



HAVING PLAN B READY

Samiksha Batnagar feels actors need to have a back-up career option as the industry is very uncertain

LEISURE P2



CRUCIAL US, RUSSIA MEETING

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken promise to cooperate on 'serious issues'

INTERNATIONAL P10



JUVENTUS TRIUMPH

Serie A giants Juventus overcome Atalanta challenge 2-1 to clinch Italian Cup title

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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BLACK FUNGUS AN EPIDEMIC IN STATE

Odisha government to actively monitor all mucormycosis cases for better treatment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Odisha government Thursday declared mucormycosis (black fungus) as an epidemic disease. This move comes about as the state has reported an increase in the number of black fungus cases since the detection of the first one May 10 in a 71-year-old male patient. The black fungus is usually affecting Covid-19 people who are under steroids. Sources said that so far more than 10 people have been detected with the disease in Odisha. "The Odisha government after careful consideration has been pleased to include mucormycosis (black fungus) as notifiable disease by exercising the power conferred by Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 until further order," the Health and Family Welfare department said in a notification.

Even though so far it has not been threatening, there has been a steady rise in the number of black fungus cases in Odisha. It is being detected mostly among Covid-



19 patients who also use corticosteroids. This type of steroid is used to lower inflammation in the body, but it also reduces immunity.

The Health and Family Welfare department has already formed a task force to monitor the treatment of black fungus cases. The panel will look after the early detection and management of such cases in different hospitals in the state, said an official.

Recently, the task force suggested a protocol for identification, treatment and follow up action of all patients infected with black fungus. Officials said it will enable the department in monitoring the cases

HIGHEST DAILY SPIKE IN STATE

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha registered 25 new Covid-19 fatalities Thursday pushing the toll in the state to 2,403. It is the highest-ever single-day spike recorded in Odisha. The state also reported 11,498 fresh infections, which took the tally to 6,55,899, said an official. Prior to Thursday, Odisha has been registering 19 or more deaths on a daily basis for the last six days. The state reported 22 fatalities each on Friday last, Monday and Tuesday respectively. Khurda and Kalahandi (four each) districts reported the highest number of deaths in the last 24 hours.

in a better manner.

Earlier in the day, the Union Health Ministry urged states and Union Territories to make black fungus or mucormycosis a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897. "This fungal infection is leading to prolonged morbidity and mortality amongst Covid-19 patients," Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said in a letter to all states.

Odisha prepares as Cyclone 'Yaas' gathers strength

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Odisha government has started preparing in right earnest as the threat of cyclone 'Yaas' is growing by the hour. The IMD has already said that the low pressure area in the Andaman Sea lying east-central of Bay of Bengal will form into a cyclone by Sunday and will advance towards Odisha and West Bengal. However, the districts in Odisha that may be affected by the cyclone is still not clear.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena has asked all the concerned departments and costal district collectors to be ready to tackle the natural calamity and be ready for all exigencies.

"The district administrations are ready with their action plans for evacuation, shelter and other auxiliaries. Various departments have been advised to mobilise required support to the districts, particularly undisturbed drinking water supply, early clearance of roads and restoration of infrastructure," Jena told mediapersons here Thursday.

A draft plan has been formulated to mobilise emergency rescue and disaster management troops like Fire, ODRAF and NDRF at strategic points. However, the final enforcement of manpower and resources will happen once the path of the cyclone is identified, Jena informed.

As per IMD bulletin, a low pressure area is very likely to form over north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal around May 22. It is very likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 24. It would move north-westwards and reach near Odisha-West Bengal coasts around May 26 morning, the IMD said. Squally wind speed reaching 60kmph is very likely to prevail over North Bay of Bengal. So coastal districts both in Odisha and West Bengal, may bear the cyclone's brunt.

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Hrushikesh appointed Sahitya Akademi chief



Hrushikesh Mallick

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Noted poet Dr Hrushikesh Mallick was appointed as the president of the Odisha Sahitya Akademi, Thursday after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik gave his approval to the recommendation by the selection committee headed by Development Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena.

A notification to this effect

was released by Odia Language, Literature and Culture department, Thursday. Mallick is a trend setter in Odia poetry writing. Over 40 books written by him have been published. Out of them 12 books were on poetry, two story collections and at least 10 books on literary criticism.

Mallick has been honoured with several state-level awards like 'Dharitri Kabita Puraskar', 'Bhanuji Rao Smruti Puraskar', 'Sarala Award', 'Jhankar Bishuba Puraskar' and 'Sachi Routray Kabita Puraskar'.

Between 1976 and 1980, Mallick was editorial in-charge of the Sunday supplement of Odia daily Dharitri. He has been editing the literary supplement 'Sahityayana' of Dharitri since 2014. Mallick's poems have been translated into Hindi, English and Bengali languages.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE	PERCENTAGE
SENSEX	49564.86	↓ 337.78	-0.68%
NIFTY	14906.00	↓ 124.20	-0.83%
DOLLAR	73.92	↓ ₹0.08	-0.11%
EURO	89.69	↓ ₹0.18	-0.20%
GOLD	₹48,547	↓ ₹127	-0.26%
SILVER	₹72,090	↓ ₹284	-0.39%

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK	Forecast
TEMP	38.6°C	37.4°C	
MAX	38.6°C	37.4°C	
MIN	28.4°C	27.5°C	
Humidity	64%	81%	Light rain very likely
Rainfall	19.2mm	Nil	

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BARTON WAS BULLIED ON THE O.C. SET

Actress Mischa Barton claims she faced bullying on the set of the popular show *The O.C.* "It started pretty early on because it had a lot to do with them adding Rachel (Bilson) in last minute," Barton said, according to a report in *femalefirst.co.uk*.

CHER ANNOUNCES BIOPIC ON B'DAY

Singer Cher, who turned 75 Thursday, tweeted to announce that her official biopic is in the works. "Ok Universal is doing biopic with my friends Judy Craymer, Gary Goetzman producing. Eric Roth is going to write it," Cher wrote on Twitter.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will want to catch up with old friends that you have been neglecting for some time. The stars suggest that you will enjoy yourself. Your excitement will brighten up your activities. Your frankness and honesty are what set you apart from others, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
You will be very sensitive about the image you project socially and professionally. Ganesh says you are treating this very seriously and doing everything you can to make this right impression. Today, you will remain dignified and focussed in all that you do.

