



INNATE TALENT

Actor Janhvi Kapoor's painting skills remind Dia Mirza of her mother, late superstar Sridevi

LEISURE P2



TRUCE WITH HAMAS

Egypt and Israel are holding talks to shore up a fragile truce between Israel and the Hamas, and rebuild the Gaza Strip

INTERNATIONAL P10



CHELSEA TRIUMPH

Chelsea win Champions League title for 2nd time defeating Manchester City in a tense final

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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Monsoon likely to hit Kerala by June 3

NEW DELHI: The arrival of monsoon over Kerala is likely to be delayed by two days and it is now expected to make an onset over the state by June 3, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

IMD Director General M Mohapatra said there is cyclonic circulation along the Karnataka coast which is hindering the progress of the southwest monsoon.

Boris remarries in private ceremony

LONDON: UK PM Boris Johnson has married his fiancée Carrie Symonds in a secret ceremony at the Westminster Cathedral in front of about 30 close friends and family members, a media report said Sunday.

In its report, Daily Mail said that the 56-year-old Johnson exchanged vows with Symonds, 33, Saturday morning, becoming the first Prime Minister to marry in office since Lord Liverpool wed Mary Chester in 1822.

But the Downing Street has not confirmed the development yet. The couple was engaged on the Caribbean island of Mustique in December 2019 and have one-year-old son, Wilfred.

A Westminster Cathedral spokesperson told the Sunday Times: "On Saturday May 29, the wedding of Carrie Symonds and Boris Johnson took place in Westminster Cathedral. The bride and groom are both parishioners of the Westminster Cathedral parish and baptised Catholics. All necessary steps were taken, in both church and civil law, and all formalities completed before the wedding."

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
MAX	36.6°C	35.8°C	
MIN	28.7°C	27.6°C	
Humidity	78%	78%	
Rainfall	NIL	NIL	
			Forecast Light rain very likely

WUHAN IT IS: STUDY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 30: British intelligence agencies now believe it is "feasible" that the Covid-19 pandemic began with a coronavirus leak from a Chinese laboratory, a media report said Sunday, prompting UK's Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi to demand that the WHO must fully investigate the origins of the deadly virus.

The origins of the Covid-19 remain a widely debated topic, with some scientists and politicians maintaining that the possibility of a lab leak of the deadly virus exists.

Western intelligence, including in Britain, at first considered there was only a "remote" chance that it had leaked from the laboratory, where research is conducted into bat-derived coronaviruses, including one closely associated with Covid-19. But there has since been a reassessment, and a lab escape is thought "feasible", the Sunday Times reported, citing sources.

China's Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) is near the outbreak's known epicentre of Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in late 2019 and became a pandemic. More than 168 million confirmed cases have since been confirmed worldwide and at least 3.5 million deaths reported.

"There might be pockets of evidence that take us one way, and evidence that takes us another way. The Chinese will lie either way. I don't think we will ever know," said a western intelligence source familiar with UK involvement in the investigation.

Agencies are believed to have few



Security personnel keep watch outside the Wuhan Institute of Virology during the visit by the World Health Organization team tasked with investigating the origins of Covid-19, in Wuhan

human intelligence sources in China. Gathering data there has focused on trying to recruit on the dark web, where Chinese employees can share secrets anonymously without fear of being caught, the paper said. Meanwhile, an explosive new study has found that Chinese scientists created the virus in a lab in Wuhan and subsequently tried to cover their tracks by reverse-engineering versions of the virus to make it look like it evolved naturally from bats.

The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 virus has no "credible natural ancestor" and was created by Chinese scientists who were working on a 'Gain of Function' project in a Wuhan lab, the Daily Mail reported Sunday, citing a new research paper by British professor Angus Dalglish and Norwegian scientist Dr Birger Sorensen.

The new research claims that scientists took a natural coronavirus "backbone" found in Chinese cave bats and spliced onto it a new "spike", turning it into the deadly and highly transmissible Covid-19. The paper also quotes that researchers found "unique fingerprints" in Covid-19 samples that they say could only have arisen from manipulation in a laboratory.

Authors Dalglish and Sorensen wrote in their paper that they had prima facie evidence of retro-engineering in China for a year, but were ignored by academics and major journals, reported DailyMail.

The study alleged "deliberate destruction, concealment or contamination of data" at Chinese labs and notes the silencing and disappearance of scientists in China who spoke out

ORIGIN OF COVID-19

Intelligence operatives are probing possibility of leak in Wuhan sparked pandemic

Western intelligence agencies had seemingly written off the leak as 'remote' chance

But a reassessment means the leak theory is considered 'feasible', sources say

about the activities. The research is expected to intensify the ongoing debate on China's role in creating the virus that has claimed thousands of lives.

In the 22-page paper which is set to be published in the scientific journal Quarterly Review of Biophysics Discovery, Dalglish and Sorensen pieced together how Chinese scientists, some working with American universities, allegedly built the tools to create the coronavirus.

In an exclusive interview with DailyMail, Sorensen said that four amino acids on the spike have a positive charge, which causes the virus to tightly cling to the negatively charged parts of a human, becoming more infectious.

Because these positively charged amino acids also repeat each other, it was rare to find even three in a row in naturally occurring organisms, while four in a row is "extremely unlikely", he said.

"The laws of physics mean that you cannot have four positively charged amino acids in a row. The only way you can get this is if you artificially manufacture it," Dalglish told DailyMail.

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O₂ plant, RT-PCR labs in all DHHs in next 2 months

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The state Health department Sunday said that it has been preparing for a possible third wave of Covid-19 and working to set up the required infrastructure to deal with the situation in the next 2-3 months.

Health department Additional Chief Secretary PK Mohapatra Sunday said, "In the event of a third wave of the pandemic, the Odisha government has decided to improve the hospital infrastructure in the coming days. In the next 2-3 months, every state government medical college and District Headquarter Hospital (DHH) will have an oxygen plant and ECMO plant to cater to the needs of the hospital," he said.

He added, "We have fixed

a timeline of 2-3 months to complete the work. We are working to increase the number of beds in the government set-ups and reserve a section of those for children."

According to Mohapatra, the department earlier formed a task force for paediatric care in the event the third wave hits children in the state severely following the advice of the experts.

"In the next two months, all DHHs will have RT-PCR labs so that we are prepared for the third wave," he said.

Mohapatra added that the state government has been working to recruit more doctors and nurses to bolster the state's ability to deal with health emergencies. So far 786 doctors have been recruited, while the appointment of 5,695 nurses is in the pipeline.

Lockdown extended till June 17

CURBS EASED IN NUAPADA, SUNDARGARH AND GAJAPATI DISTRICTS WHERE COVID POSITIVITY RATE HAS DROPPED BELOW 10 PER CENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The Odisha government has decided to extend the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown in the state till the morning of June 17, Chief Secretary Suresh Mohapatra told the media, Sunday evening.

"The ongoing lockdown has yielded good results in containing coronavirus infection. As a result, Covid positivity rates have declined in many areas. However, the positivity rates are yet to drop below 10 per cent. The state government has, thus, decided to extend the lockdown till 5 am, June 17," Mohapatra said.

He added that three districts of the state, which have reported a positive rate of below 10 per cent, would be allowed some relaxations. These districts include Nuapada, Sundargarh and



Gajapati. Except for these three districts the lockdown norms will remain the same for others. The Chief Secretary said that the 16-day lockdown would pave the way for reducing the infections and positivity rates. He urged the people to take the lockdown seriously and comply with the government orders.

Mohapatra said that shops dealing with essential supplies would remain open from 7am to 11am, while the weekend shutdowns on Saturdays and Sundays would continue as usual.

As some relaxation in curbs would

be allowed the Nuapada, Gajapati and Sundargarh districts, shops there would remain open from 7am to 1pm every day. Shops, in addition to those providing essential items, would also be allowed to open in these districts. Mohapatra, however, said that the relaxations could be stopped if there is a rise in Covid cases in these districts during the period.

The government has also decided to continue with the restrictions on the number of guests at weddings and funerals as stipulated in the Covid guidelines released in May this year.

Meanwhile, movement of emergency service providers has been eased in the state during the lockdown period. The local administrations have been asked to facilitate easy movement of people going for testing, vaccination and other medical emergencies.

AID POURS IN



Freighter carrying empty oxygen cylinders from China arrives at the Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar, Sunday (More P11)

Covid patient's body dumped in UP river

ON CAMERA, TWO MEN ARE SEEN LIFTING A BODY ON THE BRIDGE OVER RIVER RAPTI

AGENCIES

Balrampur (UP), May 30: A shocking video of a man in PPE kit throwing the body of Covid patient in a river has surfaced from Uttar Pradesh. Recently, the state made global headlines when thousands of bodies were buried in shallow graves by the Ganga, while some others were dumped in the river.

Despite the fact that the Centre has ordered several states to ensure that dead bodies are not disposed of in rivers, the video proves that the menace continues unabated.

The horrific incident was shot by a couple of people who were driving by the spot in Balrampur district May 28.

The video showed two men, one of them in a PPE suit, lifting a body on the bridge over river Rapti. The man in the PPE suit can be seen tinkering with the body - possibly trying to get it out of the body bag.

When contacted, the Chief Medical Officer of Balrampur confirmed that the body was certainly of a Covid patient, and the relatives were trying to dump it in the river. The police have registered a case against the relatives and two of the relatives have been arrested. The police have identified the



victim as Premnath, a resident of Shohratgadh Siddharathanagar.

The incident comes barely two weeks after several bodies were seen floating

to hospital May 25, and he died three days later May 28. As per Covid protocol, the body was handed over to his relatives. Preliminary investigations reveal that the relatives threw the body into the river. We have filed a case and strict action will be taken," said Balrampur Chief Medical Officer VB Singh.

Earlier this month, hundreds of bodies had washed up on the banks of river Ganga in parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Buxar district, 71 bodies were retrieved from the riverbank. Thousands of other bodies have been found buried in the sandbanks of Ganga, which local authorities said, could have floated up during the high tide.

The matter became a bone of contention between the two states with Bihar alleging that the practice of dumping bodies in river belonged to Uttar Pradesh.

In the meantime, Union Minister Gajendra Shekhawat, who heads the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, had tweeted, "We have taken serious note of the issue of dumping dead bodies in River Ganga and instituted measures for the prohibition of the same. The Centre through the NMCG and district authorities will ensure all unidentified bodies are disposed as per the protocol".

New pictures of Choksi show injury marks



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: Pictures of fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi have surfaced on social media which showed several marks of bruises on his face and shoulders, even as a private jet landed in Dominica from Qatar.

Antigua News Room, a news outlet in Antigua and Barbuda, posted several pictures of Choksi with swollen eyes and several bruises on his arm.

In a tweet it said, "First pictures emerge of Mehul Choksi behind bars."

On Thursday night, Choksi's lawyer Vijay Agarwal had said that

Choksi was forced to get into a vessel from Antigua and was taken to Dominica. He also claimed that there were marks on Choksi's body, implying the use of force.

"There is something fishy and I guess it was a strategy to take him to another place so that there are chances of sending him back to India. So I don't know what forces are operating. The time will tell," he had said.

However, Antigua Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney has rubbished the claims of Choksi's counsel and said that they have no information on him being forcefully removed. P8

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
One more hectic day! Today you will be busy trying to figure out solutions to your problems, both at home and office. Your superiors give you some leeway and it will be quite a consolation, says Ganesh. Experienced people will give you highly esteemed advice.

TAURUS
You are going to be exceptionally intense in the way you communicate your emotions and feelings. You will, no doubt, succeed in making the impact, the impression you are striving to make, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
An occurrence from the past will become a cause of worry for you today. You will also be concerned owing to the deteriorating health of the elders in your family. You will encounter medical expenses. The later half of the day should see your worries abate somewhat, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Chances are that your inquisitive nature will put in a difficulty. Others will be angry with you for keeping a secret a vital information. Ganesh counsels you to strengthen ties with friends and give up present attitude.

LEO
You may experience some tension trying to stay ahead of your busy schedule. You will need to maintain your mental and physical health. Important meetings will conclude successfully, but they may leave you fatigued at the end of the day.

VIRGO
Don't procrastinate matters regarding your health, advises Ganesh. Today you are raring to take on some past wounds. However, peace and quietude are the dominant flavours today. Ganesh suggests that you go ahead and enjoy yourself, if only just to recharge your batteries.

LIBRA
Ganesh says your uniqueness will be the focus of attention and praise today. Your undertaking of various tough tasks and completing them today will showcase your business acumen. You will show your inclination to the finer arts like music and dance.

SCORPIO
Suddenly, you become conscious about your looks today, says Ganesh. How you look, how you dress-up and the way you walk, all becomes a matter of concern for you. All prim and proper, you imagine yourself to be the best.

SAGITTARIUS
Dark and gloomy, that's what how you feel today, foresees Ganesh. However, the cloud to worries is likely to burst during the latter half of the day. Good news from abroad or a phone call from a friend is likely to cheer you up.

CAPRICORN
You have taken your personal relationships for granted but some irregularities in them have caught your attention. Now, you will focus upon them and try to get to the heart of the matter, feels Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
The cupid may strike you today. You don't want make a wrong first impression, so wear something nice and be presentable all the time. Professionally, the day will be favourable for you to make some important decisions. Overall, you are in a happy mood and you will spread the joy around, feels Ganesh.

PISCES
Today you will be attracted by the heart and not the mind. This is usual for your star sign. Attempt to understand your emotions today. Ganesh says today you might figure out the way to control both your heart and your mind.



'KNOWING REUM HAS CHANGED MY WORLD'

Entrepreneur-socialite Paris Hilton shared a loved-up post on her 18-month anniversary with beau Carter Reum, whom she tagged as her best friend for life, Sunday. Paris also said that knowing Reum has changed her world for the better.

Taapsee's dose of 'happy hormones'

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu has shared a post workout selfie saying that she is loading her dose of happy hormones.

Taapsee posted the picture on her Instagram Stories. In the image, the actress is drenched in sweat as it seems she clicked the photograph after a gruelling workout routine.

Taapsee sports a post workout glow, lying down on the floor dressed in a black vest.

"Loading my dose of 'happy hormones' to keep going through this lockdown," she wrote on the image.

Recently, the Income Tax Department searched the homes and offices of Ms. Pannu and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap as well as his partners who launched the now shuttered production house Phantom Films.

On the professional front, the actress has several films lined up, including *Loop Lapeta*, *Rashmi Rocket*, *Haseen Dillruba*, *Shabaash Mithu*.



Prateik debuts as audiobook narrator

New Delhi: Actors Rasika Dugal and Prateik Babbar have lent their voices to romance and thriller author Durjoy Dutta's latest audiobook, *The Last Girl to Fall in Love*.

Available on Audible, a major producer and provider of original spoken-word entertainment and audiobooks, the Audible Original is a sequel to Datta's much loved audiobook *The Last Boy to Fall in Love*, narrated by Sikander Kher and Rasika Dugal in English and Barun Sobti in Hindi.

This time, Rasika Dugal is joined by actor Prateik Babbar, voicing the male lead. This is Prateik Babbar's debut into the world of audio.

"This is my first experience lending my voice to audiobooks and I have to tell you - I'm hooked. Recording *The Last Girl to Fall in Love* was an extremely gratifying experience for me as an artiste. I can't wait to see how fans react to it," says the actor.

Janhvi's art works remind Dia of Sri

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor took to social media Sunday to flaunt her painting skills, which reminded another actress Dia Mirza of Janhvi's mother, late superstar Sridevi.

Janhvi shared a couple of photographs on Instagram Sunday, one in which she can be seen painting on an easel and in the other photo, Janhvi has displayed her art works.

Captioning the photos on Instagram, the actress wrote: "Can I call myself a painter yet?"

Commenting on her post, Dia Mirza hinted that Janhvi has inherited her talent for painting from her mother, late superstar Sridevi.

Dia wrote: "Like mother like daughter: Keep painting."



Janhvi's Roohi co-star Varun Sharma also commented on her post asking her to gift him one of her paintings.

On the work front, Janhvi's latest release is the horror-comedy film *Roohi* which released in March. The film directed by Hardik Mehta, also features Rajkumar Rao and Varun Sharma in the lead.



Culture dept launches YouTube channel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: In a bid to popularise the artistic diversity of Odisha, State Odia Language, Literature and Culture department has launched its own YouTube channel, Sunday.

Launching the channel, Bishnupada Sethi, Principal Secretary of the Department, said "This will help in the expansion of Odisha's art and rich and diverse cultural heritage across the world and strengthen our digital connection."



A song on CoVID awareness written, composed and sung by well known vocalist Basudev Malbishoi was released on the channel on the occasion. After getting approval from the government, the department has launched the channel with the help of Odisha.com, a report said.

UN-backed music video to release June 5

'Prithvi Manthan', sung by veteran singer Susmita Das, is a musical action thriller based on 'Shiva Tandav Stotram' and 'Sagar Manthan'

BHUBANESWAR: A music video based on themes like pollution and environment and will be released June 5, World Environment Day, to sensitise people on conservation of nature.

Titled *Prithvi Manthan* and based on 'Shiva Tandav Stotram' and 'Sagar Manthan', the musical action thriller is produced by Auomira Entertainment while veteran singer Susmita Das has lent her voice to the project.

The video, backed by international agencies like United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has featured popular Odia actress Suryamayee in the lead and Om Prakash Mohanty has composed its music. Shiv Kumar Blagrami has



penned the lyrics while the project is conceptualised by Susmita's husband Siddhanta Das, a former

DG of Forests, Government of India and directed by Dev Meher. The director says, "For the first time in India, a music video on issues like environment and pollution is being planned in such a grand scale with the support of a UN body."

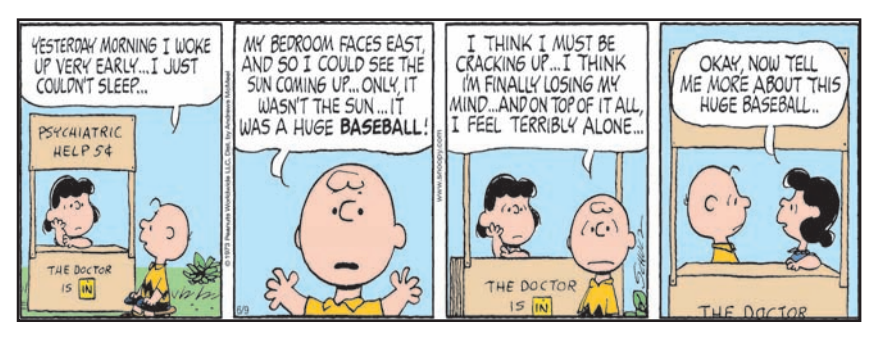
Susmita, whose popular song *Aigri Nandini* was based on women empowerment issue says, "I like to produce songs on contemporary issues to sensitise people as I believe music is the most powerful medium to reach out to the masses."

