoted as saying in cricket.com.au.

"Dhoni has been in that one spot his whole career and no wonder he's so good at it. Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard are similar - these guys continually win games of cricket for their country and in the IPL, they're used to going in batting at those spots," he added.

Ponting, who coached Delhi Capitals in the currently-suspended Indian Premier League, said one of the reasons for Australia not having a good 'finisher' was that all of the best batsmen of the country bat in top four in Big Bash League.

"So you've actually got no one that's consistently batting in that area. That's what we've got to find," said the 46-year-old legendary batsman.

"Is it going to be (Glenn) Maxwell and Mitchell Marsh that are going to finish the games, is it going to be (Marcus) Stoinis? I think that's the area that they're more worried about."

Stoinis has had success batting lower down the order under Ponting's guidance at the Delhi

Capitals. "I saw Stoinis at Delhi last year, he's opened the last few years of BBL and done a great job for the Melbourne Stars, but I needed someone that could finish games for us and he won two or three games off his own bat.

"So, it's there - but they will get better at it the more they do it. How they find a way for these guys to do it more, I'm not sure," said Ponting who is currently in quarantine in a Sydney hotel after returning from the suspended IPL. He said more players could benefit from batting at the death regularly, but admitted convincing BBL teams to demote their best players would be tough.

And of equal concern, said the former captain, was identifying the best option for wicketkeeper, and suggested that the uncapped Josh Inglis could be in the mix, despite missing out on preliminary squad for the upcoming tours of the Caribbean and Bangladesh.

"The keeper-batsman is probably the slot they'd be losing the most sleep over right now... who is going to be standing behind the stumps with the gloves on?"

"They have tried a few blokes - (Matthew) Wade has been there, (Josh) Philippe has just played as a batter, Alex Carey has been in and out and tried in a few different batting spots."

"Josh Inglis' name could be thrown into the ring as well - I really liked what I saw from him batting in the middle order in last summer's BBL."

Ponting added: "He (Inglis) plays spin really well and you think about where the World Cup is going to be (in India or the UAE), he could be a name that could come up (for selection)." Ponting has been part of Australia's T20 coaching staff in recent years and was an assistant for the ODI World Cup in 2019. The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October-November.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 29: The Indian team will stay in "managed isolation" before the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand, the ICC announced Saturday but did not mention the exact period of hard quarantine upon reaching UK. World's top two Test teams will fight it out at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton from June 18-22.

While New Zealand are already in England for a bilateral series against the hosts, the Virat Kohli-led Indian team will arrive in the UK June 3 after competing a 14-day quarantine period in India.

"The event has now been granted an exemption by the UK government as outlined in The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) (England) Regulations



2021, released 17 May 2021," the ICC said in a release.

"Upon landing, they will proceed directly to the on-site hotel at the Hampshire Bowl where they will be tested again before commencing a period of managed isolation," said the ICC release.

However the ICC release doesn't specify the duration of hard (room) quarantine in Southampton. For New Zealand team, ECB made it a three-day mandatory room quar-

antine before allowing the players to train.

Regular tests will be conducted during the period of isolation. The Indian team will enter UK after completing 14-days in a bio-bubble in Mumbai with six RT-PCR negative tests.

Some of the players like R Ashwin, Mayank Agarwal, Washington Sundar are now allowed to use the hotel gymnasium from May 25 after a week-long

room quarantine and three negative tests.

However a few like skipper Virat Kohli, his white ball deputy Rohit Sharma, all of whom joined late will have a complete room quarantine before boarding the UK flight. They have been provided with gym equipments inside their rooms.

In the UK, players' activity will be allowed in a gradually increasing manner after each round of negative testing, moving from exercise in isolation to small group and then larger squad activity, whilst always remaining within the bio-secure venue.

The New Zealand team will move from the ECB bio-secure environment into the World Test Championship Final bubble June 15 and will be subject to regular testing prior to and post arrival in Southampton.

MARY KOM SEEKS 6TH ASIAN GOLD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 29: Six-time World Champion MC Mary Kom (51kg) will seek her sixth gold when she squares off against Kazakhstan's Nazym Kyzaibay in the women's 51kg final of the Asian Boxing Championships here Sunday.

The 38-year-old Olympic-bound Mary Kom had prevailed 4-1 over Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg in the semifinals Thursday. She will face a stiff challenge from the two-time world champion Kyzaibay in the summit clash.