GEMINI
You will try to think up creative ways to perform your daily routine to get a break from the boredom and the rut of your daily schedule. You need to mingle more with people and practice some humility. Guests will come visiting at your home.

CANCER
The day looks set to be so good that you may end up inviting jealousy and envy from people around you. The stars are favourable for matters pertaining to heart. In short, a great day for boosting love and relationships. Fantastic opportunities may come your way, if you have been looking to woo a sweetheart, whispers Ganesh.

LEO
Your decisions today will be not only be correct, but also resolute and steadfast. Your health will be fine. At the work-place, things ought to proceed as usual. However, you will concentrate more on work today. In personal relationships, some minor arguments could crop up.

VIRGO
Today will be a pleasant day full of surprises and unforeseen changes. You may go for a long drive with your beloved. The trip will be very interesting and will calm your frayed nerves. All in all, Ganesh says, it is an optimistic and happy day, so go ahead and get the best out of it.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you shall soon be able to travel or plan a trip, not for family or business matters, but for getting away from the mundane life. You will pay more importance to your professional matters as opposed to your personal matters.

SCORPIO
You are one social butterfly today. However, shunning the gossips, you spread kindness and happiness in your social groups. People will look up to you today for this reason. What goes around, comes around; spread joy and you are sure to receive joy, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Determined and dedicated, that's what you are when it comes to work. Well, this may even find you amidst heaps of files and loads of work. No wonder you become a workaholic. You are likely to enjoy during the latter half of the day. Have a fun-filled evening!

CAPRICORN
Though you leave no stone unturned to identify the opportunities coming your way, you need to keep your guards on whenever you are a part of a legal matter. Financially, you're likely to bear some heavy losses, and if you're a dealer or a broker, the chances of suffering from them are even higher.

AQUARIUS
You wish to have more than twenty-four hours in a day! You are determined to finish off your pending work but somehow you will find it extremely difficult to get the load off your shoulders.

PISCES
Ganesh feels that you will sympathize with people today. This will help you get people's good wishes. You can prove to be a good boss, co worker, husband or wife and son or daughter. Ganesh advises you to carry on with these virtues.

Theatre fraternity celebrates Akademi appointments



Bhubaneswar: Odisha Natya Sangh president Haren Sahoo, on behalf of state's theatre fraternity Thursday expressed happiness over the appointments of eminent Odissi danseuse Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty and playwright Mammath Kumar Satpathy as President and Vice-president of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi respectively. Congratulating both functionaries Sahoo said, "We are thankful to the Chief Minister and the selection committee for fulfilling a longstanding demand of the culture lovers."

Among others, Sangram Jena and Prabodh Kumar Rout have been given appointment as Vice-president and Secretary of Odisha Sahitya Akademi while Srinivas Padhihari and painter Panchanan Samal have been recommended as Vice-president and Secretary respectively in Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi. Similarly, Syed Musir Alam will be the new Secretary of Odisha Urdu Akademi.

Taapsee shares her melancholic moods

Mumbai: Actress Taapsee Pannu took to social media Thursday to express her state of mind amid lockdown with a throwback picture that triggers melancholic moods.



Waiting.... Throwback pictures don't always make u smile." Taapsee recently took to social media to mourn the demise of Shooter Chandro Tomar, fondly known as Shooter Dadi, whose life inspired her 2019 film Saand Ki Aankh. While the role of Chandro was played by actress Bhumi Pednekar in the film, Taapsee essayed the avatar of Shooter Prakash Tomar.

The actress has several films lined up, including *Loop Lapeta*, *Rashmi Rocket*, *Hasen Dillruba*, *Shabaash Mithu*.



Bhumi to stand by Covid victims

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar says the ordeal her mother faced owing to Covid-19 made her realise that if the privileged people of the country went through such a harrowing time amidst the pandemic, it must be worse for others.

"When I saw what my mother was going through because of the virus, I had told myself that I would devote time to save as many people as possible. If we, the privileged people of the country, can go through such harrowing time, just imagine what others must be going through," she said.

"It is our duty as citizens of the country to stand up and do something. It is our duty to be there for our fellow citizens," she added.

About her initiative, Covid Warrior, she said: "It has been overwhelming to receive so many SOS calls from across the country. Our mission has been to help as many people as possible." IANS



'Actors need to have back-up career option'

Mumbai: Actress Samiksha Batnagar feels it is important for actors have a back-up career option as the industry is very uncertain. She adds that she is looking at an alternative, too. "Having a plan B or an alternate business model is definitely a good proposition if one is planning to be an artiste. Something that doesn't take your complete attention, is easy to set up and yields good

financial returns. I'm yet to set up one but I am thinking on similar lines," says the Black Rose actress. However, she adds that all actors must be prepared to struggle once they are part of the profession. "I can only say we must choose our options wisely. If you want to become an actor, you will have to go through a lot of hardship. You need to be steadfast in your beliefs," she says. IANS

Wear your professionalism at WFH

WOMEN SHOULD CONTINUE TO WEAR THEIR MAKEUP AS SOMETIMES THE FACE IN THE VIDEO SPEAKS LOUDER THAN THE WORDS

With the second wave of coronavirus, work from home has made a comeback! Here are a few expert tips to help you get ready for all your virtual meetings and conference calls.

Pick Your Comfort Zone
The first and foremost benefit people enjoy is that they can pick their comfort level without the pencil skirts or high heels. The pleasure of shorts and shirts together with flip flops while you are 'working from home' is unbeatable. Men have been teaming their boxers with shirts, which is a delightful twist to work wear.

Balance Home And Work
One has to assure your work decorum stays in place when WFH. So, never forget be at the top of your game even at home. Well it doesn't mean you need a tie, but you can simply be ready for a virtual meeting with crisply ironed shirts. Wear your professionalism.