Expecting the song to get wider acceptance, conceptualiser Siddhanta Das says, "The video is not for entertainment, but to sensitise people on an important issue.

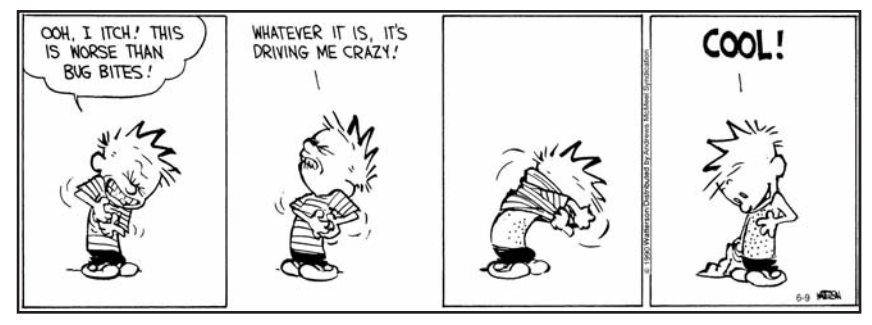
Therefore, I seek support from environmentalists and celebrities of different fields who are passionate about conservation of nature to promote the song."

Apart from UNEP other agencies like International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR) a Govt of Karnataka undertaking have given their consents to use their logo in the video film as a token of endorsement. Odisha Mining Corporation Limited has also backed the project, said a source close to the production house.

PEANUTS



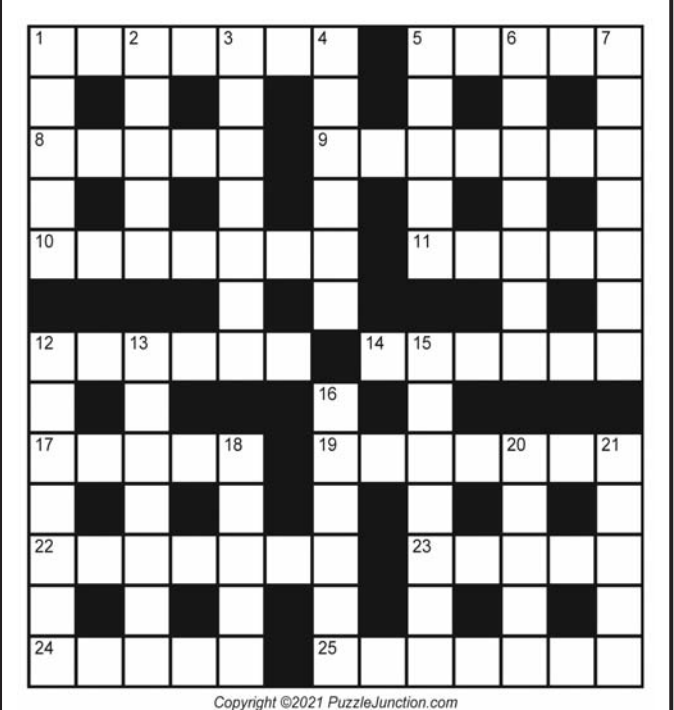
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



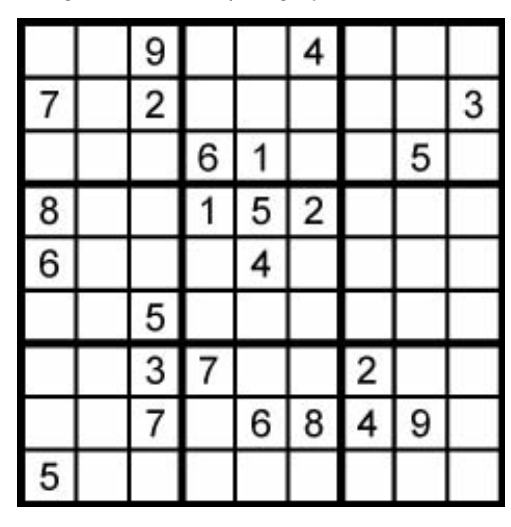
FUN post CROSSWORD



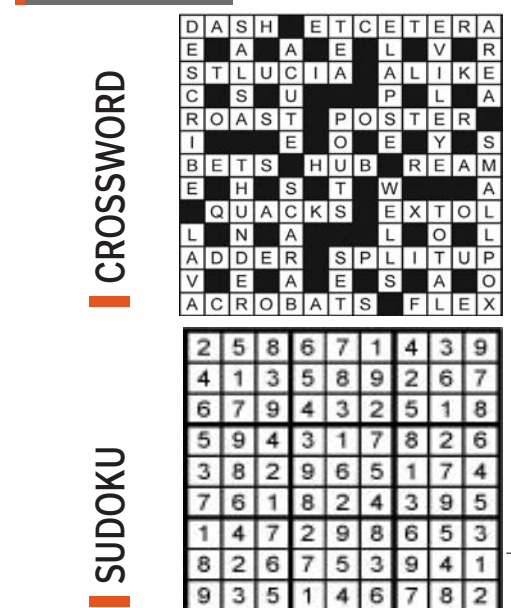
- Across**
- 1 Old square-rigger
 - 5 Kind of energy
 - 8 Express
 - 9 Epicurean
 - 10 Music hall
 - 11 Banish
 - 12 Capers
 - 14 Chess piece
 - 17 Fancy home
 - 19 Sumptuous
 - 22 Treeless plain
 - 23 Hotel posting
 - 24 "Bolero" composer
 - 25 Overspend
- Down**
- 1 Scrawny
 - 2 Unit of petrol
 - 3 Unpredictable
 - 4 Hen-pecked
 - 5 Recipe direction
 - 6 Short-tailed furry-footed rodent
 - 7 Draw back
 - 12 Financial guru
 - 13 Israeli city (3,4)
 - 15 On the fence
 - 16 Kings and queens
 - 18 Invalidate
 - 20 Banana oil, e.g.
 - 21 Discernment

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



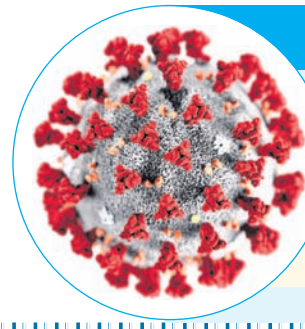
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



ENSURING HYGIENE

Sanitation workers cleaning a sewerage line by using a machine in Unit-II area of Bhubaneswar, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	17,07,40,075	15,27,36,149	35,50,719
India	2,78,94,800	2,54,54,320	3,25,972
Odisha	7,56,684	6,70,527	2,719

Positivity rate to dip further in 10 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: If the current trend continues, Odisha's Covid positivity rate is likely to witness a drastic slump in the next 10 days, Additional Chief Secretary to Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra said Sunday.

"The Covid positivity rate in Odisha has come down to 14 per cent in spite of the tests going up after cyclone Yaas. If the current trend continues, we hope the positivity rate will decrease further in the next 10 days," Mohapatra pointed out.

The senior IAS officer said that except for Andhra Pradesh, neighbouring states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have been witnessing a decline in daily Covid cases. The positivity rate in 19 districts has come down significantly. The Covid

Around 86 per cent of active cases are being treated at home. There was a higher occupancy of beds in the initial days of May. However, now only 46 per cent of the general and 72 per cent of ICU beds are occupied

PRADIPTA KUMAR MOHAPATRA I
 ACS TO H&FW DEPARTMENT



situation in Odisha is much better than in other states, he said.

Mohapatra said that there is no shortage of hospital beds and oxygen as the occupancy of general and intensive care unit (ICU) beds are

also declining. "Around 86 per cent of active cases are being treated at home. There was a higher occupancy of beds in the initial days of May. However, now only 46 per cent of the general and 72 per cent of ICU

beds are occupied," he said, adding that Odisha has not faced shortage of any Covid drugs like Remdesivir.

He pointed out that in a bid to ensure treatment of black fungus (mucormycosis), the state government has requested drugs from the Centre and has been receiving the same. "The availability of drugs to treat black fungus in the state is likely to improve in the next week," he said.

Mohapatra said that around 25 cases of black fungus have been reported from the state and out of these, three persons lost their lives. He attributed these deaths to reasons other than mucormycosis.

In the last few weeks, Odisha has sent 25,000 MT of medical oxygen to 18 states facing acute shortage of the life saving-gas to treat Covid patients, the senior official also pointed out.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Thrust on right policies to deal with Covid-19



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: Several eminent people from different walks of life Sunday deliberated on the issue of Covid-19 pandemic, right policies and approaches to contain it and the way forward amid threat of more waves of the pandemic.

The discussions were undertaken in a brainstorming session organised by Yuva Chetna in virtual mode. The session witnessed participation from people involved in human rights, politics, social service and others.

Justice PC Pant, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), expressed concerns on the impact of pandemic. "The pandemic hit the country hard. I too lost my brother in the pandemic. But I would like to thank healthcare workers who are working continuously to manage the pandemic to the best of their abilities. We at NHRC also tried our best to safeguard the rights of the people amid the pandemic," Justice Pant said.

Former Lok Sabha MP and Editor of Orissa POST and Dharitri, Tathagata Satpathy, talked about the role of different stakeholders in managing the pandemic. "The people took the first wave very seriously but as soon as the Prime Minister

and Union Health Minister declared that they had defeated Covid, people also got a bit relaxed," he said. He also added, "The time is ripe now for the government to analyse what went wrong in managing the pandemic and how it could be improved. However the citizens and others should also understand their role in managing the pandemic instead of blaming the politicians and governments."

Spiritual leader Swami Abhishek Brahmachari said that during the pandemic, everyone needed to move forward with a spirit of mutual cooperation. "There should be no barrier between the government and the public. It requires self-confidence and patience to manage the pandemic well," he said.

Presiding over the discussion, national convener of Yuva Chetna, Rohit Kumar Singh, said that through the webinar, attempts were made to create more awareness on various issue of Covid-19. Singh claimed that besides the webinar and discussions, he and his organisation had been extending a helping hand to the people by providing food, masks, medicines and other essential goods during the pandemic.

The event also saw participation from several doctors and other experts from different premier institutions of the country.

FADA urges CM to allow functioning of auto dealerships amid lockdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) has urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to allow functioning of automobile dealerships amid the ongoing lockdown in the coastal state.

In a letter to the CM, the automotive dealers' body president, Vinkesh Gulati, said that the demand for personal vehicles has gone up in the country as social distancing and fear associated with Covid-19 veer people away from public transport.

"Besides numerous regular customers, many Covid-19 warriors



and frontline workers have been approaching us for delivery of vehicles as they prefer personal vehicles (cars/two-wheelers) over public transport in these times. This apart, the demand for commercial vehicles—which are the lifeline for transportation of essential goods and services—has also been increasing. However, we are unable to serve the customers owing to the total lockdown," Gulati pointed out.

SPECIAL DRIVE TO TRACE MISSING KIDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The Commissionerate Police has launched a special drive to trace out children missing from the Capital city.

Deputy commissioner of police (DCP) Umashankar Dash has reportedly instructed the officials at the ground level to reopen the pending files of missing children reported at respective police stations.

Notably, Orissa POST in a report April 25 raised the issue regarding the failure of the twin city police in finding out around 1,549 children who had gone missing in the City during the last 10 years.

Data received through the Right to Information Act revealed that the cops failed to trace almost 35 per cent of children who had gone missing in the City during the last 10 years. As many as 4,438 child missing cases have been registered with different police stations in the City during the period. Although the cops managed to find out 2,889 children, it failed to get the whereabouts of 1,548 missing children.

Pandemic: Community radios bridge communication gap

MANISH KUMAR, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 30: Several community radios in the state have now been working in different innovative ways to bridge the communication gap especially in rural areas on Covid-19 to ensure connecting the suspected patients to health centres and spread awareness on the pandemic.

In the past few months, such communication setups have tried to reach out to rural masses in their respective local languages and dialects with important information regarding Covid and ways to prevent the same.

Radio Namaskar, a community radio station in Puri district focused on several aspects of Covid-19 ranging from identification, treatment and myth busting with the help of doctors, government officials and health workers to ensure the rural masses get authentic information on Covid.

NA Ansari, Chairman of Radio Namaskar, Saturday said that besides



An awareness van of Radio Namaskar

the normal broadcasting they also launched a mobile van with recorded audio messages which would tour to around 1000 villages in the district to raise awareness on the issue.

Several other community radio stations said that they are trying different ways to reach out to people with better information. Many of these areas, he claimed, are not covered by TV sets or large newspapers.

"There are many misconceptions on Covid and its treatment besides rumours on vaccination. Though our specialised pro-

grammes are meant for the local population, we have tried to bust several myths related to Covid and make the local communities more informed," said Pradeep Dutta, Director, Radio Kissan, Balipatna.

"One of the best parts of the communication approach from our radio stations is the use of local languages and dialects, which can be understood even by a person who is not so literate. In our region which includes hilly and remote areas, many speak Kosali dialect. So we broadcast in the dialect often so that our information goes

well into the local masses," said Biswajit Padhi, Station CEO, Radio Swayamshakti at Khariar.

Community radios are low power radio broadcasting systems where the broadcasting is done for a very small region upto 30-50kms. These are meant to empower the local community with local information and are envisioned to be run by the local community without the target of earning high profits from the system.

These stations are granted license by the Union government for educational institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), charitable organisations and others.

Jald se jald apne PAN aur Aadhaar Card ko link karna zaroori hai.

Link karne ki aakhari taareekh hai, June 30, 2021.

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4.25L tonne rabi crops procured from 14 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The state Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department minister Ranendra Pratap Swain Sunday directed officials to strictly implement Covid guidelines during the procurement of rabi crops which started from May 1 to June 30.

The department has so far procured around 4.25 lakh metric tonne rabi crops from 14 districts.

The state government asked the Collectors to start registration of farmers who are willing to sell surplus paddy under the price support system.

Till now 2.31 lakh farmers have registered themselves. The department has procured 4.25 lakh metric tonne rabi crop from 63,817 registered farmers till now at the cost of Rs 793 crore.

Balasore, Bargarh, Balangir, Boudh, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Puri, Rayagada, Sambalpur and Subarnapur are the 14 districts from where the rabi crops are procured.

Out of them Bargarh tops the list with 2.8 lakh metric tonne of rabi crop.



BALASORE, BARGARH, BALANGIR, BOUDH, CUTTACK, JHARSUGUDA, KALAHANDI, MAYURBHANJ, NABARANGPUR, NUAPADA, PURI, RAYAGADA, SAMBALPUR AND SUBARNAPUR ARE THE 14 DISTRICTS FROM WHERE THE RABI CROPS ARE PROCURED

Very soon the crop collection will start in three other districts which are Koraput, Khurda and Jajpur.

The government has decided to procure paddy (rabi crop) from 17 districts which participated in the decentralised procurement through Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation. Farmers, who wish to deliver their surplus paddy to government at MSP during the ensuing rabi procurement season, are required to register with their societies. Prior registration is a mandatory process, said a letter issued by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department.

With the government giving maximum emphasis on registration

of sharecroppers, they are required to obtain consent letter from the landholder and deposit it along with the registration form. A sharecropper has to submit the mobile number and a copy of the Aadhaar card of his landowner. There is no other way for a sharecropper to apply for registration except submitting the landowner's consent, the letter said.

BARGARH TOPS THE LIST WITH 2.8 LAKH METRIC TONNE



Carpenters constructing chariot wheels at Rath Yard in Puri, Sunday

OP PHOTO

'IRREGULARITIES' IN AIIMS-BHUBANESWAR

Rights activist seeks NHRC intervention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: A rights activist Sunday lodged a plea before the National Human Rights Commission seeking intervention into the 'denial of treatment' to serious non-Covid patients at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. The activist, Pardipta Kumar Nayak has urged the commission to direct the Ministry of Health to inquire the matter thoroughly and submit an action taken report (ATR) regarding the irregularities at AIIMS hospital for the benefit of critical patients thronging to the hospital daily.

According to the applicant, the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar was established in 2012 in order to provide high standard health service to lower income group, poor and common people of the state and neighbouring states. He alleged that the administration of AIIMS has shut down its outdoor facilities during pandemic while other hospitals including both state government and private ones continue to provide services to the non-Covid patients. "The management of AIIMS hospital is informing the patients that they do not have ICU beds, oxygen cylinders, ventilators and referring patients to SCB in Cuttack or any other private hospital. Recently, hundreds of patients have been denied by AIIMS, Bhubaneswar," claimed Nayak.

FUGITIVE RAPE ACCUSED ARRESTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The Commissionerate Police Sunday finally arrested a person accused of sexually abusing a nine-year-old minor girl in 2018. The accused iden-

tified as Pramod Kumar Singh is a resident of Damana area under Chandrasekharpur police limits.

According to sources, the victim, who used to work as a maid at Singh's residence, was raped by Singh when his family members were away to at-

tend some programme June 2, 2018. Later, the parents of the victim lodged a case (228/18) with the police in this regard. Singh later absconded after the incident since 2018.

The accused was sent to judicial custody by the court Sunday.

State records 9,541 fresh cases, 33 deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 30: As many as 9,541 more people tested positive for Covid-19, taking the tally to 7,56,684 Sunday, while 33 fresh fatalities raised the toll to 2,719, a Health department official said.

Of the 9,541 new cases, 5,343 were reported from quarantine centres and the rest were detected through contact tracing, the official said.

Accordingly, the number of active cases rose to 95,266, said the official, adding that the coastal state's positivity rate currently stands at 6.47 per cent.

Khurda, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the maximum number of new cases at 1,342, followed by Cuttack at 716, Mayurbhanj at 695, Sundargarh at 595, Angul at 562 and Puri at 528, added the official.

Only three of Odisha's thirty districts reported less than 100 fresh cases each—Deogarh (61), Gajapati (69) and Nuapada (50).

Taking to Twitter, the Health department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of thirty three Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Angul district accounted for five deaths, followed by Boudh, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur and



Representational image

Sundargarh at three each. Two fatalities each were registered in Deogarh, Cuttack, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Keonjhar and Khurda and one each at Ganjam, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada.

This apart, 53 other Covid-19 patients in the state have died due to comorbidities.

As many as 11,513 people recuperated Saturday, raising the number of those who have recovered from the highly infectious disease to 6,58,646.

Over 1.17 crore sample tests have

been conducted so far, including 66,057 Saturday

Meanwhile, Western Odisha Development Council chairman Asit Tripathy said that a freighter carrying oxygen cylinders has arrived in Bhubaneswar from China.

"Honourable CM has directed no patient shall suffer for want of oxygen in Odisha," Tripathy tweeted.