Another Olympic-bound boxer Pooja Rani, who received a walk-over in the semi-finals, will fight against an in-form Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan, who ended the challenge of London Olympics medallist Marina Volnova in the last-4 stage. Anupama (+81kg) and Lalbuatsahi (64kg) will also



face strong Kazakh boxers in their respective finals.

Defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg), Shiva Thapa (64kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) will be seen in action in the men's gold-medal bouts Monday.

Panghal will be up against 2016

Rio Olympics and world champion Zoirov Shakhobidin of Uzbekistan while Thapa will face Asian Games silver medallist Baatarsukh Chinzorig of Mongolia.

Second seeded Sanjeet will fight against 2016 Rio Olympics silver medallist Vassilij Levit, who is chasing his fourth gold medal of the Asian Championships.

The Indian boxers have already ensured their best-ever show by securing an unprecedented 15 medals, bettering their previous highest of 13 (2 gold, 4 silver and 7 bronze) achieved during the 2019 edition.

Eight Indian pugilists - Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Jaismine (57kg), Sakshi Chaudhary (64kg), Monika (48kg), Saweety (81kg) among women and Vikas Krishan (69kg) and Varinder Singh (60kg) among men - have secured bronze medals with their semifinal finish.

Sushil's police custody extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 29: A Delhi court Saturday extended by four days the police custody of Olympic wrestling medallist Sushil Kumar and Ajay Kumar Sehrawat, arrested in connection with the murder of a 23-year-old grappler, saying that no one is above the law.

Sushil Kumar and his associates allegedly assaulted Sagar Dhankar and two of his friends at Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium. Sagar succumbed to injuries later. Following Sushil and Ajay Kumar's arrest, the court had remanded them in six days police custody May 23.

On being produced before the court at the end of the remand period Saturday, the Delhi Police moved an application seeking extension of custody by seven more days, stating that Sushil Kumar was the mastermind and several recoveries are yet to be made for which his interrogation is required.

Allowing their interrogation for only four days, Metropolitan Magistrate Mayank Goel said, "No one is above law and law treats everyone equally. Though the Constitution guarantees the right to life and liberty to all persons whether they are accused or not, but that right is also subject to certain exceptions."

The allegations against the accused persons are very grave and serious in nature, the court said, emphasising on the importance of the initial days of investigation to unearth the truth.

The judge said the involvement of a large number of persons, some of whom belong to some notorious gangs stationed in and outside Delhi, is also suspected and they are yet to be arrested.

"Moreover, certain recoveries i.e. Mobile phone and clothes of accused persons are yet to be made. As such in the interest of justice I deem it appropriate to allow the application of 10 to the extent of four days

only," the judge stated in the order.

During the course of the proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor Ashish Kajal sought Sushil and Ajay's custody to confront them with other arrested co-accused, and recover mobile phones, clothes the Olympian was wearing during the brawl, and DVR of the CCTV cameras installed at his house.

Further, the prosecutor, representing the Delhi Police, said that the investigating agency seized seven vehicles from the spot which were used in the commission of the crime but only four vehicles have been linked due to evasive and non-cooperation of Sushil and Ajay Kumar.

He said their custody is required to link the remaining three vehicles with their users, apprehend other accused, identify their hideouts at Haridwar, Rishikesh and Ghaziabad and apprehend the persons who provided them help to evade arrest.

ON THIS DAY THAT YEAR

1957: Rohan Kanhai of Indian origin made his Test debut for West Indies against England at Edgbaston

1957: Real Madrid legend Alfredo Di Stefano and Francisco Gento scored to help the defending champions (Real Madrid) beat Fiorentina 2-0 in the European Cup final in Madrid

1964: Australian tennis great Margaret Court won her second French Championships Women's Tennis single's crown beating Maria Bueno of Brazil 5-7, 6-1, 6-2 in the final

1984: Liverpool overcome Roma test 4-2 on penalties in Rome after 1-1 scoreline in the regulation time in the 28th European Cup final

1987: Mike Tyson beat Pinklon Thomas by TKO in round 6 in Las Vegas to retain WBC/WBA heavyweight boxing titles

BIRTHDAY

1980
STEVEN GERRARD
England and Liverpool football great

IS IT TIME FOR CHANGING OF THE GUARD?

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, May 29: Forgive Novak Djokovic if he's just a little bit tired of hearing about, and being asked to address, how much longer he, Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer can stay at the top of tennis.