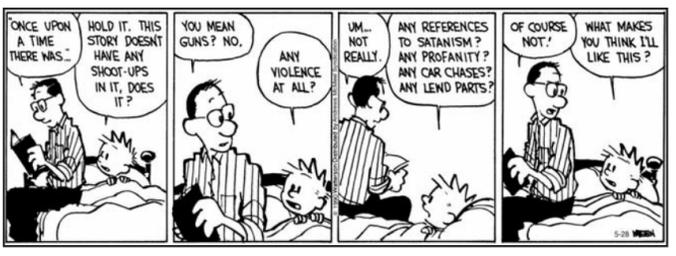
Do Not Forget It's Work
One has to also look in the mirror before being on the camera. Comb your hair so that you do not look you're right out of bed. Women should continue to wear their makeup as sometimes your face in the video speaks louder than your words.

and checks. Even colours do the trick. For instance, try your hands on bold coloured styles like mustard yellow, black, red or blue. All these colours make for a memorable look. If you haven't bothered thus far it's time to maybe shop online on a number of retailers who are delivering. Also pick accessories to make an impact. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



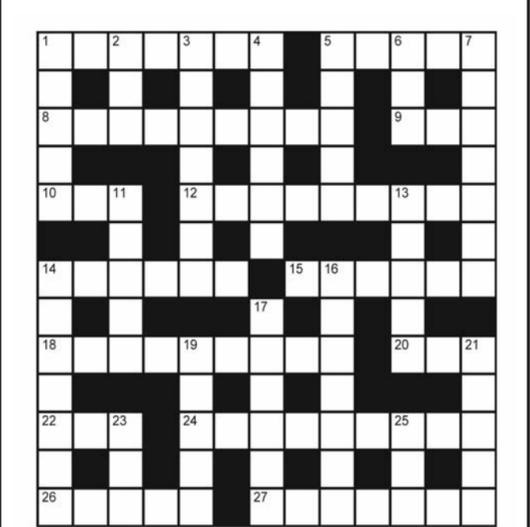
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



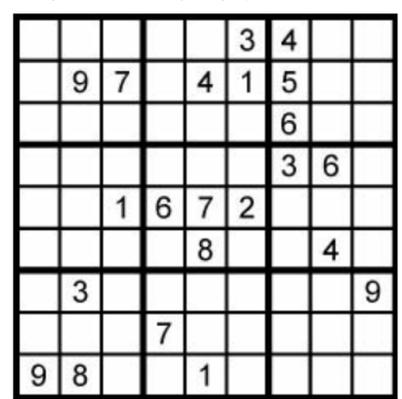
FUN post CROSSWORD



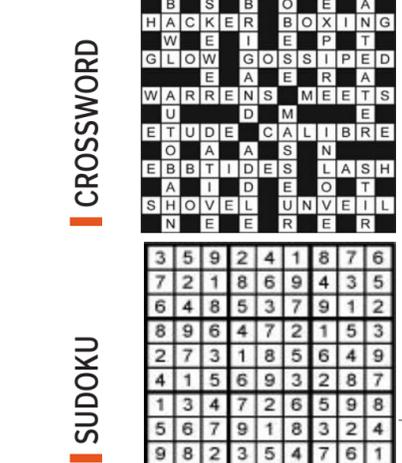
- Across**
- 1 Jaguars and leopards, e.g. (3,4)
 - 5 Blind followers
 - 8 Band aid?
 - 9 Lady's man
 - 10 Not square
 - 12 Respite
 - 14 Had a hunch
 - 15 Oceanic bird
 - 18 Italian meal starter
 - 20 Carpet
 - 22 Psyches
 - 24 Fender-bender
 - 26 Illustrious
 - 27 Draws out
 - Down**
 - 1 Full of chutzpah
 - 2 Swindle
 - 3 Friendly
 - 4 Black widow
 - 5 North Atlantic herring
 - 6 German resort
 - 7 Sunshade
 - 11 Burgundy grape
 - 13 Miscue
 - 14 Train depot
 - 16 Popinjay
 - 17 Tristan's love
 - 19 Walked nervously
 - 21 Fellows
 - 23 Harden
 - 25 Roadhouse

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

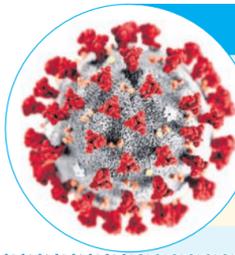


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



PERCHED & PLEASED

A parrot enjoys a fruit near Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,56,62,068	14,47,39,079	34,34,026
India	2,57,72,440	2,23,55,440	2,87,122
Odisha	6,55,899	5,56,501	2,403

3rd Fix infra crunch to save kids

3rd WAVE



PHOTO: PTI

As India continues to grapple with the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, several children below the age of 18 and newborns have tested positive for Covid-19.

A scientists' panel set up by the Department of Science and Technology under the government of India said India's second wave of Covid-19 is expected to decline by July this year. However, a third wave of the pandemic is expected to break out in about six to eight months.

Experts say that children will be the most vulnerable during the third wave of the pandemic as they are yet to be inoculated against the possible Covid-19 infection.

States like Odisha, where the spread of the infection seems prominent in children, have set up special task forces on paediatrics in anticipation of the third wave.

As per a report, around 30,000 children younger than 14 years were infected in the state till now.

Despite assurances from state health officials that all necessary arrangements have been in place, source said that the present infrastructure would be overwhelmed at the arrival of the third

Dr Bishwajit Mishra, a paediatrician of the city-based Jagannath Hospital, said, "The second Covid wave is gradually affecting everybody, at first older people, then younger ones and now it's slowly affecting those below 18 years. Of the total infections daily reported in the state, 10-15 per cent are kids which will increase during the third wave.

Fast vaccination could induce immunity in a large proportion of people. The number of susceptible people will be significantly less

after the second wave. However, with children being kept out of the vaccination programme, they will be more vulnerable than ever.

Mishra said, in this situation parents must be careful in taking all types of precautions to make their kids safe. This includes making them wear face masks. They should also regularly wash their hands. In the US, they had started vaccine for 12-16 years age group. In India, the government has allowed Bharat Biotech to conduct Covaxin's Phase II and Phase III clinical trials on children in the two-

18 age group.