Odisha supplies oxygen to around 15 states, but its administration lacks adequate number of cylinders to ferry the life-sav-

ODISHA SUPPLIES OXYGEN TO AROUND 15 STATES, BUT ITS ADMINISTRATION LACKS ADEQUATE NUMBER OF CYLINDERS TO FERRY THE LIFE-SAVING GAS TO ITS PEOPLE

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ing gas to its people.

Tripathy, however, said more than 14,000 cylinders have been added to its existing stock in the past two months, and the situation will only get better with today's import.

ULBs to extend waste mgmt facilities to nearby rural areas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: In a bid to extend the efficient waste management components to rural areas, the state government, Sunday, instructed Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to provide their waste treatment and processing facilities to the nearest Gram Panchayats (GPs).

In a letter to all Collectors, Municipal Commissioners, Block Development Officers and other officials, DK Singh, Principal Secretary, instructed all ULBs to facilitate GPs within 20 kms of their radius with facilities such as Fecal Sludge Management (FSM), Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and Plastic Waste Management (PWM).

"Odisha has emerged as a leader in FSM in urban areas. Management of fecal sludge and plastic waste are key components in solid and liquid waste management in both rural and urban Odisha. Since creation of a separate facility in rural areas is not feasible due to scale and size, it has been decided to leverage these facilities (FSTP & MRF) in the ULBs to cater to the requirements of



these areas," the letter from Panchayati Raj department read.

The ULBs were also asked to identify the GPs within the decided radius and to categorise them into three groups of 10, 15 and 20 kilometres distance. The categorisation was made to fix user charges as per distance for usage of FSM plants.

The state government mentioned that for 3 KLD (Kilo Litre per Day) cesspool vehicle category, the GPs falling under 10 kms proximity will have to pay Rs 270 along with the base price of the cesspool inside the ULB. Meanwhile, GPs between 15 and 20 kms distance with the ULBs will have to pay Rs 450 and

Rs 630 respectively along with the base price of the cesspool inside the ULB.

Similarly, for 1 KLD cesspool vehicles the rates have been set as Rs 180 plus the base price of the cesspool inside the ULB for GPs have 10 kms proximity with the ULB and Rs 270 and Rs 450 for GPs having distance of 15 and 20 kms respectively with the base price of the cesspool inside the ULB.

Moreover, suggesting on efficient plastic management, the state government said that the GPs are responsible to collect segregated dry waste and transport it to the MRFs to the tagged ULBs. While GPs were instructed to bear the cost of transportation of segregated dry waste to the MRFs, they are to maintain interim storage sheds during the time of transportation.

It can be mentioned that Odisha presently has 45 FSMs functioning in different ULBs and many others are under construction. Sources said that convergence on FSSM has been initiated on a pilot basis in Balasore municipality, tagging nearby 90 GPs for availing facilities of fecal sludge management available with the ULB.



FRESH YIELD

Workers unload pumpkins from a truck at Chhatra Bazar in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Tribal museum virtual tour sheds light on Juangs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: The ST & SC Development department has recently started the virtual tour of Odisha State Tribal Museum every Sunday in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main attraction for this Sunday tour was the life and culture of the Juang tribe of Gonasika hills in Keonjhar district, said Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) Director AB Ota.

Juang Pirh located in the Gonasika hills is believed to be the original abode of the Juang community. The Juangs are settled in the hills and valleys of Keonjhar and plains of Angul and Dhenkanal districts. Farming, shifting cultivation, hunting, food gathering are major occupations of Juang community.

The Juang tribe is one of the primitive tribal groups of Odisha. The word 'Juang' means 'Sons of man'. In the past, members of Juang community were being called 'Pattuas' for wearing leaves. The community can be broadly divided into two sections: Hill Juangs and



Members of Juang community

Plain Juangs.

The Hill Juangs are confined to the hill ranges of Keonjhar and Pallahara whereas the Plain Juangs have settled across the plains of Dhenkanal and Keonjhar districts. The Hill Juangs are still depending upon shifting cultivation while the Plain Juangs have taken up settled agriculture.

The Juang Pirh of Keonjhar district is believed to be the home-

land of Juang tribe. Those who live in this area are known as 'Thaniya' (original settlers), while those who have migrated to the plains of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts are called 'Bhagudia'. The Juang villages are grouped under four Pirhs named as Satkhanda, Jharkhand, Kathua and Rebena.

Each Pirh is led by a tribal chief designated as Sardar. Another important feature of Juang society is

its traditional dormitories for the youths, popularly known as Majang or Mandaghar.

The Majang, a rectangular house in the centre of the village, serves as a community house for the youth, court house for the elders, guest house for

visitors, cooperative store for storage of grains, place for keeping musical instruments, venue for common rituals, cultural centre and museum of art and craft.

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5 years on, construction of bridge on Lanth river still incomplete

POST NEWS NETWORK

Saintala, May 30: Five years have elapsed since the start of construction of a bridge on Lanth river under this block in Bolangir district began. However, the construction is yet to be completed, a report said. Work to build the bridge has been suspended for a long time now, without any indication when it will begin again. Lanth river incidentally is a distributary of Tel river which is a tributary of Mahanadi.

More than five years back, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for the bridge. However, still it remains unfinished. This has sparked resentment among the residents. They apprehend that this year there is hardly any chance that construction will be completed as monsoon is about to set in the state.

Left with no option, the residents continue to use the dry riverbed to travel to the other side of the river during summer. They are however worried that they will not be able to do so with the advent of monsoon.

Reports said residents of Ambapali, Durguripali, Kansar, Ghunasar under Saintala block and Belakhandi and Rishida of neighbouring Kalahandi district have to cross the river daily for earning their livelihood. In summer, going to the other side is not a problem as the river dries up for four months of the year. However, the remaining eight months crossing the river becomes a difficult proposition as it is filled to the brim.

The Odisha government con-



Residents of Ambapali, Durguripali, Kansar, Ghunasar under Saintala block and Belakhandi and Rishida of neighbouring Kalahandi district have to cross the river daily for earning their livelihood

The Odisha government considering the difficulties of the people decided to construct a bridge on the river at Badipada in the block under Biju Setu Yojana scheme

Sradhakhar Das, junior engineer of Rural Development department said that a fresh tender of ₹8 crore has been floated which will be awarded to a new agency once the Covid-19 induced lockdown is lifted

sidering the difficulties of the people decided to construct a bridge on the river at Badipada in the block under Biju Setu Yojana scheme. Later Patnaik laid the foundation of the bridge to be built at a cost of ₹14 crore under the supervision of Rural Development department.

A consultancy agency in Kalahandi district received the contract and started construction in January 15, 2016. Even though the deadline for finishing the work was set for May 14, 2018, it remained incomplete. The agency only put up three slabs and was yet to start works on the three columns. The Odisha government then floated fresh tenders for construction of the bridge as the agency failed to complete the work despite being given more than three years.

Sradhakhar Das, junior engineer of Rural Development department said that a fresh tender of ₹8 crore has been floated which will be

awarded to a new agency once the Covid-19 induced lockdown is lifted. The new agency will do the remaining work and we are hoping that the construction will be completed within the next few months.

Notably, residents in 2019 had staged a road blockade on National Highway-26 demanding that construction of the bridge be completed before the start of the rainy season. They relented after the then Titilagarh sub-collector reached the spot and assured them that their demand will be looked into. However, since then there has not been any development.

Similarly, Rural Development and Labour Minister Susant Singh during an official trip to Saintala, had promised to the locals that construction of the bridge will be completed quickly. However, despite a host of promises the bridge still remains a pipe dream for the residents.

Black marketing of O₂ cylinders busted in Silk City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 30: Acting on a tip-off, a joint raid conducted by drug inspector and the police unearthed black marketing of oxygen cylinders in Silk City. A total of 10 oxygen cylinders were seized from a shop called 'Sree Surgical' here, Sunday. Officials later informed that the 10 cylinders had been stored for black marketing and were to be sold to family members of Covid-19 patients at hefty prices.



A health official informed that the need for oxygen cylinders has increased drastically as suspected Covid-19 patients try to procure those in advance to overcome the fall in oxygen levels. The unscrupulous and dishonest traders taking advantage of the situation are selling the cylinders at a very high price. A 10-litre cylinder is being sold for prices ranging between ₹25,000 to ₹30,000, the official said.

The raid took place after the drug inspector Debashis Kalo received a complaint regarding black marketing of oxygen cylinders in the city. Kalo informed his Chhatrapur counterpart Lalit Kumar Sahu and SDPO Bishnu Prasad Pati following which a joint team of drug department officials and police raided the store and unearthed the wrongdoing. Kalo informed similar raids will take place in other places of the city.

IN FULL SWING



Repairing of a saline embankment which was washed away during cyclonic storm Yaas following its landfall near Bahanaga coast in Balasore, is in full swing, Sunday

Relief ops hit by floods

Several villages in Bhadrak district goes without relief

POST NEWS NETWORK

Padmapur, May 30: The unseasonal floods in Mantei, Kanchudi and Dhala rivers flowing in Basudevpur block of Bhadrak district has increased the woes of the cyclone Yaas-hit people in the riparian villages, a report said.

The rivers are in spate due to cyclonic storm-induced heavy rainfalls which lashed the district. As a result, Agapur, Saratarpur, Sanandpur in Padmapur panchayat, Kusunbinda, Kanjikhia, Kalyanpur in Sugo panchayat, Dadhibanapur, Jagannathprasad, Mishrapur, Mamadila, Korbatia, Chhatrapur in Jagannathprasad panchayat have been submerged in floodwaters.

Similarly, Charbatia, Chhatrapada, Kalidaspur in Balimeda panchayat,



Khantakuada, Kuali, Kashipur, Andola, Goapalpur in Andola panchayat, Sribatshapur, Jivanpur in Lakshmidaspur panchayat and Havelisahi, Nandapatna villages in Balamunda panchayat have also been inundated. There are no im-

mediate signs of the water receding.

Farmlands in these villages have been submerged with three to four feet of water overflowing on them. The water level has failed to recede in these rivers as the sea surface continues to remain rough since the calamity struck the coast.

The people are having a harrowing time due to lack of essentials while government help has failed to reach them. Hundreds of kutcha houses have collapsed in these areas while the revenue department is yet to make an assessment of the losses.

The motor boat which is usually used to provide relief for rescue operations is lying defunct near the Mantei riverbank. As a result, relief and rescue works have been hit in the areas.

Illegal felling of trees sparks resentment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Odagaon, May 30: Mindless felling of over 50 large trees on the pretext of road construction under rural job programme Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has sparked resentment and tension in Nayagarh district, a report said.

It has been alleged that the contractor has cut down over 50 trees, each more than hundred years old for the construction of a road from Dandor to Kural under Odagaon block and tehsil in the district without the permission of officials. The trees were cut down using heavy machines four to five days after the start of construction of the road. Locals alleged that unless

action is taken quickly, 30 more trees will be mowed down within the next two to three days.

Residents have expressed their wrath over cutting of so many old trees. The road once finished will connect this place with State Highway-21. It is being constructed close to a temple built near Kusumi nullah.

The residents alleged that the trees had been protecting them from heat and rain for generations and kept the environment pollution free. The trees were home to varieties of birds and it helped in a creating a nice ambience. However, with the trees gone, the area will wear the look of a desert, they said.

Sources said that the company



started soil examination for the road but has not put up any information plaque describing the details about the project. The project director of the district rural development agency (DRDA) and the

assistant engineer of the block are not aware about the wrongdoing as they have not visited the site yet to oversee the work.

On the other hand, the contractor and his henchmen have cut down several medicinal and fruit-bearing trees in the locality, without informing government officials, they said.

It is being alleged that the contractor is threatening the locals who are opposing the cutting of trees. A farmer who lost 10 decimal of land for the road project was forced to give his consent for tree felling out of fear. The farmer also alleged that an open well which has been a source of drinking water for generations has been closed by the contractor.

A representative of Kural sarpanch denied having any knowledge about the tree felling by the construction company.

Sudhir Kumar Parida, revenue inspector of Komand said that he will visit the spot and take necessary action. Sarat Kumar Mallick, assistant engineer, Odagaon block termed the tree felling as 'illegal'. He said trees are usually cut with the joint permission of Forest and Revenue departments. He said he will visit the spot and seize the chopped logs and take action against the guilty.

Amrit Kumar Sahu, Odagaon forest ranger also termed felling of old trees as illegal. He assured that a probe will be conducted and promised strong action against the guilty.

NHRC moved over police assault on 'Dharitri' scribe



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaipur, May 30: A case has been filed in the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over the police attack on Dharitri's Puri correspondent Dattatreya Nayak, a report said.

The petition filed by defendant Bhajaman Biswal has been admitted (case no-8500/IN/2021) for hearing by the national rights body. In his petition, Biswal has prayed before the NHRC to direct the state government to pay ₹3,00,000 compensation to the scribe through its Chief Secretary for violation of his human rights, life and freedom.

Biswal has prayed that the compensation amount should be deducted from the salary of the police officials involved in the attack

on the scribe. The heinous assault on Nayak has infringed on his life, freedom, and dignity and is misuse of power of the police officials for which criminal proceedings may be initiated against the concerned police officials and stringent action to be initiated against them, the plea said.

Biswal has mentioned that Nayak was discharging his professional duty without fearing for his life during the Covid-19 pandemic when the police officials attacked him. The Odisha government has pronounced the scribes as Covid warriors who are working towards the protection and welfare of the citizens. The state government has freed media from the restrictions of Covid-19 induced lockdowns but the Puri police chose to attack him, Biswal stated.

₹63 Lakh embezzlement: Tehsildar levels charge against senior revenue assistant

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dabugaon, May 30: A senior revenue assistant (SRA) working at Dabugaon tehsil office has been detained by the local police for allegedly misappropriating government funds in Nabarangpur.

According to a source, the tehsildar of Dabugaon brought charges over alleged financial irregularities to the tune of ₹63.62 lakh against the SRA working in the same office. Based on an FIR lodged by tehsildar Sandhya Somarath against revenue assistant Chandana Mondal police conducted a probe. During the probe, she was detained,

a senior police official said.

Mondal put up a challan after making a correction of the billed amount. She overwrote the amount May 24 and presented it before Sandhya for her approval. Suspecting foul play and noticing overwriting, Sandhya asked Mondal to update the bank passbook of the office.

The assistant however, was intentionally avoiding her visit to the bank for updating the passbook. She was continuously stating that she would not like to visit a crowded place as there was heavy rush at the bank. Later, the tehsildar informed her higher-ups about the matter.

BEAUTIFICATION DRIVE



An artist making a wall painting as part of a beautification drive at Sorada in Ganjam district by the local civic body

Angul's rural areas see surge in Covid cases

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, May 30: The surge in Covid-19 cases in rural areas of eight panchayats including Boinda of Kishorenagar block in Angul district has been a cause of concern for the administration.

As per the information available, a total of 281 residents of Nunukapashi panchayat tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 40 days. The panchayat has so far reported one fatality. During the same period, Boinda panchayat reported 276 cases. The figures for other panchayats are: Handapa (269, seven deaths), Jambunali (88), Luhamunda (82, two deaths), Kataranga (81), Kanteikoila (77) and Bileiniali (70, one death).

Boinda is known as one of the prominent business hubs in Angul district. Small-time businessmen and farmers from nearby villages come to this town every day. They have been blamed for the spread of the pandemic. Meanwhile, the panchayat administrations have imposed a seven-day shutdown in various villages of Nunukapashi, Boinda, Jambunali, Luhamunda, Handapa and Kanteikolia panchayats. In order to avoid community transmission in, residents of 22 villages with the support of the administration are enforcing the shutdown rule



A micro-containment zone

Boinda is known as one of the prominent business hubs in Angul district. Small-time businessmen and farmers from nearby villages come to this town every day. They have been blamed for the spread of the pandemic

The local administration is taking steps to create awareness among the villagers. Police on the other hand, are keeping an eye on violators. They have sealed many shops for violating Covid-19 guidelines

strictly. They have erected bamboo fences at the entry points, restricting entry of outsiders into the villages.

In view of the situation in the rural areas, the local administration is taking steps to create awareness among the villagers. Police on the other hand, are keeping an eye on violators. They have sealed many shops for violating Covid-19 guidelines.

Panic-stricken villagers urged the administration to take stringent action against those who are endangering the lives of others by not following the guidelines.

"The cases are increasing in villages because infected persons instead of staying

at home, roaming in markets. They should realise that it is difficult for poor villagers to pay hospital bills or even undergo home quarantine. The police should take stringent action against Covid-19 violators," observed Amat Sahu, a resident of Kanteikolia panchayat. Echoing the same, Anil Kumar Sahu of Handapa panchayat alleged that infected persons are not following the home quarantine rules. They are moving around in villages without masks. They should be punished, Sahu said.

When contacted, Dr Saroj Kumar Nanda of Boinda CHC said the situation in rural areas is deteriorating by the day because

infected patients are hardly taking medication or following guidelines.

"We are keeping a watchful eye on those who are roaming outside without any work. We will be stricter in coming days," said Arun Kumar Panda, OIC, Boinda outpost. When asked, Kishorenagar tehsildar Shantiswarup Mishra admitted that the number of Covid-19 patients in the block is increasing. "We are taking measures to contain the spread. We are raid-

ing shops flouting Covid-19 guidelines and sealing them. We are also creating awareness among the people on how the disease can be kept at bay. We are also requesting infected persons not to step out during home isolation period," he informed.

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Notice

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in, respective Subsidiary Company ([MCL](http://www.mahanadicoal.in), www.mahanadicoal.in), CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> in addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal <https://gem.gov.in>."

R-5057

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, NAYAGARH
E-Mail: nayagarhrw2@yahoo.in
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works

Identification No. Online Tender / 01/ RWD-II / 2021-22

No. O-222- 1. Name of the work: Construction of Road works. 2. Total number of works: 9 Nos. 3. Approx. estimated cost : Varies from Rs.0.88 lakh to Rs.53.10 lakh. 4. Class of contractor: D, C, B & A Class of contractor. 5. Period of completion: Sl. No. 1 & 3 (3 Months), Sl. No. 4 to 7 (2 Months), Sl. No. 8 & 9 (1 Month). 6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender Online for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of opening of tender in O/o E.R.W. Divn-II, Nayagarh	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Nayagarh	Online Tender/ 01/ RWD-II/ 2021-22	07.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	20.06.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.	19.06.2021 upto 1.00 P.M.	21.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	21.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M. for Sl. No.2 to 9 21.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M. for Sl. No.1

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
OIPR-25106/11/0001/2122

Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Nayagarh

The fly that touches honey cannot use its wings; so too the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.