Or, put another way, whether a younger generation of men finally is poised to consistently win Grand Slam titles.

"I mean, I said it a thousand times. I don't know how many times people want me to repeat it. Of course the Next Gen" - a marketing slogan pushed by the ATP - "is there, is coming, whatever. But here we are, still winning the biggest tournaments and Slams. I don't know what to tell you other than that," Djokovic said.

"I'm not focused on the Next Gen, even though I know ... It creates a story. People like to talk about it. Fine. The guys are there. They are already establishing themselves in the Top 5, Top 10 of the world. Nothing new," he continued, then noted with pride: "But we are still there."

When the French Open begins in Paris Sunday, it will feel in some ways like order restored after the 2020 edition was altered in two significant ways because of the coronavirus pandemic: Only 1,000 spectators were let into Roland Garros per day, and competition started in September instead of May.

Back in its rightful spot on the calendar - well, delayed by a week



Novak Djokovic



Rafa Nadal



Roger Federer

because of COVID-19 concerns, but close enough - and with about 5,300 fans allowed in each of the first 10 days, then 10,000 or more each of the last five days, could the day-court championship serve as the setting for a symbolic changing of the guard?

Or, to Djokovic's point, will the elders remain in charge? "A lot of people underestimate the time and the era we are playing in, with by far the three best players in the history of the game," said Dominic Thieme, whose US Open title last September makes him the only

first-time major men's champion since 2014.

"It's more than clear that it's incredibly tough to win Grand Slam tournaments, having to beat, most of the times, two of them." As in any sport - or, truthfully, any business - eventually there is turnover. Has to be, of course. The guessing game in tennis has been about both who will break through and when.

With Federer turning 40 in August, Nadal turning 35 next week and Djokovic now 34, there did seem to be some recent evidence that such a shift might be hap-

pening, including in the rankings, where World No.2 Daniil Medvedev is the first man other than the Big Three or Andy Murray to be ranked in the Top 2 in 15 years.

Dominic Thieme's triumph in New York at age 27 made him the first man born in the 1990s to win a Grand Slam title. Runner-up Alexander Zverev and the other semifinalists at Flushing Meadows also belong to that decade - and the 2020 US Open was the first Slam since 2004 without at least one of Djokovic, Nadal or Federer in the semifinals.

A caveat, though: Neither Federer (coming off two knee operations that sidelined him for more than a year) nor Nadal entered the US Open, and Djokovic was disqualified in the fourth round.

Three recent Masters 1000 finals featured matchups between up-and-comers, including Tsitsipas vs. Rublev at Monte Carlo.

But at the last Masters 1000, on clay at the Italian Open this month, Djokovic faced Nadal in the final (Nadal won, perfect preparation for his bid for a 14th French Open title and 21st Grand Slam trophy overall).

After beating Tsitsipas in the semifinals in Rome, Djokovic ran into Nadal in the locker room. "We kind of joked around," Djokovic said, "that the old guys are still not giving up."

Women's tennis scenario Things look quite different in the women's game, where the question is which player might extend the recent run of success of the younger set in women's tennis. Iga Swiatek, for example, won last year's French Open at age 19 (she turns 20 Monday). Other relatively recent Slam champs include Ash

A GLIMPSE AT THE DOMINANCE

- 15 of the past 16 Grand Slam tournaments were won by the Big Three;
- Starting with the 2005 French Open, they collected 54 of the past 63 major titles;
- In that same span, 23 Slam finals involved one of these matchups: Djokovic vs. Nadal, Djokovic vs. Federer, or Nadal vs. Federer

2021 SCENE AT ROLAND GARROS

- That can't happen at Roland Garros because they are in the same half of the bracket for the first time at a Grand Slam tournament
- No.1 Djokovic could face No.8 Federer in the quarterfinals; one of them could meet No.3 Nadal in the semifinals
- The other half includes No.5 Stefanos Tsitsipas and No.6 Alexander Zverev, who are among the 20-something men considered contenders to grab a first major trophy, along with No.2 Daniil Medvedev and No.7 Andrey Rublev

Barty, 25, Sofia Kenin, 22, and Bianca Andreescu, 20.

And then there is someone like Coco Gauff, still just 17, who keeps moving up the WTA rankings. She, like 19-year-old Jannik Sinner in the men's game, is seen as part of a group of possible future stars, ready to step forth as Serena Williams, who is 39, and the top men move on.