Odisha Thursday reported its highest single-day toll due to Covid infection with as many as 25 people succumbing to the disease in the last 24 hours. Maintaining a steady rate of infection positivity, the state also witnessed over 11,000 new coronavirus cases in the past one day. The new fatalities have pushed the overall toll in the state to 2403

"We must focus on improving health facilities for children to save them from the imminent third wave. In the capital, many private

hospitals have facilities for tackling the situation. But in western Odisha, we need more facilities," Mishra said.

Dr Mrutunjay Dash, Professor, Department of Paediatrics, SUM Hospital, said the reason for the second wave to affect kids is because the Covid strain is mutated in a notorious way. Symptoms such as muscle pain, stomach pain, diarrhoea, skin rashes, among others are noticeable among kids.

Dash said parents must ensure that if they are symptomatic then they must start taking precautions

for their kids. They should start consulting doctors and must start medicines also.

Dr Arjit Mohapatra, neonatologist and head of Translational Research, AIPH University and Jagannath Hospital in Bhubaneswar, said in the first wave children were not exposed to much risk. However, the second wave of the coronavirus has changed the way the virus could impact kids.

Stating that various strains or mutants of coronavirus are the reason behind the spike,

Mohapatra said the fast mutation of the virus is the main cause for impacting children in the second wave. This will be a bigger problem in the third wave. At such a situation if third wave strikes, our available infrastructure will not be sufficient to handle the menace, he added.

Dr Braja Kishore Behera, another child expert of Sum Hospital, said at present there isn't enough infrastructure at the paediatrician level. The government is planning to set up special hospitals for children but they will not be ready soon enough to tackle the third level.

As part of the preparation, the state government formed a committee to manage Covid-19. The panel has been tasked with works like suggesting preparedness measures, including augmentation, training of human resources to deal with Covid-affected children and formulate SOPs.

Recently, the state government issued an advisory asking parents to ensure that children older than two years wear face masks while stepping out of their homes.

Prof Dr CBK Mohanty, chief of Directorate of Medical Education and Training (DMET) and chairman of this committee, said the present cases of kids are not dangerous. They show very mild symptoms. But we're prepared for the danger and will increase the number of beds if it is found necessary for the children. We have necessary beds and units for every kind of patients, he added.

Director of Health and Family welfare Dr Bijay Panigrahi said, "We are in talk with several paediatricians for creating SOPs for the safety of kids during the third wave. He said at present, vaccination for kids is not an option so we are looking at improving facilities available at Covid hospitals.

Khurda Chief District Medical Officer Dr VR Pati said Khurda district has enough intensive child care units for newborns at Capital Hospital and others. However, for other young kids, the facilities need to be strengthened.

Improving facilities

We're in talk with several paediatricians for creating SOPs for the safety of kids. At present, vaccination for kids is not an option so we are looking at improving facilities at Covid hospitals



DR BIJAY PANIGRAHI | DIRECTOR, HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPT

Infra challenge

The Covid strain is fast mutating now. At such a situation if third wave strikes, our available infrastructure will not be sufficient to handle the menace



DR ARJIT MOHAPATRA | NEONATOLOGIST, JAGANNATH HOSPITAL

Well-prepared

We're prepared for the danger and will increase the number of beds if it is found necessary for children. We have necessary beds and units for every kind of patients



PROF DR CBK MOHANTY | CHIEF OF DMET

Precautions for parents

From now on, parents must be careful in taking all types of precautions to make their kids safe. They include making them wear face masks, and ensuring they regularly wash their hands



DR BISHWAJIT MISHRA | PAEDIATRICIAN, JAGANNATH HOSPITAL

Watch symptoms

The reason why the third wave will affect kids is that the Covid strain is mutating in a very notorious way. Symptoms such as muscle pain, stomach pain, diarrhea, skin rashes are noticeable among kids



DR MRUTUNJAY DASH | PROF, DEPT OF PAEDIATRICS, SUM HOSPITAL

Rickety infra

At present there isn't enough infrastructure at the paediatrician level. The government is planning to set up special hospitals for kids but they will not be ready soon enough to tackle the third wave



DR BRAJA KISHORE BEHERA | DEPT OF PAEDIATRICS, SUM HOSPITAL

Enough ICUs

Khurda district has enough ICUs for newborns at Capital Hospital and others. However, for other young kids, the facilities need be strengthened



DR VR PATI | CDMO, KHURDA

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Real estate firm dir held in ₹3.66cr fraud

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) here Thursday arrested the director of M/s DRM Infrastructure Private Limited, a real estate firm, on the charge of duping a land owner to the tune of ₹3.66 crore.

The accused, Dhruva Charan Mohanty was arrested on the basis of a case registered on the complaint of Bijaya Mishra of Sailashree Vihar under various Sections of the IPC apart from Section 6 of the OPID Act, 2011.

A mutual agreement was executed between Mishra and the firm in 2009 for the construction of a multi-storied building over a piece of land owned by Mishra at Kalarahanga. Out of the flats constructed, the complainant would get a share of 35 per cent of the super built-up area and the company would get 65 per cent as its share.

However, after completion of the construction, the firm cheated Mishra by not providing any flat/share and sold those flats to other persons and misappropriated ₹3.66 crore.

Earlier, Dhruvi Ranjan Mohanty, a managing director of the firm, was arrested by the EOW in connection with the case.

HELPLINE, TEMP HOMES FOR KIDS IN 30 DISTRICTS

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The state government has issued multiple helpline numbers to help track children whose parent have either died or are under treatment in Covid hospitals. Considering their vulnerabilities, the government has come forward to take care of the abandoned kids.

The department of Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti has issued 24X7 helpline 1098, OSCPSR helpline 1800-345-4494 and State Covid helpline 104 for immediate tracking of these children.

Any person coming across children below 18 who are already orphaned or have their parents under treatment in Covid hospitals or in isolation may use the helpline numbers or get in touch with Child Protection Officer for immediate rescuing of these children.

The department of W&CD and MS with its strong networks has been facilitating uninterrupted operation of Childline teams in all over the state to provide rescue and response services to these children. They have created sarpanchs' WhatsApp groups in every district.