SRI AUROBINDO



Islands in Hot Water

Lakshadweep islands across 12 atolls, closest to Kerala, constitute India's least populated Union Territory with a population size of 65,000 living in only 10 of its 36 islands. It is now making national headlines for a series of controversial proposals mooted by Praful K Patel, the administrator of the UT of Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, who has been given the additional charge of Lakshadweep following the death of Dineswar Sharma in December, 2020. The people there are seething with anger as they find in the proposals a sinister attack on their culture, freedom and constitutionally guaranteed rights. They appeal to their lone MP from Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and MPs of Kerala to send a petition to the President urging him to restrain the administration from attempting to rip apart their social fabric. The administration has predictably claimed the proposals aim at ensuring safety and well-being of the residents and promoting the islands as a tourist destination like the Maldives.

Obviously, the administrator, a former minister in the Narendra Modi-cabinet of Gujarat, would not have gone ahead with his ill-conceived and insidious proposals without clearance from the top. The suspicion gains ground because the proposed measures follow a set pattern of communal polarisation and benefitting the superrich that characterise the governance of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre.

The administration seeks to ban the slaughter of cow, calf, bull and buffalo without a certificate from a competent authority. It prohibits the sale, transport and storage of beef and beef products with penalties that include a jail term up to one year and a fine of Rs 10,000. The communal intent is too transparent. For Moslems, the measure is a direct infringement on their culture and eating habits. The BJP's crusade against beef eating is a well known tactic for communal polarisation tried before in UP and other parts of the country with literally deadly consequences.

There is the abhorrent proposal under the Draft Panchayat Regulation 2021 that aims to bar people with more than two children from becoming members of gram panchayats. The regulation does not disqualify those, who have already more than two children, provided they do not have further children after the rule comes into effect.

The proposal to allow liquor to be served at resorts on inhabited islands has triggered hostile reaction from the residents. Currently, prohibition is in place on all the inhabited islands with liquor served only at resorts on the uninhabited Bangaram island. The fig leaf for the new proposal is, as Collector S Asker Ali clarified, that liquor permits would be given only to resorts for tourists and not for locals. The move, it is feared, will lead to a proliferation of liquor sales on the island, which had been observing near-prohibition until now. Interestingly, Patel was Minister of Finance in the Gujarat government headed by Narendra Modi earlier. In his home state, he was a staunch supporter of prohibition.

Moslems constitute the majority of the population on these islands, nearly 62,000, according to the last Census.

Similarly, the administration has prepared a draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR) to oversee development of towns on the islands with sweeping changes in the way land can be acquired and utilised. It talks of declaration of 'planning areas' and constitution of 'planning and development authorities' for preparing a land use map and register, ostensibly for large projects. The large infrastructure and tourism projects have the potential to destabilise the ecology, while the draft gives powers to the administration to remove small landholdings of Scheduled Tribe residents.

The worst part of the whole exercise is the provision for Lakshadweep Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation that accords powers to the state to detain a person for up to a year without legal representation from six months to a year to prevent him from "acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order". This is being done when Lakshadweep has the record of being a UT with one of the lowest crime rates in the country.

The horrifying clause of detention without legal representation has of late become a favourite tool of the Centre to shove reprehensible, anti-people measures down the throat of the people denying them legal redress if they protest against government's illegal acts. The controversial farm laws have one such provision to deprive farmers of legal remedy should they find themselves cheated by private operators in agri-marketing of the legitimate prices for their produce.

In the name of introducing draconian measures against anti-socials disturbing law and order, the administration seems to be arming itself to stifle all voices of protest against the new proposals.

Significantly, for one full year Lakshadweep did not record any case of COVID-19 thanks to stringent quarantine protocols and testing of inbound travellers. But, last December when Patel assumed charge as administrator, the pandemic standard operating procedures (SOPs) were diluted by removing mandatory quarantine for travellers at Kochi and Kavaratti. Instead, anyone with a negative RT-PCR certificate issued in the previous 48 hours could travel to Lakshadweep. The administration said the SOPs were changed as per Union Home Ministry rules to allow reopening of the economy. The result is that till May 28 Lakshadweep has reported over 7,300 COVID cases and 28 deaths.

The administrator of Lakshadweep appears to be bent on destroying an oasis of peace with an insidious agenda.

WISDOM CORNER

It is an ironic habit of human beings to run faster when we have lost our way.

ROLLO MAY

Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive push. A smile. A world of optimism and hope. A 'you can do it' when things are tough.

RICHARD M. DEVOS

Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

WORDSWORTH

New Puritans

We're hardly short of names with new on the front. They're intended to suggest that an old idea has been revitalised, often alas only to the extent of putting new wine in old bottles. In recent decades we've had the New Age, the New Romantics, New Men, the New World Order, and the British New Lads and New Labour. And in only one sense is New Puritans a new tag, since there have been new puritans for decades, with or without capitalisation, for example as the name for a sexual backlash to AIDS in the USA in the eighties. But these British New Puritans are newer than any other new puritans. It's the name for an artistic movement founded by Nicholas Blincoe and Matt Thorne, whose founding philosophy appeared in an anthology last autumn, called — with what you may feel is a touch of hubris — All Hail the New Puritans. The rules were made explicit in a ten-point manifesto: writers must be dedicated to narrative, eschew poetic licence, aim at clarity, and have a moral purpose. In other words — or at least the words of Nicholas Blincoe — New Puritan fiction is fiction in "its purest and most immediate form". The movement has come in for a fair amount of derision; in the nature of artistic movements that suddenly burst on the scene, it's hard to be sure how long it will survive. Like the Dogme filmmakers, the New Puritans seem to be guided by the idea that because something is simpler in expression it is also purer in content (Independent on Sunday, Sept. 2000). But instant movements tend to be unreliable, and the New Puritans were accused of being "anti-literary" and opportunistic (Guardian, May 2000).

THE NUDGE APPROACH

FOCUS PUBLIC TRANSPORT



Frequent travellers are often influenced by status quo bias; they don't easily change the mode of transportation and tend to stick to the default local taxi service. To change such tendency the Odisha government may make the "Mo Bus" service a default option for government employees

Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, is an emerging urban centre, and it finds its name among the world's top-20 global smart city ranking. Its nearby city, Cuttack often known as the sister city of Bhubaneswar, was the British time capital. Cultural legacy of Cuttack vis-à-vis the smart emerging urban culture in Bhubaneswar often complement each other and together they are branded as twin cities of Odisha. Amidst all the positive talk, people often find it difficult to travel smoothly between these two cities. Lack of public mobility intertwined with crowded private buses make travelling experience even worse.

Traffic congestion has a huge negative externality; it reduces productivity of commuters by eating up their time and increases noise and air pollution. Much of the traffic congestion arises from the fact that individuals often use private vehicles for their work. Travellers of the twin cities also use private auto rickshaws and buses for intercity movement. Besides they often face the wrath of price monopoly being fixed by auto and bus associations - rates are exorbitantly high and the travel is not safe. Accidents, thefts, roadside robbery and even rape were reported in the past.

Realising the problem of transportation, in 2018, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched a new city bus service, titled "Mo Bus" meaning "my bus" and with extraordinary enthusiasm he took a ride from the airport to his secretariat. His effort is indeed reflected as a great policy towards "moving people, not vehicles". The cheap and safe travel was expected to undercut the monopoly price of private operators. The government has made this deliberate effort to reduce congestion in the twin cities. From purely economic prospective, public transport has huge positive externality. Now daily commuters find "Mo Bus" service as a safe and cheap alternative and expect that it will break the monopoly of private taxi and bus associations. "Mo Bus" service is available in every half an hour following a strict timetable. The service is hygienic, comfortable with air-conditioning and music facility.

The buses are also equipped with CCTV camera, Wi-Fi, online ticketing systems, GPS and a smartphone application. Automated fare collection system through the smart Odyssey City Card make travel more convenient and commuters can plan their journey and book seats in advance using a mobile app.

In the past too, the government had taken several such good steps in the public utility area, yet the take up rate among the public was not encouraging. Therefore, this service should not become inefficient like others. It provides a case for the government to think as to how to make "Mo Bus" service more user-friendly and use insights from behavioural economics to nudge people to use public transport more often.

Thaler and Sunstein in their famous book "Nudge" explain that a nudge "is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives." In simple words nudge is a non-intrusive intervention that directly

acts on choice architecture to guide people towards a desirable action. Governments' intervention using nudge in public transport is not uncommon.

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) using a real-time bus information system, "CTA Bus Tracker" positively nudged people to increase CTA bus ridership. Similarly, off-peak discount experiment in Hong Kong has resulted into less crowding of Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway (Halvorsen et al. 2016).

Frequent travellers are often influenced by status quo bias; they don't easily change the mode of transportation and tend to stick to the default local taxi service. To change such tendency the Odisha government may make the "Mo Bus" service a default option for government employees. It can provide monthly travel passes instead of providing transport allowance to employees. In order ensure smooth revenue collection, use of smart Odyssey Card should be made the default mode of payment.

Commuters often maximise their utility through mental cal-

culations, using three key choices, namely, shortest route, cheapest facility and quality of service. They often fail to make the best choice due to limited cognitive ability. In psychology, attention is often viewed as a scarce resource. If you are new to town, or in a vacation to a new city or it is raining, then processing all the travel information for optimal decision is not possible. To overcome this cognitive barrier among twin city travellers, the government must use "salient information" as a nudge tool to motivate people for getting into "Mo Bus". Railway stations, bus terminals, airport and prominent crowded places in the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar should use electronic display, mentioning walk time to nearest "Mo Bus" point. This will drive people to consider public bus service before stepping into a taxi or calling an auto rickshaw.

Another important issue that affects people's choice for using public transport against their own private vehicle is the "sunk cost bias". It affects the mid-frequency user category who have already invested money on own vehicle. They often feel that they are "wasting" own resources by choosing public transport. What is on hand is more valuable than what would be acquired in future. This tendency is often referred to as "loss aversion". The Government of Odisha may encourage such people to use "Mo Bus" service by providing "try-before-you-buy" facility. The pre-paid smart Odyssey Card may have advance credit facility up to 20 per cent of travel cost, which can be used by a traveller during payment.

Apart from the above behavioural economics tools, the government may also use pure economic tools like providing free travel facility to school children and senior citizens for making "Mo Bus" service a best transport option in the twin cities of Odisha.

The author is an IRS officer working with the Ministry of Finance, Government of India and a Li Ka Shing Scholar from the National University of Singapore. Views are personal.



Susanta Mishra

GOVERNMENTS' INTERVENTION USING NUDGE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS NOT UNCOMMON

SPECTRUM COVID-19

An equation beyond human comprehension

It doesn't matter if you are a theist or an agnostic, a scientist or a spiritual master, a doctor or an astrologer, literate or not. Not a single soul can provide any promising explanation to the mind numbing amount of deaths occurring due to the pandemic that has spanned over one and a half years now. Scientists and doctors are toiling day in, day out to enumerate possible risk factors, newer symptoms, treatment protocols, vaccination strategies and preventive tools and rejecting theories as fast as accepting them yet no one seems to have a clue.

Luckily we have established the mode of transmission with some certainty and have a basic framework of vaccination schedules and treatment options. Even then it is almost confusing as to how, not all of the deaths can be attributed to some definite cause. There is no denying that medical science is a science of exceptions, however it is heartbreakingly interesting to note how the game of immunity changes from individual to individual and there's just no one bracket of medical his-

tory that can be used as an example. We have nonagenarians beating the disease yet teenagers succumbing to the same. When minutely studied, we also find cases without severe comorbidities getting critically ill, requiring mechanical ventilation which sometimes is due to delay in treatment among other reasons. A possible explanation for this is an undiagnosed chronic disease or unidentified long term immunosuppression however as a whole the picture is very grim.

Covid-19 has managed to wreak havoc, destroying families entirely with no one but a toddler left at the mercy of neighbours and even recovered patients contracting a second infection. It doesn't stop there. It is followed by the horror of fungal infection, cardiac compromise and other forms of dreadful complications. No matter who claims to completely cure the disease with their herbal concoction or raise immunity with some homemade cocktail of vitamins, it is imperative to understand that we must trust the experts in the field and not doubt or unnecessarily

question every protocol that is being put up for public benefit.

Medicine is essentially a science. Science is about discovering. It builds on trial and rejection. We must have patience and faith. Besides, we must discourage self-treatment and neglect for our own benefit. There is nothing that can change the scenario overnight. No amount of infrastructure, no government and no healthcare personnel can just conjure a trick up their sleeve and save the world. It will take time. It will also, unfortunately take more lives, because this is a cosmic calculation. An equation beyond human comprehension. Probably, a predestined mass destruction of this beautiful world. We are helpless.

It is not easy as families to endure the pain of separation from our dearest ones, as doctors do slowly see patients die in front of us, as policymakers do practically have fruitlessly exhausted all our ideas, as human beings to just survive everyday in anticipation of death. It is taking a toll on each one of us. Living amid fear and anxiety every second of life is a pun-

ishment worse than death. In death there is peace, in living we suffer.

Therefore more than ever, now is the time to be hopeful. To be patient. To remind ourselves that there is light at the end of every tunnel and that this too shall pass. We must fight to survive. We must not give in. Our mind needs tending to. Please be gentle with yourself and those around you. This is the era of living as one. Humanity needs you. I know, you are grief stricken or probably tirelessly taking care of your near and dear ones, just remember to take care of yourself. We will overcome this. We are alive today. We must respect it: the power of now.

Until we have an effective solution and visible reduction in the situation, stay indoors, maintain social distancing, mask up and get vaccinated because let's not kid ourselves, no amount of faith is going to help if we are foolish. God helps those who help themselves.

The author is a doctor by profession and a writer by passion.



Dr Soumya Subhadarsini

NO AMOUNT OF FAITH IS GOING TO HELP IF WE ARE FOOLISH

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

Orissa POST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Periods don't stop

Sir, Periods don't stop just because there are lockdowns, cyclones or any other form of calamity or pandemic. However, the manufacturing units that are in the business of making affordable sanitary pads are facing disruption as successive lockdowns have slowed down, almost halted in fact, the process of importing raw materials. The sorry development has led to the shortage of affordable sanitary napkins across the country. This has caused millions of menstruating women to suffer, especially those belonging to the rural areas of India, as they couldn't access sanitary pads during the lockdowns. This is forcing many women to adopt unhygienic methods of managing their periods, which may give rise to other diseases. Therefore, both the Centre and the state governments should act swiftly to restore normalcy in the production of affordable sanitary pads. Otherwise, the gains made over the last decade in improving menstrual hygiene and empowering women in this field may be reversed.

Saipriya Senapati, CUTTACK

Unrealistic vaccine claim

Sir, Union Minister Prakash Javdekar has said that every Indian will be vaccinated by December, 2021. Is this humanly feasible, given the acute vaccine shortage and uncertainties on its procurement and the need to vaccinate the remaining 87 per cent of our population?

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

Pandemic's positive side

Sir, Amid the pandemic, humanity is sanely interrupted. A Maoist named Ganga Aaytha Korsa expired in hospital due to COVID. His relatives refused to accept the body, and the last rituals were performed by the Sukma (Chhattisgarh) police along with the help of health workers on Friday. Even in times like this, where families are refusing to touch their dear ones due to the fear of deadly infection, there are some righteous people who aren't even bound by blood, but for the sake of humanity coming forward to stand for those who are in need. It's quite wrong to think that the pandemic has only crippled us through various factors. It has also brought the best out of many. The frontline warriors are doing a fabulous task when it comes to serve humanity. They are simply spreading the message of 'service to mankind is service to God'.

Manoj Kumar Jena, CUTTACK

Why's Vasundhara walking on track parallel to BJP?



GROWING DIFFERENCES

The former chief minister is seen escaping the programmes scheduled by BJP workers and promoting the programmes being organised under her solo banner

A group called Vasundhara Raje Team 2023 actively running on Facebook since the last few months demanding Raje be the CM face was blocked recently

No matter if it is the question of distributing food and water in different parts of the state or attending the virtual party meetings, Raje and her team members are seen endorsing 'Brand Raje' in all these programmes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, May 30: Even during the pandemic times, former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje seems to be walking on a track parallel to the Bharatiya Janata Party, exposing her growing differences with the saffron party. She is seen escaping the programmes scheduled by BJP workers and promoting the programmes being organised under her solo banner.

No matter if it is the question of distributing food and water in different parts of the state or attending the virtual party meetings, Raje and her team members are seen endorsing 'Brand Raje' in all these programmes.

Recently Raje and team, with an aim to distribute food and water to the needy, launched a campaign 'Vasundhara Jan Raso' in different parts of the state in which neither the BJP symbol 'lotus' nor Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pictures were seen.

What raised eyebrows is the time chosen to launch this event as the saffron party is running a similar campaign across the nation called 'Seva Hi Sangathan' to celebrate the seven years - first term and two years of the second term - of the Modi government on the directions of BJP National President JP Nadda.

So what is the need for Raje starting this campaign under her own name during the pandemic, questioned a senior BJP worker.

As the aim and objective of both the programmes are the same, why are they being run under two different banners in the desert state, he questioned.

Friday MLA Kalicharan Saraf, a Raje loyalist, distributed food to the needy in Jaipur under Vasundhara Jan Raso. On the same day, MP Manoj Rajauriya also inaugurated this campaign in Karauli and distributed food packets to the needy.

In fact, Raje's campaign was recently launched in Sawai Madhopur too, but all camps had one fact in common - none of them had any BJP symbol or any picture of PM Modi or any other leader but Raje's picture was being seen at the centre.

Besides this effort of Raje to start her own campaign, there are other issues too being discussed in political circles, which include her continuous absence from the party office, her distance during the campaigning for the by-polls held on three seats recently in the state and her silence and distance on/ from attending party virtual video conferences.

Recently, BJP MLA Gautamlal Meena passed away and all MPs and MLAs attended a virtual meeting to pay tributes to the departed soul but Raje was absent from this meeting. A separate message was shared by her media team condoling the death of Meena.

In fact a group called Vasundhara Raje Team 2023 actively running on Facebook since the last few months demanding Raje be the CM face was blocked recently.

However, May 26, the group admin wrote on Facebook wall questioning if the group should be started again.

He also informed that the group was blocked for some special reasons. While the followers were seen questioning the reasons, many amongst them expressed their desire to restart the group.

Raje, these days, is attending virtual meetings of Jhalawad workers and is taking special care of those seats since she is the MLA while her son Dushyant Singh is MP.

Also, she is attacking Congress Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on the deteriorating law and order situation in Rajasthan, retweeting tweets of BJP National President JP Nadda. She is also quite vocal on all burning issues, giving indications that her silence on her sidelining should not be taken for granted and those thinking to write her off should change their thinking.

Maybe the BJP should take cognisance of the issue and intervene to heal this rift in the party as it gets going to win the 2023 polls, said a BJP state worker.