Sarpanchs are chairpersons of the gram panchayat level child protection committees. Cases requiring intervention are reported through this platform. The helpline numbers such as 1098 and 104 have been displayed at Covid Care Centres, isolation homes along with contact details of DCPU and CWCs.

Temporary homes have been created in 30 districts for safe-keeping of the distressed children whose families are affected by the second wave of Covid. So far, four children have been identified and kept in CCIs.

Detailed instructions to CCIs have been issued for prevention of distress and management of these kids. Virtual training has been provided to CCI functionaries for Covid prevention and infection management.

Outsiders' entry has been restricted to the CCIs. Mapping of staff has been done and their movements have been restricted. A corona calendar has been prepared and are being implemented in CCIs for creative engagement of children through special campaign and smart education through personalised learning app.

A psycho social manual in local language has been prepared and practiced through training of the trainers. Financial assistance to all CCIs has been ensured. Funds have been released to CCIs and token support has been extended to non-aided CCIs.

Thermal scanners, oxymeters, masks and sanitizers have been provided to all CCIs. Disinfection and sanitization of CCIs are conducted in regular interval.

Mandatory inspections are conducted through virtual visits. Isolation facilities have been created in CCIs in every district. There are 8500 plus children in 238 CCIs cared by 2000 plus care givers.

Tracking each case of infection is done on a regular basis.



REPRESENTATIVE PIC (GLOBALGIVING.ORG)

O₂ supply monitored on hourly-basis: CM

CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK VIRTUALLY INAUGURATED AN OXYGEN PLANT AT MKCG MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL IN BERHAMPUR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday said the state government is taking all possible measures to save precious lives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dedicating a liquid medical oxygen (LMO) plant at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur to people on virtual mode, the Chief Minister expressed hope that it would help reduce pressure on oxygen cylinders in the healthcare facility that caters to the needs of people from south Odisha districts, particularly Ganjam.

Speaking on supply of oxygen to various hospitals, Patnaik revealed that medical oxygen supply management system is being monitored on an hourly-basis. The state is



Dignitaries at the inauguration of LMO plant at MKCG Medical College and Hospital

further strengthening oxygen management through purchase of oxygen cylinders, establishment of oxygen generating facilities and deployment of LMO containers. A taskforce has also been set up to plan for future oxygen requirement and management system, the CM said.

Thanking people for their co-operation in the fight against pandemic, Patnaik said, "Together we can contain the virus and come back to normalcy soon."

Participating in the event, Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das said the LMO plant

Together we can contain the virus and come back to normalcy soon

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

has been built at an expenditure of Rs 2 crore and it has a production capacity of 20 thousand litres per day. 5T Secretary VK Pandian coordinated the event. Among others, Berhampur MP Chandrasekhar Sahu, local MLA Bikram Panda, chief advisor to Chief Minister R Balakrishnan, Chairman of the Western Odisha Development Council Asit Tripathy, Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra and other senior officials of the state government, district administration and MKCG Medical College and Hospital participated in the event.

DEFT HANDS



A potter busy shaping pots at his pottery at Basantpur on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Niranjan seeks all-party meeting on Covid-19

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik Thursday wrote to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik seeking an all party meeting on Covid-19 management in the coastal state.

He said that the all party meetings of the Assembly were not useful on several occasions due to lack of equal representation from all parties. The OPCC president urged the CM to invite civil society members to discuss the issue.

"The speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly had called a meeting to take MLAs into confidence. We heard further that the CM had also participated in this meeting. But most of the political parties were not invited and whosoever were called were not present in the meeting," he said.

The OPCC president also said that he also had demanded a similar meeting in the first wave of the pandemic but he did not get any response from the CM on the important issue and demand.

"During the first wave of Covid-19, I had requested for an all-party meeting to discuss the strategy to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. I have not received any response to my letter. Subsequently I heard that an all-party meeting was being planned. But no meeting has regrettably taken place till now," he said.

Patnaik cited the large number of infections and deaths owing to the pandemic and the need to convene a meeting of all political parties and other persons to get more ideas to tackle the threat. He also said that people should now come forward to seek a solution forgetting differences.

Huge cache of stolen minerals, iron pellets seized; 5 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch Wednesday arrested five persons involved in illegal transportation and storage of stolen hard coke, Ferrochrome and iron pellets while conducting raids in Dhenkanal.

Acting on a tip-off, the officials conducted raids at different places in Dhenkanal and seized 230 tonne of stolen hard coke, 45 tonne of steam coke, five tonne of Ferrochrome, three tonne of iron pellets and seven tonne of iron rods.

These apart, four 14-wheeler trucks loaded with steam coke and iron pellets, two excavators, one 10-wheeler truck and other incriminating articles were also seized from them.

In this connection, a case (STF PS Case No. 20/2021 U/s 379/411/413/120(B)/34 of IPC) was registered and a detailed investigation is underway.

Govt hosps to come under one digital platform

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: For better management of public healthcare infrastructure, the state government is going to bring all its major hospitals under one digital platform.

Speaking to reporters here, Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das said the government will implement Odisha e-Hospital Management Information System (OeHMIS) in all government medical colleges along with Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer, Sishu Bhawan—Cuttack, Capital Hospital—Bhubaneswar, all district headquarters hospitals and 106 urban public healthcare centres of the state.

This digital technology-enabled solution will boost public health-



care and administration. The project will be taken up as part of the 5T initiative of government and the 'Sustha Odisha-Sukhi Odisha' vision of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, he said. The state government has earmarked Rs 163.38 crore for implementation of the project. Das added.

The project will streamline the treatment flow of the patients in the hospitals, while allowing doctors and other staffs to perform to their

peak ability in an optimised and efficient manner. It will also help in decision support system for the hospital authorities for developing comprehensive healthcare policies, elaborated the minister.

The project will cover various public health services including registration of patients, emergency registration, billing at hospitals, bed management, OPD management, IPD management system, lab reports, OT and anesthesia, laundry,

This digital technology-enabled solution will boost public healthcare and administration

The project will be taken up as part of the 5T initiative of government and the 'Sustha Odisha-Sukhi Odisha' vision of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik

The state government has earmarked ₹163.38 crore for the project

diet kitchen and transport.