BJP state president Satish Poonia meanwhile said that Raje has been a senior party worker and we all respect her. It is the central leadership which can speak on all these issues for she is BJP national vice president, he added.

BJP leaders restive over Yogi's Covid mgmt

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES WERE FACING MASSIVE PUBLIC ANGER IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CONSTITUENCIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 30: Union minister Santosh Gangwar, MP Satyadev Pachauri, UP minister Brijesh Pathak, BJP MPs Kaushal Kishore and Rajendra Agarwal, MLAs Dinanath Bhaskar, Dalveer Singh, Lokendra Pratap Singh and Sanjay Pratap Jaiswal, MLC Rajkumar Agarwal.... the list goes on.

More and more BJP leaders are airing their resentment against the Yogi Adityanath government over its Covid management, rather mismanagement.

UP law minister Brijesh Pathak was the first to blow the lid off the state of affairs in the state when he wrote a letter to senior health officials, expressing his anguish on the stressed-out health facilities amid Covid surge last month.

In the one-page letter, Pathak, an MLA from Lucknow, lamented that he had received a frantic call from the residence of Yogesh Praveen, informing him that his condition was critical and needed an ambulance. However, the ambulance did not reach him and the historian died.

BJP MP Kaushal Kishore, who lost his elder brother to Covid, wrote to CM Yogi Adityanath, demanding action against Balarampur hospital and King George's Medical University doctors who have been 'ignoring' patients. He claimed in his letter that ventilators were not in working condition in these hospitals.

In another instance, BJP MP from Meerut, Rajendra Agarwal wrote to Adityanath, complaining about inadequate arrangements, especially lack of medical oxygen in the city.

Rajendra Agarwal stated in his letter that both government and private hospitals in Meerut are starting at an acute shortage of medical oxygen.

Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Labour Welfare Council and state minister Sunil Bharala, on the other hand, protested about the lack of beds, oxygen, and life-saving drugs in Meerut and asked Adityanath to directly intervene on behalf of Covid-19 patients.

BJP MLA from Badaun, Dharmendra Shukya, levelled serious allegations against the Badaun Medical College and sought a probe into the matter.

Another BJP MLA, Dinanath Bhaskar from Bhadohi, sent a letter to the CM seeking an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the death of a local BJP leader Lal Bahadur Maurya. Bhaskar further said the doctors were abusive and told the patient to get "Yogi Adityanath to treat you."

The most disturbing case is that of BJP MLC Rajkumar Agarwal, who lost his son, Ashish, to Covid because the hospital did not allow him to give an oxygen cylinder to the patient who was gasping for breath. Agarwal wrote letters, complaining against the hospital but no action has been taken till date.

Talking to IANS, one of the BJP lawmakers, who wrote a letter to the CM, said, "If we had not put our letters on the social media, no one would have even known about them. The CM's office has not responded to even one letter. If this is the response to elected representatives, then we can understand the plight of the common man."

He said further, "Our voters now taunt us and we are helpless. If our own kin have died without proper treatment - and the government is not even apologetic about it - you can imagine what happens to the people."

A BJP legislator from a district adjoining Lucknow, said, "The situation is still explosive in the rural areas and the problem is that the CM depends on feedback from his Team 9. I have been seeking an appointment but have not got one yet. More people in my constituency are dying due to lack of treatment than of Covid. Even the death rate among non-Covid patients is escalating because all facilities for them have been shut out. Doctors are now demanding a negative Covid report before even treating fractures."

A two-term BJP MP, meanwhile, said that elected representatives were facing massive public anger in their respective constituencies.

"The problem is that we are helpless because the bureaucracy does not listen to us. We have informed our leaders about the sit-



uation but no one is doing anything. We have to face public anger and I do not know how this will reflect in the upcoming Assembly elections," he said.

He added that the panchayat elections and the BJP's poor performance in it were an indication of the things to come.

The deep disquiet in the BJP has now spread to its mentor organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

An RSS functionary, admitted that this was the first time in seven years that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image had been dented due to pandemic misman-

agement. "The middle class is the worst-hit - and now the virus is spreading to the villages. The pandemic could have an adverse impact on the poll outcome," he confessed.

BJP spokesman Ashok Pandey, however, downplayed the situation. "I admit that things were bad but now the chief minister is hitting the ground and setting things right. We have managed to control the situation and Covid is ebbing too," he said.

An MLA, on the other hand, said, "The damage is irreparable. Those who have lost their family members to mismanagement will not forget things in a hurry."

COVID AWARENESS



Police personnel take part in a rally to make people aware on COVID-19 safety guidelines, amid lockdown in Jaipur, Rajasthan, Sunday.

Sugar mills turn vax centres in west UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Muzaffarnagar (UP), May 30: After the Eidgah and the Chhota Imambara in Lucknow, it is now the sugar mills in western Uttar Pradesh that are turning into Covid vaccination centres.

Eight vaccination centres have come up in eight sugar mills in Muzaffarnagar alone. The local administration is using the record of cane farmers registered with the mill to reach out to them through SMSes. The service is usually used to disseminate information during the crushing season but it is now being used to invite farmers for vaccination.

According to Amit Singh, addi-



tional district magistrate, "Sugar mills have contact details of each farmer and it helps to reach out to them for vaccination. We send SMSes and ask the farmer to come on a fixed date and time at the sugar mill concerned for vaccination."

Besides this, the administration has started vaccination camps

at villages. Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Sadar area, Deepak Kumar said, "Not only vaccination but we are also conducting tests to detect Covid positive people in the rural area. The administration has also deployed vehicles to ferry the elderly to the vaccination centres."

Superstitions fuelling virus spread in rural Raj

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ajmer, May 30: Unfazed by the increasing spread of Covid-19 and related deaths, the rural folks in Rajasthan are relying on superstitions and crude practices of quackery, instead of health experts and medical help. Worse still, many people are even against vaccinations because they believe that the pandemic is a curse from God. Many others are influenced by misinformation.

May 27, Dhapu Bai Gemati (70) of Baghelo Ka Kheda village in Bhilwara district hid from her family for five hours after slipping away from the vaccination centre in Kiratpura. Passersby, who initially thought they had stumbled upon a body, found her hiding in the bushes. When they discovered her, she begged with folded hands asking not to be vaccinated, claiming it would kill her. She was shaking with fear when the sarpanch came and talked her into going back home. Her relatives said they will bring her back for vaccination after some counselling.

Even as the people of Dantra Dhani village in Bhilwara district believe that hanging shoes at the facades of their houses will ward off the "evil spirits", those in Lachchipura village of Ajmer are keeping campfires alive throughout the night to please their village deities in hope that they would protect their lives. Similar is the situation in Nagaur, Bhilwara, and Tonk districts of the state, where the villagers infected with Covid-19 are turning to priests and quacks. Because of the dearth, or even complete lack, of medical facilities in some of these areas, the administration is unable to create awareness among these people about seeking proper medical help in case of diseases.

Also, the faith in traditions is so deep-rooted in the minds of people that all efforts by the district administrations to prevent them from gathering for rituals and functions are proving fruitless.

In Sagariya village of Bhilwara district, more than 100 people gathered in the first week of May to perform the last rites of an 80-year-old man, defying the lockdown and flouting restrictions that specify

that no more than 20 persons should be present at a funeral. "The people fled when they saw us. We seized 15 vehicles from the spot," said Bhagirath Singh, the SHO of Shahpura police station.

However, the relatives of the deceased once again defied orders and organised a community feast later, which was also attended by a large gathering as a mark of unity.

A similar incident was reported from Ajmer, where some members of the Koli community organised a grand funeral in the city's Dhola Bhata area for a person who died of Covid-19. This, when on average, four Covid-related deaths are reported from the area every day.

"We had appealed to the people to desist from organising functions or rituals that involve the gathering of people, but in vain. Hence, we have requested the authorities to take stringent steps to prevent such gatherings," said Lalit Verma, a former corporator from Dhola Bhata.

A major hurdle before the Rajasthan government in containing the spread of the virus is the deep-rooted traditions and superstitions in the minds of rural people.

In Dantra village of Bhilwara district, a tribal area with only 3,000 residents, 28 Covid-related deaths were reported in a span of 30 days. Yet, the villagers refuse to take vaccinations against the virus they believe that hanging shoes on the facades of their houses would keep the "evil spirits" at bay, and that quacks, who often use crude practices such as searing their skins with hot iron rods, could cure the disease.

"We have launched an awareness programme and are trying to convince people to take medical help," said C.L. Sharma, the sub-divisional officer of Asind block of Bhilwara.

The district administration has so far sealed three clinics run by quacks in Pushkar town and Bhilwara. Raids to nab more such practitioners are on in Jahajpur, Mandal, Badnore, and Asind areas. In the first half of May alone, eight Covid-19 patients, who were initially treated by quacks, were admitted to Mahatma Gandhi Hospital at Bhilwara.



It's safer in jail: UP prisoners don't want parole

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 30: Most people would do anything to get out of jail. But that's not the case with 21 inmates in nine prisons of Uttar Pradesh who have written to authorities saying they don't want parole as staying incarcerated is "safer and healthier" for them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parole is a temporary suspension of prison sentence. The inmates who have made such a request are lodged in nine jails of the state, including in Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Meerut, Maharajganj, Gorakhpur and Lucknow, Director General of Jail Administration Anand Kumar told PTI Sunday.

The reason is that if they get a 90-day parole, then this will get added to the punishment term, he said.

"The other overriding reason which they give is that if they go



out, they will not get food and other healthcare facilities, which they get in the jails. The inmates say health checkup is done regularly

in the jails. They get food on time, they are safe and healthy in jails. The inmates say that once they go out of the jail, they will have to

struggle to earn a living," Kumar said.

There are four such requests from Lucknow jail, three from Ghaziabad and two from Maharajganj jail.

Asked what is the jail administration's response to the request of the inmates, Kumar said, "Since they have given it in writing, obviously we have to accept their stand and honour it."

Kumar also said over 2,200 inmates have been released on interim parole, and more than 9,200 prisoners have been given interim bail.

In all, around 11,500 inmates have been released following recommendations of a high-powered committee on the orders of the Supreme Court, he said.

Taking note of an "unprecedented surge" in COVID-19 cases in the country, the Supreme Court May 8 passed directions for de-

congestion of prisons and ordered forthwith release of all those prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year in view of the pandemic.

In March last year, the Uttar Pradesh government had decided to free 11,000 prisoners from 71 jails pursuant to a Supreme Court directive to decongest jails across the country in the wake of the COVID-19 contagion.

March 16, 2020, the top court had taken suo motu cognisance of overcrowding of prisons across the country and had said it is difficult for jail inmates to maintain social distance to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The Supreme Court had directed all states and union territories to constitute high-level committees to consider giving parole or interim bail to prisoners and undertrials for offences entailing up to seven-year jail term.

of the day quote

Our aim is to inoculate 1.1-1.2 crore people by August 15 if we get vaccines. We hope that the availability of vaccines will improve by that time

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

The cases are still higher than our expectations. We will have a meeting with ministers and experts June 5 or 6 to chart out the future course of action. However, we have not taken any decision yet

B S YEDYURAPPA | KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER

Actually I wanted to instill confidence and motivate doctors and nurses, whose services are laudable

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER



The relations between the Centre and states have become more strained under the Narendra Modi government

M VEERAPPA MOILY | FORMER UNION MINISTER

DUST STORM HITS PARTS OF DELHI

Delhi witnessed a sudden change in weather on Sunday evening as a dust storm hit parts of the city. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the national capital is likely to receive rains late in the evening



Several states extend lockdown

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: Haryana, Odisha, Telangana and Sikkim were the latest among states and Union Territories to extend the Covid-induced lockdown, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir Sunday announced easing of restrictions in districts with less active cases, though night curfew and weekend shutdown will remain.

Many states, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Goa, have extended the lockdown or restrictions for a week to a fortnight in June, while some of them like Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have also announced a certain relaxation in the curbs due to a decline in new cases and positivity rate.

While shops have been permitted to open for more hours, at some places malls have also been allowed to function on certain conditions. However, education institutions will continue to remain closed.

The country had recorded 1,61,736 infections April 13. The daily pos-



itivity declined to 8.02 percent, remaining below the 10 per cent mark for the sixth consecutive day.

The Telangana Cabinet extended the ongoing lockdown by another 10 days from Monday with relaxations from 6 AM to 1 PM every day, a statement from Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu's office said.

Addressing a virtual press conference Sunday, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said even though the Covid-19 situation has improved in the state, it has been decided to extend the "Mahamari Alert/Surkshit

relaxation of lockdown in the state with certain activities allowed from June 1. However, 20 districts including the state capital Lucknow will not benefit from this as they have more than 600 active cases. He said shops and markets outside containment zones will be allowed to open from June 1 onwards from 7 AM to 7 PM but weekend lockdown, as well as night curfew from 7 PM to 7 AM, will remain.

The districts where the curbs have not been eased include Meerut, Lucknow, Varanasi, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bareilly and Gautam Buddha Nagar. Jammu and Kashmir administration has also started the unlock process in the Union Territory, limiting the corona curfew to night hours and weekends only.

Issuing the 21-page guidelines, Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam said corona night curfew would remain imposed in all 20 districts from 8 PM to 7 AM and there will be weekend curfew from 8 PM Friday till 7 AM. The five Kashmir districts - Pulwama, Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara

and Budgam - have been put in the 'red zone' along with some areas, while the rest 15 are in 'orange'. The order said public transport and malls will not function in the red zone. Barber shops, saloons, parlours and liquor shops are permitted to open three days a week, except Saturdays and Sundays.

Maharashtra government has extended lockdown-like restrictions by another 15 days from June 1, though it has indicated some easing of curbs. The Goa government has also decided to extend the ongoing "corona curfew" by another week till June 7.

Staggered work hours, frequent testing and monitoring of COVID appropriate behaviour will mark the resumption of manufacturing and construction activities as Delhi reopens partially from Monday, even as other lockdown restrictions continue till June 7.

Though the Madhya Pradesh government has approved a phase-wise unlocking of the "corona curfew" restrictions beginning June 1, the weekend lockdown will continue to be in force across the state.

Bandopadhyay might not go to Delhi today

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, May 30: In the midst of the tug-of-war between the Centre and the state over the issue of his central deputation, West Bengal Chief Secretary, Alapan Bandopadhyay, is left with a day to decide his future course of action. Indications are that the top bureaucrat, who has got an extension of three months in service, is likely to attend a meeting convened by the Chief Minister on the Covid situation and might not go to Delhi Monday.

Bandopadhyay, who was supposed to retire May 31, got an extension of three months May 24 to continue as the Chief Secretary of the state. He was given the extension by the Centre on the basis of a request of the state government but May 28, the Centre's Department of Personnel and Training wrote a letter to the state urging Bandopadhyay to be present before the department at 10 a.m. on May 31. The state government has also been asked to relieve him.

The transfer order triggered political controversy and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee made it clear that the state is not willing to release Bandopadhyay because he is needed in the state and not at the Centre. She also hinted at exploring legal action to counter the Centre's "unilateral decision" without consulting the state. Though Bandopadhyay was not available for comment but sources close to the Chief Secretary indicated that he is not willing to go to Delhi on Monday and continue on to work on his post in the state.

The letter of recall, however, has triggered widespread controversy in the political as well as in the bureaucratic level.

'Antibody cocktail' therapy used for Covid patient in Pb

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mohali (Punjab), May 30: The 'antibody cocktail' therapy was administered to a 72-year-old Covid positive patient who is a diabetic with chronic kidney disease, at the Fortis Hospital here Sunday. Administered one dose of the cocktail intravenously, the patient is reportedly stable post infusion, said the Fortis Hospital.

The 'antibody cocktail therapy' is for those above the age of 65, who are isolating at home, have a saturation oxygen of 93, require no oxygen support but are at risk of developing a severe form of the infection on account of their comorbidities such as obesity, diabetes, liver disease, heart ailments, or chronic lung disease. It can also be administered to those suffering from an immuno-compromising condition or those with weakened immunity on account of immune suppressive treatment.

Dr Zafar Ahmed, Senior Consultant - Critical Care, Pulmonology and Chest and Sleep Medicine in Fortis Hospital, said like antibodies, which are proteins generated by the body to fight disease, monoclonal antibodies are "artificially created in the lab".

'Choksi may have been on romantic trip to Dominica'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 30: Fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi may have left his sanctuary in Antigua and taken a boat ride to neighbouring Dominica to have dinner or a "good time" with his girlfriend, Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne said.

He said that Government of Dominica and law enforcement agencies, unless the court rules otherwise, can deport him to India because he is an Indian citizen, Antigua News Room reported.

"The information that we are getting is that Mehul Choksi may have taken his girlfriend to Dominica probably to have dinner or have a good time and so on and got caught. That would have been a monumental error because in Antigua he is a citizen, we could not deport him," he said.

"The problem is if he is sent back to Antigua because he is an Antiguan citizen, even though his citizenship is unsettled, he still enjoys constitutional and legal protections. We have no doubt that his citizenship will ultimately be revoked because he did not disclose material information," Browne said. India seems to have spotted a window of opportunity in Choksi's arrest in Dominica where he was "detained"

for illegal entry. A Qatar Airways private jet landed at the Douglas-Charles airport in Dominica, Antigua News Room reported, leading to speculation about the deportation of Choksi who was detained in the Caribbean island nation after his mysterious disappearance from Antigua and Barbuda. Browne told the radio show that the jet came from India carrying necessary documentation needed for deportation of the businessman, the media outlet reported.

There was, however, no immediate official confirmation from Indian authorities about it. Publicly available data of Qatar Executive flight A7CEE shows that it left the Delhi airport at 3.44 pm May 28 and reached Dominica at 1.16 pm local time on the same day, via Madrid. The Dominica High Court has stayed the removal of Choksi from its soil and put a gag order on the developments till the matter is heard in an open court June 2.

Choksi has alleged that he was abducted from Jolly Harbour in Antigua and Barbuda by Antiguan and Indian looking policemen and was taken to Dominica. Pictures, purportedly of 62-year-old Choksi, surfaced in Dominica showing him with a red, swollen eye and bruises on his hands.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are wanted for allegedly siphoning Rs 13,500 crore of public money from the state-run Punjab National Bank (PNB) using letters of undertaking. Both are facing a CBI and ED probe. While Modi is in a London prison after being repeatedly denied bail and is contesting his extradition to India, Choksi took the citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda in 2017 using the Citizenship by Investment programme before fleeing India in the first week of January 2018.

FUN TIME



Youngsters play cricket near a construction site in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Monsoon may hit Kerala by June 3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 30: The arrival of Southwest Monsoon over Kerala is likely to be delayed by two days and it is now expected to make an onset over the state by June 3, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Sunday.

However, Skymet Weather, a private forecasting agency, said monsoon has already made an onset over Kerala. G P Sharma, President (Meteorology) of Skymet Weather said it is a "very weak onset" this year. Skymet Weather had earlier predicted that monsoon will make an onset over Kerala May 30. IMD Director General M Mohapatra said there is cyclonic circulation along the Karnataka coast which is hindering the progress of the Southwest Monsoon. "The south-westerly winds could strengthen

further gradually from June 1, resulting in likely enhancement in rainfall activity over Kerala. Hence the monsoon onset over Kerala is likely to take place around June 3," the IMD said.

Due to strengthening of lower level southwesterly winds, fairly widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls are very likely over northeastern states during the next five days.

The normal onset date for the monsoon over Kerala is June 1. This marks the start of the four-month rainfall season for the country. Earlier this month, the IMD had predicted the arrival of monsoon over Kerala by May 31 with an error margin of plus or minus four days. On Sunday morning, the IMD, in its daily bulletin, said the onset of the monsoon over Kerala was expected to be around May 31. However, by

afternoon it said the onset is expected to be by June 3. According to the IMD, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala depends on three parameters. If after May 10, 60 per cent of the 14 stations - Minicoy, Amini, Thiruvananthapuram, Punalur, Kollam, Allapuzha, Kottayam, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Thalassery, Kannur, Kudulu and Mangalore report rainfall of 2.5 millimetres or more for two consecutive days, the onset over Kerala is declared on the second day, provided other two criteria are also in concurrence.

This has to be supplemented by the wind speed. The depth of west-erlies should be maintained up to 600 hectopascal (hPa), in the box equator to Latitude 10-degrees north and Longitude 55 degrees to 80-degrees east.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

COVID THREAT ENOUGH TO QUIT SMOKING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, May 30: Over the past one year, doctors and health experts around the world have deciphered many newer aspects of risks to human life, especially during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the severity of coronavirus is higher among those who smoke cigarettes regularly.

Every year, May 31 is observed as World No Tobacco Day, so on the eve of this day, experts have warned the world that if this health emergency is not threat enough for people to quit smoking, then nothing is.

Commenting on dangers associated with smoking during this pandemic, Surendra Bathula,

Senior Consultant Medical Oncologist, SLG Hospitals pointed out that tobacco products kill more than 8 million people each year, and tobacco use is the primary cause of 25 per cent of all cancer deaths.

"It is a known fact that tobacco causes respiratory infections and aggravates severity of the diseases. Worldwide, many studies clearly exposed that tobacco consumption increases risk when the person contracts Covid-19, because smoking impairs lung function making it difficult for the human body to fight off coronavirus.

It is established that smoking increases expression and upregulation of ACE-2 receptors in the lungs, giving abundant space for coronavirus to invade the human



body, replicate itself, and cause severe harm," he said.

"Quitting the best thing! But, if you cannot do that immediately, you could shift to using e-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco; do not share

devices like waterpipes and e-cigarettes with others; protect others from the harms of second-hand/passive smoking; maintain physical distance with other while you are smoking; and above all, do not spit

in public places, because that could spread viruses," said Mervin Leo, Cluster COO, Gleneagles Global Hospitals.

According to Vaibhav Agrawal, Consultant, internal medicine and critical care, Wockhardt Hospital, Nagpur; the relation between Covid-19 and cardiovascular health is important because tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke are major causes of cardiovascular diseases globally.

"The effect of Covid-19 on the cardiovascular system could thus make pre-existing cardiovascular conditions worse. Additionally, a weaker cardiovascular system among Covid-19 patients with a history of tobacco use could make such patients more vulnerable to severe symptoms, thereby in-

creasing the risk."

Anusha Reddy Karra, Internal Medicine, Western Plains Hospital, Dodge City, USA, pointed out smoking is also associated with increased development of acute respiratory distress syndrome, a key complication for severe cases of Covid-19, among people with severe respiratory infections.

"From the personal experience of working in the United States, it is more than evident that people who smoke or into drug abuse suffered during this Covid-19 pandemic. Inability of such patients to respond to cure administered suggests how weak the human immune system turns due to smoking and how vulnerable such people are when they contract coronavirus," said Anusha.

of the day quote

Nitish Kumar has started a new trend in Bihar. His government is registering FIRs against honest reporters who are responsible for highlighting ground reality and truth of Bihar

The threat of the spread of Covid-19 to the villages in the constituency, 'tele-consultation' facilities are being set up and this will reduce the burden of patients at district hospitals through indiscriminate referral system

More than 85% of the households in Andhra Pradesh were benefited by the schemes implemented by the YSR Congress Party government during the last two years

SHORT TAKES

Dalit minor girl raped

Moradabad: A 15-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly raped by a youth in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district. The police said the girl, a student of class 8, had gone out of her house early in the morning when the accused dragged her into his shop and raped her. In his complaint, the girl's elder brother said that when the family noticed that she had been missing, they started searching for her and heard her screaming from a shop locked from inside.

Hooch tragedy toll rises to 25

Aligarh (UP): The death toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 25 Sunday and new cases have been reported from a block along the district's border with Haryana, officials said here. The BJP's Lok Sabha MP from Aligarh, Satish Gautam, however, said as per information gathered by him, the death toll has crossed 35. Speaking to news persons, Gautam said his figures were based on inputs collected from different villages "where many victims have been cremated without conducting post-mortem examination".

House set on fire in Thane

Thane: A house was partially set on fire in Mahagiri locality of Thane city Sunday by unidentified persons, police said. The house belongs to Mudassar Bhatkar, who is into preparing food licences, a Thane Nagar police station official said. "As per the complainant, he was alerted by his wife to smoke near the main entrance of their home at around 2:45am. The door, walls and ceiling had got charred. Bhatkar has told us he could smell petrol fumes," he said. A case of mischief by fire under section 436 of the IPC has been registered and hunt was on to nab the accused, the official said.

4 Naxals held

Narayanpur: Four Naxals, allegedly involved in triggering IED blasts and torching vehicles, were arrested from Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, a police official said Sunday. The cadres, identified as Sonaru Anchla (22), Fagu Ram Anchla (35), Sonu Ram Anchla (45) and Mangtu Ram Potai (35), were apprehended from a forest near Irakhbhatti village under Kohkameta police station limits Friday when a joint team of security forces was out on a search operation, he said.

'Modi govt harmful for country'

"The truth is Modi govt's seven years are a story of immeasurable pain, insurmountable devastation and unfathomable agony and anguish for a nation of 140 cr people," Cong said

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: On completion of seven years of the Modi government, the Congress has said that Modi Govt is 'Harmful for the Country' and has accused it of "committing 7 Criminal Blunders in 7 Years".

The Congress has said that the Modi government has failed on all fronts - from economy to securing national security while surrendering to China.

Addressing a press conference Sunday Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "The systematic destruction of the Indian economy has forced a deceleration. Even before the pandemic, GDP Growth fell from 8.1% in FY2015-16 to 4.2 per cent in FY2019-20. The Indian economy has registered a recession for the first



time since Independence. The GDP growth was minus 24.1% in Q1 of FY2020-21 and minus 7.5% in Q2 of FY2020-21. The overall GDP growth for FY2020-21 is expected to be close to minus 8 per cent." The Modi government promised 2 crore jobs every year. On the contrary under the Modi rule, India saw the worst unemployment in 45 years in 2019. As per CMIE, during Covid-19,

close to 12.2 crore people lost their jobs and almost 75% of the 12.2 crore people were small traders and wage-labourers.

The congress alleged that all-round failure of the Modi government has ensured that prices of essential commodities like Edible Oils, Pulses and Petrol/Diesel have hit the roof. The management of Covid-19 by the Modi government

NAP FOR A WHILE



Labourers rest at a bus shed during Covid induced lockdown, in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Can supply 10 cr vax doses in June, says SII

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 30: Serum Institute of India (SII) has informed the government that it will be able to manufacture and supply nine to 10 crore doses of Covishield in June, official sources said Sunday amid complaint by states about the shortage of anti-coronavirus vaccine jabs.

In a recent letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, SII said its employees have been working round the clock in spite of various challenges because of the pandemic.

"We are pleased to inform that in the month of June we will be able to manufacture and supply nine to 10 crore doses of our Covishield vaccine to the country as compared to our production capacity of 6.5 crore doses in May," Prakash Kumar Singh, the Director of Government and Regulatory Affairs at SII, said in the letter.

Singh also thanked Shah for his "valuable guidance and continuous support" at various stages of their endeavour to make India 'aatmanirbhar' (self-sufficient) in Covid-19 vaccines and making it available for the people of the country. "Serum Institute of India

has always been sincerely concerned about the protection of the citizens of our country and world at large from Covid-19.

Under the leadership of our CEO, Adar C Poonawalla, our team have been working relentlessly shoulder to shoulder with our government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic," he said in the letter.

"We assure you that with the support of the Government of India and under your kind guidance, we are trying our best by utilizing all of our resources to increase our production capacity of Covishield in the coming month also."

In early May, SII had communicated to the Centre that production of Covishield would be ramped up to 6.5 crore in June, seven crore in July and 10 crore each in August and September. India is currently using made-in-India vaccines - Covishield manufactured by SII and Covaxin of Bharat Biotech - in its COVID-19 immunisation programme.

The Russian Sputnik V is the third vaccine to get approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use and is being used in a few private hospitals.

home turf in the Gujarat Assembly polls next year. A section of the state Congress leaders are planning to approach the West Bengal chief minister for playing a proactive role in the Gujarat polls to give the much needed teeth to the campaign. One of the leaders loyal to the Nehru Gandhi family said "we don't see Mamata different from the Congress stock." Besides, their rationale is that Mamata's entry in Gujarat would blunt the AAP's ambitious plans to take the Congress space. The state Congress loyalists who do not wish to be quoted, say they are not against the party high command but want it to be proactive to prepare in advance. "We have been lacking a face and fire in the belly particularly after the death of

Ahmed Patel. We do not want the Congress to be pushed to the number three position like in Bihar, Maharashtra and other states," a former Lok Sabha MP said. During the 2017 Assembly polls, the Congress increased its numbers and confined the BJP to the double digit. Meanwhile, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has also reconciled to his humiliating defeat and is willing to work with Mamata Banerjee to defeat the BJP.

1 cr vax doses needed daily

India will have to inoculate almost one crore doses a day if it wants to vaccinate 94 crore people

56% INDIANS APPREHEND GETTING COVID INFECTION

Majority of Indians are afraid of being infected with the ongoing Covid disease either by themselves or their family members. Of these 56% people, 38% strongly agree that Covid may catch them or their family members

58.9% healthy people died due to Covid-19



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: After more than 3 lakh deaths during the pandemic, an IANS-CVoter survey showed 58 per cent people who lost their lives were completely healthy before getting infected.

The respondents also said 10.9 per cent of the deceased did not have any serious ailments but were not completely healthy; 17.5 of the victims had serious ailment like heart disease, diabetes, TB, Cancer, while 13.3 per cent did not know about it.

A 21.2 per cent of the deaths were in the age group of above 66 years; followed by age group of 36 to 45 which had 19.1 per cent deaths due to Covid; 18.3 deaths occurred in age group of 56 to 65 years, while 16.1 per cent lost their lives in the group of 46 to 55 years.

More and more analysis revealed that most of the deaths occurred in the agegroup below 45, which was 36 per cent of the total deaths. This was followed by 34.4 per cent in age group of 46 to 65 years while 21 per cent died above this age group. The field survey was done between January 1 and May 27, 2021 and samples were spread in all 542 Lok Sabha seats across all states, with error of +/- 3% at macro level and +/- 5% at micro level with Sample Size of 56685

India Sunday reported 1.65 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases in 24 hours with 3,460 deaths - one of the lowest since April 12, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry said.

India's overall tally stands at 2,77,29,247 with 22,28,724 active

Fifty have died due to black fungus in Haryana

Chandigarh: Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Sunday said 50 people have died due to black fungus in the state so far, while 650 more are undergoing treatment for the infection in various hospitals. "There have been over 750 cases of black fungus in Haryana so far. Fifty-eight have been cured while 50 people have lost their lives and 650 patients are seeking treatment," Khattar said during a news conference here. Addressing the conference virtually, he said the government was procuring the injection used in treatment of black fungus while some stock was already available and was being used in government hospitals.

cases, and 3,22,512 deaths, so far.

In 18 days India had recorded over 68,000 deaths. India registered record deaths due to Covid on May 21 with 4,529 deaths - the highest number of fatalities from Covid infection in any country since the coronavirus outbreak was reported in China's Wuhan in December 2019. It surpassed 4,468 deaths in the US on January 12, and earlier 4,211 in Brazil April 6. After battling a brutal second wave for weeks, fresh Covid cases came down below the three lakh-mark for the first time May 17 after touching record high of 4,14,188 May 7.

Sasikala hints at political comeback

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 30: The close associate of former Chief Minister late J Jayalalithaa and the former General secretary of AIADMK, VK Sasikala popularly known as 'Chinamma' among the AIADMK cadres has reportedly hinted that she would return to active politics.

She in a telephonic call to a party worker Saturday hinted that she may come back to politics and that she will take over the AIADMK.

AIADMK is reeling under the electoral defeat and infighting between the two senior leaders - former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and former Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam has peaked. In the telephonic call she is speaking to a party worker that she will not allow AIADMK to fall apart and that after Covid-19 pandemic subsidies she would come back to active politics.

Sasikala, before the assembly elections, had dramatically announced her withdrawal from politics after entering the state of Tamil Nadu with a convoy of 1,000 vehicles. She was released from the Parappana Agrahara Central prison in Bangalore after serving a four-year jail term in case related to disproportionate wealth case. Sasikala's nephew and Chairman of Amma Makkal



Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), TTV Dhinakaran was not available for comment but his office when contacted by IANS said, "Sasikala Madam has spoken to some of the party members that she will be coming back to Tamil Nadu politics". There is an intense rift in the AIADMK after the loss in elections and it was evident during the selection of the opposition leader. Palaniswami had pipped Panneerselvam for the post of opposition leader and Panneerselvam had left the AIADMK head quarters where the meeting was held, in a huff.

While Edappadi had emerged stronger in the party owing to his huge victory in his home constituency Edappadi with a margin of 93,802 votes in the 2021 assembly elections and was instrumental in the victories of AIADMK led front in ten of the eleven seats

in Salem district, the home district of Edappadi K Palaniswami(EPS).

In the Southern districts of Tamil Nadu which was once the stronghold of AIADMK, the party faced a drubbing and in the Theni district, the party could win only Bodinaykknar seat of O Panneerselvam while the party lost in other seats. This was a major setback for the AIADMK as the predominant "Thevar" community was always aligned with the AIADMK ever since Sasikala had emerged in AIADMK politics.

Sasikala, according to the sources in AMMK is inclined to take over the AIADMK and pose a threat to the ruling DMK dispensation and it has to be seen how far she will succeed in wriggling her way to the top in the new avatar of AIADMK in which Edappadi K Palaniswami has emerged stronger.



Cong wants Mamata to fight BJP in Gujarat

The Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee could be giving back to BJP's aggressive campaign in PM Modi's

aggressive campaign in PM Modi's

functioning of Rahul Gandhi last year, sister Priyanka stepped in. She held a series of meetings with Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Jitin Prasada, Mukul Wasnik etc besides holding telephonic talks with many others. With Ahmed Patel not around and G-23 leaders having dislike for general secretary K C Venugopal, the task to hammer out a solution fell on Priyanka. She did a decent job as Rahul Gandhi remained aloof to the entire process. Ghulam Nabi Azad was made chairman of the Relief Committee while Venugopal will report to him as member. Other G-23 leaders have been given one responsibility or the other too. For the time being, a truce has been achieved.

How Priyanka brought truce

A truce of sorts has finally been brought about between the Congress high command and Group of 23 dissident leaders, thanks to strenuous efforts by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. It transpires that after these leaders raised a banner of revolt against the style of



Tomorrow, I intend to share with you how we plan to keep Covid-19 under control, while progressively opening up again. The solution: testing, contact tracing, and vaccinating, all faster, and more. Also: What will the new normal be like?
LEE HSIEN LOONG | PRIME MINISTER, SINGAPORE

MACRON PLEDGES SUPPORT

French President Emmanuel Macron has pledged supporting the investigation launched by the Nelson Mandela Foundation into the assassination of South African anti-apartheid political activist Dulcie September in 1988



of the day quote

We will discuss establishing a permanent ceasefire with Hamas, a mechanism for providing humanitarian aid & the reconstruction of Gaza with a pivotal role played by the international community
GABI ASHKENAZI | FOREIGN MINISTER, ISRAEL

Iraq's close relations with the Arab world, Islamic neighbouring countries, and its relations with the international community are a cornerstone of security, stability, and development in the region
BARHAM SALIH | PRESIDENT, IRAQ

We will do our best to achieve the goal of vaccinating our 10 million targeted population by the end of this year or the latest in early next year
HUN SEN | PRIME MINISTER, CAMBODIA

'Chinese astronauts set to visit new space station next month'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, May 30: A three-member crew of male astronauts will blast off next month for a three-month mission on China's new space station, according to a space official who was the country's first astronaut in orbit.

The comments by Yang Liwei, the manned space programme's deputy chief designer, to state television came as an automated spacecraft was launched with fuel and supplies for the Tianhe station.

The Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, is the third and largest space station launched by China's increasingly ambitious space pro-

gramme. Its core module was launched into orbit April 29.

The Shenzhou 12 capsule carrying the crew will be launched from the Jiuquan base in China's northwest next month, Yang said in comments broadcast Saturday by China Central Television.

Yang, who orbited Earth in 2003, gave no details of the astronauts' identities or a flight date but confirmed the crew will include no women. He said the crew will come from the program's two earliest groups of astronauts.

Asked whether women would be in the crew, Yang said, "on Shenzhou 12 we don't have them, but missions after that all will have



them." The Tianzhou-2 spacecraft that docked with Tianhe Sunday carried 6.8 tons of cargo including space suits, food and equipment for the astronauts and fuel for

the station, according to the space program. The space agency plans a total of 11 launches through the end of next year to deliver two more modules for the 70-ton station,

The comments by Yang Liwei, the manned space programme's deputy chief designer, to state television came as an automated spacecraft was launched with fuel and supplies for the Tianhe station

supplies and the crew. Beijing doesn't participate in the International Space Station, largely due to US objections. Washington is wary of the Chinese

programme's secrecy and its military connections.

China has sent 11 astronauts, including two women, into space beginning with Yang's flight in October 2003. The first female astronaut was Liu Yang in 2012. All of China's astronauts to date have been pilots from the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army.

Astronauts on the Tianhe will practice making spacewalks with two people outside the hull at one time, according to Yang. China's first spacewalk was made in 2008 by Zhai Zhigang outside the Shenzhou 7 capsule.