"After implementation of the project in the designated hospitals, I am sure this will boost, but stress and ramp up quality public health service and overall administration of hospital with optimum utilisation of doctors and healthcare staffs towards dispensing service delivery," the minister added.

Pradhan unveils ICU facilities at Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 20: Union Minister of Steel and Petroleum & Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan Thursday dedicated augmented ICU ventilator facilities at Ispat Post Graduate Institute (IPGI) and Super Specialty Hospital (SSH) of SAIL at Rourkela for the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Keeping in view the steep rise in the number of critically ill Covid patients in the region, the Union minister said that it was decided to operate a 60-bed Covid ICU facility and subsequently it was decided to upgrade the facility to a 100-bed ICU. He said that this upgraded ICU facility is a significant addition to the healthcare infrastructure in the region and will bolster Odisha's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Significantly, the IPGI and SSH complex was dedicated to the nation by the President of India March 21. The Union minister informed that patients from different places in and around Rourkela as well as neighbouring states had started availing the OPD facilities at SSH.

Lauding the efforts of steel companies to combat the deadly Covid-19 pandemic, Dharmendra Pradhan said the steel plants' liquid medical oxygen (LMO) supplies have been ramped up from 538 MT April 1 to now over 4400 MT per day. He said that SAIL has also taken a slew of

measures to contribute to Odisha's fight against the pandemic. Pradhan said that since April, more than 9653 MT of the life-saving LMO has been dispatched from Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP)'s captive and BOO plant, to various states of the country including Odisha.

"Rourkela Steel Plant set up a Virology Laboratory at its IGH in April 2020, which enabled quick Covid testing. The capacity of the testing facilities for RT-PCR has been enhanced from the initial 60/day to about 550 now and work is in progress to increase it to about 1000/day within a short time," Pradhan said.

Calling for stepping up efforts towards testing, treating and vaccination, Pradhan urged SAIL to take up vaccination of all its stakeholders, including contract employees and residents in the vicinity of plants.

"I call for a 1+2 approach towards vaccination, meaning for every vaccine given to an employee by the corporate house, they should give vaccination to two non-employees," he added.



DGP cautions against rise in cyber fraud cases during pandemic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: The Director General of Police Abhay Thursday urged citizens to remain vigilant against cyber criminals amidst the spike in various incidents of cyber fraud during the pandemic. He cautioned the people against the cyber fraudsters who have been duping gullible victims of their hard-earned money following different modus operandi.

DGP in his message clearly revealed the ways through which cyber fraudsters are luring targets into their traps. He said that the miscreants have created various fake apps and portals to misguide persons trying to register themselves for Covid-19 vaccination. The cyber fraudsters are also sending SMS and malicious links to the

email and mobile phones of the people asking them to register for Covid-19 vaccine.

He informed in his address that one can register for vaccination only through the authorised portal and apps, CoWin, Arogya setu and Umang run by the government.

Similarly, many fly-by-night operators have entered into the cyber space pretending to make available oxygen cylinders and Covid-19 related drugs. There are many such advertisements available on fake websites and social media platforms and people are being lured for pre-payment. Most of these are fraud and fake websites so please properly verify where operators are stressing on prepayment."

He also stated that recognised NGOs and government agencies have been offering free telemedicine

services as its importance increased manifold during the pandemic period. However, several fraudsters have started websites and apps offering telemedicine services on payment basis to dupe people. He cautioned people to check before making payment.

The fraudsters are cheating by selling medicines and supplements claiming the products to cure Covid. They are also offering fake products for testing of Corona virus. He also urged the citizens to verify the sources before blindly believing in the Covid-related information available in various websites.

DGP Abhay requested the netizens to not give access to their phones while installing any random app. He shared not to engage in sharing intimates photos and videos with anyone on any social media platform.

Decaying body found from school bus

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Commissionerate Police has recovered a decomposed body from inside a school bus parked in the campus of a school at IRC village here. The police are yet to find out the identity of the person aged between 35 to 40 years.

According to sources, locals informed the police who reached the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Capital Hospital for post mortem late Wednesday night. The body will be kept at the morgue for 72 hours before disposal. Police sources said that the person was a beggar who used to spend nights inside the bus which had been parked on the school campus. Police suspect he was suffering from an illness for past several months. The police is yet to get any clue in connection with the skeleton of a lady found locked inside a seized vehicle at the Janla outpost in February this year.

DGP orders probe into police assault on Dharitri reporter

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: A day after a reporter of leading Odia daily Dharitri was assaulted by police at Badasankha in Puri, DGP Abhay Thursday directed Puri district Superintendent of Police (SP) to investigate into the incident and submit a report forthwith.

The DGP directed Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh to probe the incident personally and send the report to Odisha Police headquarters.

Deepak Kumar Sahoo, a fruit vendor, was assaulted by police on charges of violating Covid guidelines in Puri Wednesday. Sahoo sustained injuries in the attack and was rushed to a hospital.

The vegetable and fruit sellers of Badasankha staged a road blockade to protest against the police highhandedness.

The DGP directed Puri SP to probe the incident and send a report to the Odisha Police headquarters

Some police personnel attacked Dharitri reporter Dattatreya Nayak and tried to drag him into a PCR van while he was gathering information on the incident. Protesting against the police assault, Nayak staged a dharna on the Grand Road, prompting the police to come up with a press note.

"There was an unfortunate incident involving the policemen and a working journalist. The police action was not intentional and the issue was resolved amicably. The journalist will not opt for any legal recourse," read the press note issued by the police.

IIT-Bhub completes semester exams amid Covid

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 20: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bhubaneswar has completed its spring end semester examinations of 2020-21 for all of its students except for the first year BTech despite the Covid-19 pandemic, an official said.

The first year students' examination will take a month and half more due to late admission and late beginning of the semester across all the IITs in the country.

The spring end semester examinations of 2020-21 have been completed for all other students May 15.

Last year in March 2020, before lockdown was announced, the premier institute switched to online education without any gap due to prior planning, innovations and execution, a senior official familiar with the development said.

The institute also developed a



very unique as well as innovative online method to hold comprehensive pen and paper exams, trained its faculty and applied the same very successfully to hold the end-semester examination, in May 2020, said the official.

"Due to the very tough pandemic, the theory classes for the entire 2020-21 too were conducted online, timely for all the students. For science and engineering students hands-on laboratory training is important and carrying

out the same during the pandemic composed a serious problem," IIT-Bhubaneswar director Raja Kumar said.

He said the lab courses were organised for students with both physical presence with hands on experience and online by live streaming or pre-recorded video of demonstration of experiments performed on the lab table by the faculty members.

In the later method, students were provided with the live video streaming of the demonstration of experiments during the lab class as per the timetable, he pointed out.

All students except for the freshers were brought to the campus and they had their full lab sessions with physical presence in the campus during February-April 2021 successfully.

Due to the onset of the second wave of the pandemic in a severe form, the lab practice with physical presence of the freshers has

been postponed and it will be completed as soon as it is conducive, the director said, adding that even the extra academic activity (EAA), including Yoga classes and practice of the first year BTech students, could be done online in a very innovative and unique way during the pandemic.

Projects and research seminars, evaluations, of UG, PG and PhD programmes have been conducted over online platforms, he said.

Stating that maintaining good health and protection from the pandemic is more important than running the academics in standards, Raja Kumar said, "IIT-Bhubaneswar campus has been kept Covid-free except for five cases in September 2020 and up to seven cases in April 2021 and five cases in May 2021, through a very strict and spirited implementation of the Covid protocols, awareness campaigns and participation of the whole fraternity in the same."

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MGNREGS comes to migrants' rescue

ADMIN APPROVES 12,000 PROJECTS, SANCTIONS ₹284 CR IN SAMBALPUR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 20: The Centre-sponsored Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has again come in handy for the migrant returnees and local labourers in this district as the administration plans to create 75 lakh work days amid the second wave of the pandemic, a report said.

As part of its efforts, the district administration has approved 12,000 projects and sanctioned ₹284 crore for the purpose. Works on various projects have started in almost all blocks with plans to involve more than 1 lakh families in the rural job scheme.

Sources said the central scheme was extensively used last year to provide temporary jobs to scores of migrant returnees and local labourers who lost their livelihood during the Covid-induced lockdown last



The district administration involved women self-help groups, youths and people in the implementation of the projects and was able to provide livelihood to returnees and local workers last year. Taking a leaf from its success, the district administration has decided to implement the job scheme this year too to alleviate the sufferings of returnees following the spread of the second wave of the pandemic.

The district administration had set a target of 50 lakh work days last year while in current fiscal, it has decided to create 75 lakh work days, an additional 25 lakh work days during the implementation of the scheme. This has been done anticipating higher work demand due to influx of migrants.

Sobhit Bisi, district coordinator of MGNREGS said it has been decided to create more work days for

proper implementation of the scheme. The works include excavation, renovation of ponds, construction of farm ponds, canals for irrigation, deep bore wells, digging of trenches for rainwater conservation and construction of gram panchayat buildings. Last year, it achieved 93 per cent success as it helped scores of returnees and poor people earn their living.

It was alleged that workers had declined to work in March due to delay in payment. However, they have now joined the work after their dues were cleared. According to reports, 21,329 workers were engaged in various projects, Thursday.

The scheme has achieved only 44 per cent of the target in May Reports said 353, 492 work days have been created from April 1 to May 20. It is doubted whether the district administration will achieve hundred per cent of the target in May with only 10 days left for the month to end.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE



Fishermen securing their boats and trawlers at Digha-Udayapur beach near Bhograi of Balasore district ahead of the cyclonic storm 'Yaas' Thursday

Lower Suktel oustees in quandary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 20: People of Pardhiapalli in Bolangir district are caught in a quandary after the district administration served them a notice to leave the village within seven days. Notably, Pardhiapalli is among the villages identified for displacement for the Lower Suktel project in the district.

In fact, the displacement notice has come to the villagers at a time when they are supposed to be confined to their homes during the second wave of the Covid-19 virus. This notice also stands in contravention of the Covid-19 guidelines laid down by the government.

The villagers have condemned such a move as bizarre and inhuman at this crisis time. Worried over the development, the villagers have drawn attention of three legislators, the Chief Minister and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

According to reports, the director

DISPLACEMENT NOTICE AT PANDEMIC TIMES



of the Rehabilitation and Resettlement office of the Lower Suktel Irrigation project had issued a public notice (20, dated 13/4/2021) for the villagers of Pardhiapalli. Thereafter, another notice was issued by the same office May 11.

As per the latest notice, it was stated that a camp was held at the village from April 26 to April 30. But the villagers did not furnish

necessary land and other documents to claim their dues. They were told to receive sanctioned funds from the office.

Further, it was stated that legal action will be taken against the villagers if the latter fail to leave their houses within the seven days from the second notice.

Currently, lockdown and two-day weekend shutdown are in force in

Bolangir as well as in the state due to the spread of the pandemic.

However, the villagers are now reluctant to leave the village even though they support the project.

Termining the notice as unfortunate, the villagers alleged that for the last two years, 11 demands of the project affected people have not been fulfilled as yet.

"Despite this, the administration has issued a notice to us. We have drawn the attention of the MLAs of Loisingha, Bolangir and Kantabanji, the Chief Minister and the National Human Rights Commission," the villagers said.

The villagers have observed that the administration should meet their demands first. Inclusion of youths aged 18 in the list of oustees and adequate compensation are among their demands.

Reaction of Mahendra Kumar Mohapatra, the director of Rehabilitation and Resettlement office of the Lower Suktel project, could not be available.

Graft in mega drinking water project: Investigation begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sajanagad, May 20: An investigation was started into the alleged irregularities in a mega drinking water project in Nilagiri block of Balasore.

According to reports, the state government has allocated ₹172 crore for a mega drinking water project for 19 panchayats in Nilagiri block.

It is under construction. Locals had alleged that there were irregularities in the project work as the contractor concerned compromised with the quality of work. Various works were not carried out according to the scheme. Former Nilagiri MLA Chittaranjan Sarangi had written to the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, the 5T secretary and Balasore Collector about the irregularities May 3.