Israel, Egypt talk truce with Hamas, rebuilding Gaza Strip



Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry was meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi, who landed in Cairo Sunday, which was the first public visit by an Israeli foreign minister in over a decade

The official said Egypt would offer guarantees that rebuilding funds will not find its way to Hamas, possibly going through an international committee led by Egypt or the UN

AGENCIES

Cairo, May 30: Egypt and Israel are holding high-level talks in both countries Sunday to shore up a fragile truce between Israel and the Hamas militant group, and rebuild the Gaza Strip after a punishing 11-day war that left much of

the seaside enclave in ruins. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry was meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi, who landed in Cairo Sunday. It was the first public visit by an Israeli foreign minister in over a decade, according to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

NZ hosts Aus PM in first meeting since outbreak

AGENCIES

Christchurch, May 30: Growing friction with China and how to re-open borders after the pandemic will likely be among the topics discussed by the leaders of Australia and New Zealand in their first face-to-face meeting since the coronavirus outbreak prompted both countries to close their borders.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison arrived in the tourist resort of Queenstown for an overnight visit Sunday.

He greeted his New Zealand counterpart Jacinda Ardern with a traditional Maori hongi, in which

the pair pressed noses together. Morrison is the first major world leader to visit New Zealand since both countries shut their borders last year to contain the virus.

The neighbours opened a quarantine-free travel bubble last month, although a recent outbreak of the virus in Melbourne has prompted New Zealand to suspend the arrangement with Victoria state.

Morrison's visit came as New Zealand was dealing with extensive flooding in the Canterbury region following heavy rains.

Video footage showed one farmer being rescued by helicopter from a raging river, while other swelling

rivers threatened to flood thousands of homes.

The choice of Queenstown for the meeting was deliberate as New Zealand tries to revive its battered tourism industry.

Queenstown has been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic, although tourism operators say they expect a boost from Australian tourists during the upcoming ski season now that the travel bubble has begun. The changing dynamics with China have been a big topic in both countries.

Australia's relationship with China has deteriorated significantly off late.

Climate change: 6 priorities for pulling carbon out of the air

AGENCIES

London, May 30: To reach net zero emissions by 2050, global emissions must be cut faster and deeper than the world has yet managed. But even then, some hard-to-treat sources of pollution - in aviation, agriculture and cement making - may linger for longer than we would like. It will take time for clean alternatives to arrive and replace them.

That means the world also needs to find and ramp up ways of taking CO2 out of the atmosphere to stabilise the climate. Just meeting the UK's net zero target is likely to require the removal of 100 million tonnes of CO2 a year.

Some experts worry that carbon removal could prove to be a mirage - particularly at the massive scales assumed in some pathways for reaching net zero - which distracts from the critical task of reducing emissions. So how do we get removals right? As the scientists who will lead a national greenhouse gas removal hub,

we've sketched out six priorities.

1. A clear vision
The UK government has yet to decide how much CO2 it wants to remove from the atmosphere, the specific methods it prefers, and whether 2050 is an endpoint or a stepping stone to more removals beyond. A clear vision would help people see the merits of investing to remove CO2, while also indicating which emissions sources should be stopped entirely.

2. Public support
Carbon removal at the scales under discussion will have big implications for communities and the environment. Entire landscapes and livelihoods will change. The government already aims to plant enough trees to cover twice the area of Bristol each year. These changes need to offer other benefits and align with the values of local people. People care not only about the removal techniques themselves, but also how they are funded and supported, and will want to see that reducing emis-



sions remains the priority.

3. Innovation
The types of approaches that remove CO2 permanently are at an early stage of development and cost hundreds of pounds per tonne of CO2 removed. They are more expensive than most decarbonisation measures such as energy efficient lighting, insulation, solar and wind power or electric cars.

Government support for research and development, and policies to encourage deployment are also crucial to stimulate innovation and bring down costs.

4. Incentives
How does a business earn a profit from removing CO2 from the air? Except for trees, there are no long-term, government-backed incentives for the removal and

storage of carbon. The UK government can learn from efforts in other countries. The 45Q tax rebate and Californian Low-Carbon Fuel Standard and the Australian Carbon Farming Initiative both incentivise businesses to capture and store CO2.

5. Monitoring, reporting and verifying
This is the vital but unglamorous work of ensuring carbon removal is properly documented and accurately measured. Without it, citizens would rightly worry whether any of this was real, and whether governments were simply handing out public money to companies for nothing in return.

6. Decision-making
A lot of information about CO2 removal resides in academic literature and focuses on global-scale scenarios. But actually doing it will involve people ranging from local farmers to international financiers. All will need tools to help them make better decisions, from easy-to-read manuals to improved models.

THE ROYAL RIDE



Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, rides a land yacht at the beach in St Andrews, Scotland, Britain

REUTERS

Russia to support Belarus with \$500 mn in credit

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Moscow, May 30: Russia will support Belarus with \$500 million in credit over the coming weeks, the leaders of the two countries have agreed. During a meeting in Sochi on Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his visiting Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko agreed the sum would be paid out by the end of June, dpa news agency quoted Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov as saying.

This is the second tranche of a credit package that was agreed before the controversial forced landing of a passenger aeroplane in Minsk on May 23 in order to arrest a dissident blogger, Roman Protasevich, and his partner Sofia Sapega.

During their meeting, Putin and Lukashenko spoke about trade and economic cooperation, Peskov said. Belarus' economy is weak, and it has already borrowed billions of dollars from Moscow.

During the opening of the meeting, both leaders complained about pressure from Western countries on Belarus.

After the incident with the plane,



the Ryanair commercial flight between Athens and Vilnius that was forced to reroute and land in Minsk, the European Union (EU) and the US imposed fresh sanctions on Belarus, which the Kremlin slammed as an emotional reaction.

Peskov emphasized that the fate of Sapega, who is a Russian national, mattered to the Russian authorities, but said the 23-year-old had a residency permit in Belarus.

Meanwhile President of the EU Parliament, David Sassoli, said he wants to keep up pressure Belarus in order secure the release of the blogger and his girlfriend.

Sassoli suggested that photos of Protasevich be exhibited at all airports in the EU and in the European Parliament.

'Doing everything to get Biden admin provide vax to India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, May 30: Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said he is doing everything to get the Biden administration provide excess vaccines not used in the United States to India, amid the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. He was speaking during a webinar organised by the Howard University here along with the Gautam Buddha University and Association of Indian Universities.



RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI

"I have been doing everything I can to get the Biden administration provide the excess vaccines that we are not using in the United States for the use of India.

"I made a call on them to share portions of our 80 million excess vaccine doses. They responded favourably, but I am now proposing something even bigger," Rajakrishnamoorthi said in his brief address on "Strategies on Dealing with COVID-19 especially access of Vaccines Supply".

The Congressman had also recently introduced the Nullifying Opportunities for Variants to Infect and Decimate (NOVID) Act.

"It would stand up as a US program to vaccinate 60 per cent of the world's population. It is very important that we make sure that 60 per cent or that we reach herd immunity in India and other countries," he said.

"Not only because it is the right thing to do out of compassion and morality, but it is the smart thing to do. If we do not do that, variants from all other countries will come back to harm everyone in the United States," he asserted.

The NOVID Act is an expansive coronavirus prevention program that will ensure Americans are not subject to another deadly surge of Covid-19 domestically, according to a media release.

SHORT TAKES

2 dead, 20 injured in shooting: Police

Hialeah (US): Two people died and an estimated 20 to 25 people were injured in a shooting outside a banquet hall in South Florida, police said. The gunfire erupted early Sunday at the El Mula Banquet Hall in northwest Miami-Dade County, near Hialeah, police told news outlets. The banquet hall had been rented out for a concert. Three people got out of an SUV and opened fire on the crowd outside, police director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III said. Authorities believe the shooting was targeted. "These are cold blooded murderers that shot indiscriminately into a crowd and we will seek justice," he tweeted.

Azerbaijan open to Russian mediation

Baku: Azerbaijan has shown openness to possible Russian mediation in establishing a demarcation line with its hostile neighbour Armenia. "Azerbaijan is ready to constructively resolve the issue of the border line with Armenia," PM Ali Asadov said at a meeting with other heads of government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In this context, he said on Saturday, they supported a proposal by Russia to form a trilateral commission.

6 people dead in Colombia protests

Bogota: At least six people have died in protests in the Colombian city of Cali, local media reported. Newspaper El Tiempo said there were six deaths Saturday, while RCN Radio put the toll at seven, reports dpa news agency. President Ivan Duque Friday night sent additional military assistance to support police in the Valle del Cauca district, the epicentre of the protests of which Cali is the capital, after several people died in protests earlier in the day.

US criticised at pro-govt rally

Addis Ababa: Ethiopian pro-government demonstrators denounced the United States Sunday for imposing restrictions on aid over the Tigray conflict, at a massive rally organised by the authorities to show support for their positions. More than 10,000 people attended the rally, some carrying banners written in English, Arabic and Amharic. Slogans included: "USA show us your neutrality", "Ethiopia doesn't need a caretaker", and "Fill the dam", a reference to a huge Nile dam opposed by Egypt and Sudan.

business



We are very happy that on Goa Statehood Day, we are flagging off this high-impact, and crucial project and that GEDA and CESL are working together towards expanding solar access to off-grid and kachha houses in the state
NILESH CABRAL | MINISTER OF POWER, GOA

CIL RETAINS PRODUCTION

Despite Covid-19 restrictions in several states, Coal India (CIL) maintained its output and despatch momentum in May, the second month of the current fiscal, an official said. The mining major is likely to report dry fuel production of around 41.7 MT and offtake of nearly 55 MT this month



of the day quote

At a time when rural India is hard hit by Covid pandemic, agriculture teleconsultations through technology have come as a boon for farmers. Apart from teleconsultations, soil testing facility will also be provided to farmers through labs being set up at the blocks under the initiative
SANJAY RAKESH | CEO, CSC SPV

If you look at all the world, the demand for Indian models is increasing drastically. So, we have to catch up with such kind of demand as soon as possible. So, we are very positive about our future exports plan
SATOSHI UCHIDA | COMPANY HEAD, SUZUKI MOTORCYCLE INDIA PVT LTD

We are in the process of acquiring a very well known brand of a listed hotel company... It will give us a much bigger bandwidth in the hotel business than we currently have
BINOD CHAUDHARY | GLOBAL CHAIRMAN, CG CORP

Hospitals get 100% loan cover for on-site O₂ generation

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: As the country faced a severe shortage of medical oxygen amid the second wave of Covid-19, Centre has decided to offer 100 guarantee on loans up to ₹2 crore to hospitals, nursing homes, clinics and medical colleges for setting up on-site oxygen generation plants.

The interest rate for such loans has been capped at 7.5 per cent. A Finance Ministry statement further said that borrowers who are eligible for restructuring as per RBI guidelines of May 5, 2021 and had availed loans under ECLGS 1.0 of overall tenure of four years comprising of repayment of interest only during the first 12 months with repayment of principal and interest in 36 months thereafter will now be able to avail a tenure of five years for their ECLGS loan.



The government has also announced additional ECLGS assistance of up to 10 per cent of the outstanding as on February 29, 2020 to borrowers covered under ECLGS 1.0, in tandem with restructuring as per RBI guidelines of May 05, 2021. The Finance Ministry has also

decided that the current ceiling of ₹500 crore of loan outstanding for eligibility under ECLGS 3.0 will be removed, subject to maximum additional ECLGS assistance to each borrower being limited to 40 per cent or ₹200 crore, whichever

is lower. Finance Ministry statement said that borrowers who are eligible for restructuring as per RBI guidelines had availed loans under ECLGS 1.0 of overall tenure of four years

The modifications in ECLGS, would enhance the utility and impact of ECLGS by providing additional support to MSMEs, safeguarding livelihoods and helping in seamless resumption of business activity

Civil aviation sector will be eligible under ECLGS 3.0. Validity of ECLGS has been extended to September 30, 2021 or till guarantees for an amount of ₹3 lakh crore are issued.

Centre has permitted disbursement under the scheme permitted up to December 31, 2021.

The modifications in ECLGS, would enhance the utility and impact of ECLGS by providing additional support to MSMEs, safeguarding livelihoods and helping in seamless resumption of business activity. These changes will further facilitate flow of institutional credit at reasonable terms, the ministry said.

Why credit growth hit a 59-year low in FY21?

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 30: One of the reasons for bank credit growth to plunge to a 59-year low in FY21 could be that the higher (AAA & AA+) rated companies could borrow cheaper from the markets than from banks whose loan pricing has been as high as 46 bps over the interest rate that corporate bonds commanded, despite banks slashing their MCLR by 90 bps in the year.



According to analysis of the corporate bond yields, bank's MCLR and GSecs between January 2020 and March 2021 by Care Ratings, AAA-rated companies could sell their debt at a cheaper rate than bank loans to the extent of 46 bps, and AA+ papers by 33 bps over the MCLR or the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate and below which a bank cannot lend. When compared to the Gsecs, AAA and AA+ papers could command only 100 bps over the benchmark gilts.

Despite the Reserve Bank leaving no stones unturned to boost credit demand that too in the worst crisis year for the economy that was savaged by the pandemic, credit demand from banks tumbled to a 59-year low at 5.56 per cent in FY21.

This was also in spite of the massive credit-driven stimulus that the government tried to push to help tide over the impact of the pandemic.

Centre extends ECLGS to civil aviation sector

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 30: The government Sunday announced extending the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme to the civil aviation sector, a move that is expected to provide a liquidity solace for the pandemic-hit segment.

Industry players said the "timely" decision to include the aviation sector under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), which was announced in May last year, will ease the pressure and provide the much-needed liquidity.

The civil aviation sector has been facing strong headwinds due to the coronavirus pandemic and looking at possible help from the government.

Recently, the civil aviation ministry allowed the domestic airlines to reduce the capacity to 50 per cent from June 1 in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic. Air travel demand has been impacted due to the lockdowns and strict restrictions by various state governments to deal with the pandemic.

Last month, domestic airline companies had reportedly sought reduction in capacity besides financial assistance to tide over the cash burn amid the nose-diving demand.

In a statement, the finance ministry on Sunday said that on ac-



Industry players said the 'timely' decision to include the aviation sector under the ECLGS, which was announced in May last year, will ease the pressure and provide the much-needed liquidity

count of the disruptions caused by the second Covid-19 wave to businesses across various sectors of the economy, it has been decided to enlarge the scope of ECLGS.

The civil aviation sector to be eligible under ECLGS 3.0, it added. In March, ECLGS 3.0 was introduced to cover business enterprises in hospitality, travel and

tourism, leisure and sporting sectors. The ministry has also removed the current ceiling of ₹500 crore of loan outstanding for eligibility under ECLGS 3.0, subject to maximum additional ECLGS assistance to each borrower being limited to 40 per cent or ₹200 crore, whichever is lower.

Budget carrier SpiceJet on Sunday said the inclusion of the aviation sector in ECLGS will help the domestic aviation industry, which has been impacted the most by the pandemic.

The inclusion of the civil aviation sector under the ECLGS is a welcome and timely move by the government that should help the sector that has been the most severely impacted by the pandemic, SpiceJet Chairman and Managing Director Ajay Singh said.

RBI's new norms to help enhance audit quality, transparency: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 30: The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) new norms for auditors will help enhance the overall audit quality as well as transparency, apart from adding to the value to the businesses rather than wasting resources, according to various auditing experts amid concerns expressed by businesses over the new regulations.

Some of them are also of the view that concerns such as cost escalation in terms of compliance with the new norms in a way question the quality of smaller firms without giving them a chance.

In April, the Reserve Bank issued a circular putting in place the new norms for appointment of statutory central auditors and statutory auditors for commercial banks, large urban co-operatives and large non-banks and housing finance companies.

Various mid-sized and small audit firms have welcomed the new measures, including stipulating joint auditor, rotation of auditors, capping number of assignments for each firm, treating auditors under same network as one entity and curbs on combining audit and non-audit work. These steps will lead to increased opportunities for all and not just for large ones alone, they opine.

"If audit is considered a cost,



If audit is considered a cost, then the best way forward is not to go for an audit. Regulatory compliance is part of the business and good audit adds to value to the business and the process is value accretive and not a waste of resources

VED JAIN | EX-PRESIDENT, ICAI

then the best way forward is not to go for an audit," quipped Ved Jain, a former president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAI).

"Regulatory compliance is part of the business and good audit adds to value to the business and the process is value accretive and not a waste of resources," Jain told PTI about the new audit rules.

Stating that "good audit mitigates risks", Jain said those who suspect the quality of smaller local audit firms should remember Saytam Computers, IL&FS, DHFL, Yes Bank and many other scams.

SHORT TAKES

'Restructuring process begins'

New Delhi: To provide support to small businesses hit by the second coronavirus wave, banks have initiated the process of restructuring of loans up to ₹25 crore in line with the Covid-19 relief measures announced by the Reserve Bank earlier this month. Many lending institutions have got board approval for the resolution framework and eligible borrowers are being contacted. For example, Bank of India has sent messages to its eligible customers to submit their willingness to debt recast online.

RINL opens Covid centre

New Delhi: Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Sunday dedicated to the nation a 300-bed Covid care centre at RINL's steel plant in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. In the second phase, the capacity of the centre will be expanded to 1,000 beds, the Ministry of Steel said. "Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan today dedicated Phase-I of JUMBO COVID CARE facility at RINL steel plant township with 300 oxygen equipped Beds in the service of the nation," the statement said.

'FDI in hardware jumps threefold'

New Delhi: Foreign direct investment (FDI) in computer software and hardware jumped over threefold to \$26.14 billion during 2020-21 on account of significant growth in the country's technology space, according to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. The sector received \$7.67 billion FDI in 2019-20 and \$6.41 billion in 2018-19, the data showed.

FPIs pull out ₹1,730 cr in May

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) turned out to be net sellers for second month in a row by taking out nearly ₹1,730 crore from Indian markets in May as second wave of the coronavirus pandemic spooked investor sentiment. In April, the total net outflow from the Indian capital markets stood at ₹9,435 crore. According to repositories data, overseas investors withdrew ₹3,375.2 crore from equities but invested ₹1,645.8 crore in the debt segment between May 1 and May 28.

BIZ BUZZ

'5G to grow strongly despite shortages'

New York: The market for radio components used in cellular user equipment grew in 2020 despite the pandemic and will continue to grow 8 percent per year through 2025, according to a new report. The radio component revenue reached an all-time high in 2020 and strong growth will continue, according to latest research from Strategy Analytics. The radio components include baseband processors, RF transceivers, power amplifiers, RF filters, switches, antenna tuners, drain modulators, tuners, and other RF front-end components.

Hyundai to support cyclone-hit customers

Bhubaneswar: Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) formed a "Relief Task Force" to support the Cyclone Yaas-affected Hyundai customers in Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand. Tarun Garg, Director (Sales, Marketing & Service) said, "We take responsibility towards our customers' vehicle ownership journey by aiming to provide the best of service assistance at all times. Our relief teams will make efforts to ensure uninterrupted mobility for customers affected by this cyclone in Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand." To ensure uninterrupted mobility, Hyundai is extending emergency roadside service to support the customers for hassle-free and peace of mind experience. Additionally, Hyundai is also offering 50% discount on depreciation amount of insurance claims for flood affected vehicles. From online service booking, vehicle status update, pick & drop from home/office to online payment facility, a touch free service experience is ensured for the customers.



ArcelorMittal to supply 5,150 oxygen cylinders to Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 30: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) Sunday delivered the first tranche of empty consignment of 5,150 medical grade oxygen cylinders to Odisha, part of a continuing contribution by the steel manufacturer to bring relief to victims of Covid-19 across India. The first tranche of 1,350 cylinders landed at Bhubaneswar airport this morning and will be distributed by Odisha state officials to medical centers across the state. The airlift includes both 46.7 and 10 litre capacity cylinders, which are in acute shortage in Odisha.

A second consignment of 3,800 units is on its way and is expected to arrive in Odisha in the coming days.



According to company's press release, "Today's consignment for the government of Odisha extends AM/NS India's support for Covid-19 to six states across India: supplies and support are already supporting relief work in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. In addition, seven nitrogen-carrying trucks have been converted to load oxygen to increase the supply of oxygen to areas with shortages."

Asit Tripathy, Principal Advisor

Covid trends to dictate market trends this week: Analysts

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 30: The MPC's interest rate decision, a host of macroeconomic data announcements, COVID-19 trends and global factors would be the major highlights in the equity market this week and their outcome would be a major driving force going ahead, analysts said.

"This week marks the beginning of the new month also and a lot of important macroeconomic data and events are lined up. On the macroeconomic front, we have GDP data for the first quarter, core sector data, Markit Manufacturing PMI and services data scheduled during the week," said Religare

Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra.

He also added monthly auto sales numbers will also start pouring in from June 1.

Importantly, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) review meeting is also scheduled this week, Mishra added.

"Expectations of state-wise unlocking due to declining COVID-19 cases are giving hopes of economic recovery."

"As the result of a decline in the COVID-19 second wave infection curve, the plausibility of further reopening of the economy has enlarged and consequently the market is expected to gain further momentum surpassing previous



highs," said Geojit Financial Services Head (Research) Vinod Nair.

RBI interest rate decision on Friday would be a major event

watched by investors.

"The overall structure of the market remains positive as fresh COVID-19 cases continue to decline and investors are upbeat

Going forward, likely announcement of phased withdrawal of state-level lockdowns in coming weeks and likely recovery in economic activities can potentially aid market to sustain rally in the near to medium term

BINOD MODI | HEAD (STRATEGY), RELIANCE SECURITIES

about unlocking of the economy in June which will help revive commodities investment trend would also be looked at by market investors for further direction.

Financial Services Head (Retail Research) Siddhartha Khemka said.

During the last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark rallied 882.40 points or 1.74 per cent.

"Going forward, likely announcement of phased withdrawal of state-level lockdowns in coming weeks and likely recovery in economic activities can potentially aid market to sustain rally in the near to medium term," Reliance Securities Head (Strategy) Binod Modi said.

Movement of the rupee, Brent crude and foreign institutional investors investment trend would also be looked at by market investors for further direction.

Chelsea win battle of Blues

PEP GUARDIOLA'S DREAM OF WINNING CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WITH AN ENGLISH CLUB DOESN'T TURN INTO REALITY

KANTE DOES IT FOR CHELSEA

The humble, silent worker who delivers

ASSOCIATED PRESS



PROUD MOMENT: N'Golo Kante poses with the Man of the Final trophy

Porto, May 30: N'Golo Kante approached the winners' podium and sized up the gleaming European Cup that was almost as big as him. The diminutive midfielder had seen jubilant teammates before him give the trophy a kiss as they walked by. Kante, a touch nervous maybe, gave it a little pat and shuffled on.

Humble to the end, Kante moved a step closer to winning everything there is to win in football by adding the Champions League medal to his trophy cabinet.

Kante has been a Premier League winner in 2016 and 2017, with Leicester, then Chelsea. In 2018 he became a World Cup winner with France. Then he was a Europa League winner in 2019 and now, a European champion. If he wins the European Championship title with France in the next six weeks, Kante will have done the lot.

Asked if Kante is the best player in the world, Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta was in no doubt: "It's straightforward, yes."

At the moment, it's hard to argue. Kante was voted man of the match by UEFA's technical observers in both legs of Chelsea's semifinal against Real Madrid, and again in the final.

"He (Kante) does everything," Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel said. "The energy he brings, I don't know how many ball recoveries today (Saturday). He covered so much ground. It's special to have him. After winning the World Cup, the Champions League, he's so humble in his position," Tuchel added.

what to say I waited a long time. I've worked 15 years for this moment."

City pressed high but struggled to trouble Edouard Mendy in the Chelsea goal, while at the other end Timo Werner should have done better than shoot straight at Ederson in the 14th minute.

Match stats	
Man City	Chelsea
60%	Ball possession 40%
7	Shots on goal 8
1	Shots on target 2
3	Corners 1
14	Fouls 13

Chelsea then suffered an injury blow as an emotional Thiago Silva was forced off hurt, Andreas Christensen taking the Brazilian's place in central defence.

Yet it was they who opened the scoring in the 42nd minute. Mount's through ball splitting the City defence, allowing Havertz - their marquee 71 million-pound (\$100mn) signing last summer - to go around the lunging Ederson and convert into an empty net.

City lost De Bruyne just before the hour mark, the Belgian taken out in a collision with Antonio Ruediger that appeared to leave him concussed. He came off in tears, and Guardiola instead turned to Sergio Agüero for the latter stages, but there was to be no glorious send-off as a City player for the Argentine, as a Riyadh Mahrez shot sailed just over in the sixth minute of injury time.



MEMORABLE NIGHT: Chelsea players celebrate with the Champions League trophy after beating Manchester City in the final Saturday at Porto

"We'll learn, we'll come back," Guardiola said. "The players did everything, they wanted to do well, to win this competition, sometimes you perform well, sometimes not," he added.

Chelsea won the title for the first time beating Bayern Munich in a shoot-out in 2012 and now they have their second European Cup to move level with Juventus, Benfica and Porto.

"It's such a special occasion. At this moment in time, we're the best team in the world. You can't take that away from us," said Mason Mount, who has been outstanding for the Stamford Bridge side this season.

Havertz was 'overwhelmed' after the win and said: "I don't know

the FA Cup semifinals in April and delayed their title celebrations with victory in Manchester. Now, in a final watched by a limited crowd of just over 14,000 fans who created a raucous atmosphere, they denied Man City the first Champions League crown they and Guardiola so crave.

"It was an incredibly tough fight, what a fight. Today they were determined to win this. We wanted to be the stone in their shoe," manager Thomas Tuchel told 'BT Sport' after the game. "The effort was huge. We overcame some difficult moments and had a fantastic attitude to defending."

Manchester City had to wait 13 years after being taken over by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour just to get to the Champions League final.

"It is the first time we're here,

the London club finished fourth in the Premier League, a huge 19 points behind champions City, but this, remarkably, was their third win over Guardiola's side in six weeks.

Chelsea in the process ended City's hopes of a domestic treble when they triumphed in

AGENCIES

Porto, May 30: Chelsea won the Champions League for the second time as a Kai Havertz goal secured a tense 1-0 victory over Manchester City in the final played here Saturday. The loss shattered Pep Guardiola's dream of lifting the trophy for the third time and his first with an English club.

The only goal of the match came three minutes before half time. Kai Havertz rounded City goalie Ederson to score at the Estadio do Dragao and the Chelsea players ran to celebrate with the German.

The London club finished fourth in the Premier League, a huge 19 points behind champions City, but this, remarkably, was their third win over Guardiola's side in six weeks.

Chelsea in the process ended City's hopes of a domestic treble when they triumphed in



Kai Havertz

SHORT TAKES

Trip cancelled

New Delhi: The Olympic-bound men's lightweight double scull rowing team have cancelled their five-week exposure tour in Portugal due to strict fortnight-long quarantine rule for Indian visitors. The tour was supposed to start June 1. "Since it was mandatory for the Indian squad to undergo a two-week quarantine period on arrival in Portugal, we had to cancel the exposure tour. With less than two months to go for Olympics, we can't afford to lose practice," national rowing coach Ismail Baig said Sunday. Last week, Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) of SAI had sanctioned Rs 21 lakh for the team, consisting of Arun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh, to train in Portugal's Pociinho High Performance Centre ahead of Tokyo Olympic Games starting July 23.

Milkha discharged

Chandigarh: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh was Sunday discharged from a private hospital where he was being treated for Covid-19. However, he continues to be on oxygen support. While the 91-year-old Milkha was discharged in stable condition, his 82-year-old wife Nirmal Kaur had to be shifted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Saturday night due to increasing oxygen requirement. "On the request of the family, Mr Milkha Singh was discharged from the hospital today (Sunday) in a stable condition. He is on oxygen and nutritional support," the hospital in, said in its update. "Mrs Milkha Singh had to be shifted to the ICU last (Saturday) night due to increasing oxygen requirements. She continues to be stable," it added.

Tragic end

Mugello (Italy): Swiss Moto3 rider Jason Dupasquier has succumbed to injuries sustained in a crash at a qualifying race at the Italian Grand Prix Saturday, organisers MotoGP said Sunday. He was 19. "We're deeply saddened to report the loss of Jason Dupasquier," MotoGP tweeted. "On behalf of the entire MotoGP family, we send our love to his team, his family and loved ones. You will be sorely missed, Jason. Ride in peace," it added. Dupasquier, only in his second season in Moto3, was struck by another bike after he fell. He was airlifted to a hospital in Florence where he died.

Mithali ready to bury the hatchet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 30: Personal likes or dislikes don't matter when one is playing for the country, India's Test and ODI captain Mithali Raj said Sunday. She insisted that she and head coach Ramesh Powar have 'moved on' from a bitter past to take the team forward.

Powar, the former India spinner, returned to the role of coach after being sacked following India's semifinal defeat in the 2018 World T20. Mithali was controversially dropped from that game and relations between the two went south with both accusing each other of unprofessional conduct.

Mithali was asked if their past will come in the way of their present and future. "...We can't be living in the past. I've played for so many years, I don't have an ego or I don't give attention to my personal likes and dislikes. I've never done that," Mithali asserted.

"And 21 years has been a long time for me to sort of go through many challenges. When it comes to playing for India, it's like serving your country, so personal issues, I don't really give any weightage (to

"We can't be bitter and carry the bitterness. I've never been a confrontational person. I am not someone who carries the past into the present"

MITHALI RAJ

those)," Mithali added. The 38-year-old is a torchbearer of women's cricket for more than two decades and doesn't like to carry baggage.

"You need to think about the bigger picture. That's how I am. There are so many things that have happened in the past, but I don't carry that baggage into my present or in the future," Mithali asserted.

Mithali said the World Cup is the primary goal at the moment and everyone is aligned with that. "He (Powar) is the coach, and he has his set of plans, it's important that both of us are aligned on the same page to take the team forward. Both of us want India to do well in the World Cup. It's everybody's goal in the team," Mithali pointed out.

KIWI FAST BOWLER EXCITED AHEAD OF WTC FINAL AGAINST INDIA

SPECIAL GAME FOR WAGNER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 30: New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner feels the upcoming World Test Championship (WTC) final against India is like a World Cup title clash for him. This is because he has never played a white-ball game for the Kiwis. The inaugural WTC final begins at Southampton June 18.

"Yeah, it is like a World Cup final for me. The biggest disappointment, I guess, in my career is that I've never really played a white-ball game for New Zealand or never been able to crack into the T20 or the one-day game," Wagner was quoted as saying in 'ESPNCricinfo'. "To be able to play in a World Test Championship final is like a World Cup for me," the 35-year-old added.

The New Zealanders are already in England, preparing for a two-match Test series against the hosts. Though he is excitedly looking forward to play in the WTC final, Wagner said he would not like to let the occasion get the better of him.

"I know this final is the first and there isn't a lot of history around it, but it's the start of something that's pretty big. To play in



Fast bowler Neil Wagner is looking forward to the battle against India in the World Test Championship final

one-off Test final against India - one of the best teams in the world, if not the best - to be able to test yourself against the best on the

highest and biggest stage, that's what it's about," Wagner said. "It's extremely exciting, but I don't want to think too far ahead.

Anderson expects rotation regularly

London: He is closing in on becoming England's most-capped Test cricketer. However, veteran seamer James Anderson has said players might be rotated more in the marquee five-match series against India later this summer since the games will be taking place in quick succession. The pacer, who is the world's highest Test wicket-taker among fast bowlers with 614 scalps from 160 matches, will turn 39 in July. "The five Tests against India might be a different story with back-to-back games in quite quick succession. That might be where people get rotated a bit more," Anderson said. England, prior to the series against India, will play two Tests against New Zealand. The series starts June 4. Anderson also added that he wants the 'bubble life to end'.

Don't want to let the occasion get to you, just treat it like another Test match and do the same things you do," the Kiwi pointed out.

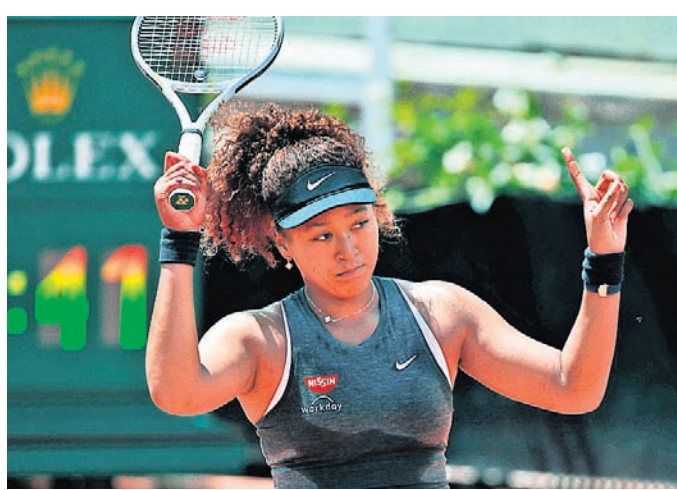
QUALIFIER ANHELINA ANNIHILATES FORMER WORLD NO. 1 KERBER

Osaka overcomes Tig threat

AGENCIES

Paris, May 30: World No. 2 Naomi Osaka of Japan got her French Open campaign off to a strong start with a 6-4, 7-6 (7-4) win over 63rd-ranked Romanian Patricia Maria Tig here Sunday at the Roland Garros. The four-time Grand Slam title winner, seeking her first second-week showing at the clay court Major, fended off a spirited challenge from Tig in 107 minutes.

Naomi, the reigning US Open and Australian Open champion, is playing at the French Open for the first time since 2019, after withdrawing from last year's event with a hamstring injury prior to the tournament. In other first-round matches on day 1, No. 33 seed Paula Badosa of Spain continued her fine clay court season with a 6-2, 7-6 (7-3) win over Lauren Davis of the USA. Paula has reached the semifinals or better in her last three clay court appearances - at Charleston, Madrid, and Belgrade, where she won her maiden WTA singles title. Former World No.1 Angelique Kerber of Germany was however,



SMOOTH START: Naomi Osaka raises her arms in delight after winning her first round match at the French Open, Sunday

sent packing by Ukrainian qualifier Anhelina Kalinina 2-6, 4-6 in 90 minutes.

The 139th-ranked Anhelina came into the French Open qualifiers in exceptional form, having won back-to-back ITF Challenger events in Portugal and Croatia. Anhelina broke the World No 27 Angelique six times

en route to her first ever win over a player ranked inside the top 30.

In the men's segment there was a huge upset as US Open champion and two-time runner-up Dominic Thiem was beaten. World No. 68 Pablo Andujar beat the Austrian 4-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in a match that lasted a little over three hours.

Gold for Rani, 3 others bag silver

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, May 30: Defending champion Pooja Rani (75kg) was the lone Indian woman boxer to strike gold at the Asian Championships while three others, including six-time World Champion MC Mary Kom (51kg), signed off with silver medals here Sunday. The Olympic-bound Pooja dismantled Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan with a clinical performance to win the gold and a prize purse of USD 10,000.

However, Mary Kom, and tournament debutants Labuatsaihi (64kg) and Anupama (81+kg) finished second best. All three lost tightly-contested bouts and fetched themselves prize money of USD 5,000 each along with silver medals.

The Olympic-bound Mary Kom went down in a split 2-3 verdict to Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan. It was the Manipuri superstar's seventh medal in the tournament, the first being a gold that came way back in the 2003 edition.

Labuatsaihi lost 2-3 as well but after giving her Kazakh rival Milana Saffronova a fight to remember while Anupama also lost by an identical margin to Lazzat Kungebayeva of Kazakhstan. The fight was marred by excessive clinching.

NO SURPRISES IN GIRO D'ITALIA

Bernal triumphs in impressive fashion

AGENCIES

Rome, May 30: Colombian Egan Bernal (Ineos Grenadiers) emerged Sunday the winner of the Giro d'Italia overall title after avoiding incident in the final time trial. Although he conceded 30 seconds to nearest challenger Damiano Caruso (Bahrain-Victorious), Bernal's victory never looked in doubt, and he had time to lift his arms in celebration as he crossed the line. Caruso finished second overall and was followed by Simon Yates (BikeExchange) in third position.

It was the Colombian's second Grand Tour overall victory following his success at the 2019 Tour de France. In the process Bernal joined an elite club to have won both the Giro and the Tour in the last decade. The others who have achieved the feat are Vincenzo Nibali, Chris Froome and Alberto Contador.

"I was just focussed on my effort," Bernal said when asked about how he approached the time trial. "I was thinking I can't do a mistake, I don't want to lose the Giro in one



corner: I pushed in the parts I could push, so in the corners, I don't have to take any risks. It's the first time trial I actually enjoyed! I'm always suffering in the time trials, but today (Sunday) was a special one," Bernal was quoted as saying by cyclingnews.com.

Sunday turned out to be great day for Ineos Grenadiers. The 21st and last stage of the time trial was won by Bernal's teammate Filippo Ganna. He finished ahead of Remi Cavagna (Deceuninck-QuickStep) and Edoardo Affini (Jumbo-Visma). Ganna had to overcome a puncture towards the end of his ride, but still posted a very quick time that averaged 53.8km per hour.