It was alleged that the contractor laid substandard underground pipes while pits for the underground pipes had not been dug upto stipulated depth. But the officials of the Panchayatiraj and Drinking Water Department did not monitor the work, it was alleged.

Junior engineer of the department, Subhalaxmi Mohant and a junior engineer of the construction agency started the investigation in the presence of villagers at Pranabandha village. The investigation revealed that the pits for the pipelines had not been dug upto to required depth as prescribed in the project estimate.

However, villagers demanded similar investigation at other places too. The former MLA demanded a Vigilance investigation into the matter.

SHORT TAKES

Contractor asked to end grid work within 15 days

Sambalpur: A few days ago, Orissa POST carried a report about incomplete work of Maneswar electricity grid in Sambalpur Municipal Corporation. Taking note of the report, a high level team of the electricity distribution company in western Odisha took stock of the grid work in the presence of company officials executing the 33KV grid project. The officials examined the works to be completed and directed the contractual agency to finish the work within 15 days. SDO Manas Das said, "The contractor was asked to finish the work. If the work is hastened, it will take hardly a week. We have set a target to finish the work by June 1." Due to power fluctuations and unsheduled power cuts, locals had demanded quick commissioning of the grid.

Jumbo calf found dead in Kuldiha

Sajanagad: A female elephant calf was found dead in Kuldiha sanctuary in Balasore Thursday. The jumbo, aged about three years, was suspected to have died due to sun stroke. Forest officials were carrying out patrolling inside the sanctuary Wednesday when they found the elephant carcass. Balasore DFO Biswaraj Panda, ACFO Sarat Chandra Behera and veterinary doctors visited the spot. Post mortem of the carcass was conducted.

Minor boy hacked to death

Kantabanji: A man hacked a minor boy to death at Pandaren village under Turekela police limits in Bolangir district Thursday. The incident happened when the minor boy and his sister were collecting mahul flowers in a farmland, a report said. Police started an investigation. However, the reason behind the murder is not known. It was learnt that Jiten Poda of Pandaren village attacked six-year old Parmeswar Gahir, son of Jayram Gahir of the same village, with an axe. Parmeswar died on the spot while his sister Tikemin Gahir (12) managed to save her life.

Contractor dies over extortion

Koraput: A contractor was murdered by unidentified people over extortion at Kunduli village under Pottangi police limits in Koraput district, family of the deceased alleged Thursday. The contractor had been continuously receiving extortion calls over last few days. He had also agreed to pay the amount to the callers, a member of the family stated. According to sources, the 65-year-old contractor was identified as Ram Khil of Hatapada area. He had got the work order for a project of Koraput lift irrigation department at Kunduli. Four to five armed persons came to the project site at around 5 pm Wednesday evening and attacked the contractor with sharp weapons killing him on the spot, an eyewitness said.

FLARING TENSION



Irate villagers smashing liquor bottles on road demanding closure of an IMFL shop at Santoshpur under Koshagumuda block in Nabarangpur district, Thursday

Staff crunch hits treatment of critical patients

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 20: A severe staff shortage has hit the treatment of critical non-Covid patients in Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in this town with ventilators remaining non-functional, a report said.

Critical patients admitted to the intensive care units (ICU) of the hospital are gasping for breath in the absence of ventilators. Many alleged that the health condition of patients instead of getting better was deteriorating due to this reason. This has sparked sharp resentment among patients and their attendants as they held the authorities responsible for the problem. This has happened as 20 ventilators in the ICU are reportedly not working due to lack of adequate staff to operate them. As a result, the hospital authorities have been forced to refer critical non-Covid patients to other hospitals for treatment.

On the other hand, the hospital has 35 ventilators which have been put into use for the Covid patients. Dinesh Sharma, a representative of Bolangir MP, has raised similar al-

HEALTHCARE IN MESS AT BBMCH



Subarnapur DHH functions sans ICU, ventilators

SONEPUR: Even as there is a surge in Covid-19 cases in Subarnapur, the district headquarters hospital (DHH) here functions sans an intensive care unit (ICU) and ventilators. Further, 22 posts of doctor have remained vacant against 58 posts sanctioned, a source said.

With no proper facilities, Covid-19 patients from across the district, who come to the DHH in critical condition, are referred to hospitals in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Burla and

Bolangir. This puts the lives of critical patients in risk.

The foundation stone for a seven-storied building of the DHH with 300 beds was laid three years ago. However, the project faltered owing to lack of funds.

Though high-level meetings have been held in the past, but to no avail. Repeated meetings have failed to draw the attention of the government towards the plight of the DHH. This has local denizens fuming. On

Man fined ₹1lakh for throwing feast

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, May 20: Police imposed a fine of ₹1,00,000 on a person for treating guests at his daughter's marriage ceremony with a feast, flouting Covid-19 guidelines at Pururagarh in Deogarh district Wednesday.

According to sources, a marriage ceremony was underway at the residence of Surya Kumar Sahu, a resident of Pururagarh area. On this occasion, a feast was organised for the guests.

Sahu had obtained permission from the police for the marriage ceremony. He had mentioned in the application that the ceremony would have 50 guests and they would be treated with food.

But on the day of the marriage, the police were informed that Sahu is treating over 250 guests at the venue with a feast.

A team led by sub-divisional police officer Pratyush Kumar Mohapatra and sub-inspector Pratap Dalei swooped down on the venue and found gross violation of the Covid-19 guidelines.

At the time of giving permission, police had directed Sahu to hang a list of guests on his outer wall. The police found no such list anywhere.

No vax, but couple marked vaccinated



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bant, May 20: A couple from Bant area in Bhadrak district, who have not yet received their second doses, experienced the shock of their lives when they saw their vaccination certificates uploaded in CoWIN website.

According to Bharat Pani (64) and his wife Ramamani (62), they had had their first doses of Covid-19 vaccine at Bant primary health centre (PHC) March 13. Then, there was no online booking for vaccine and second dose was being administered after 42 days of the first dose. So the couple had visited the PHC for second doses April 26.

The staff had advised them to come after online booking. Their slots for second doses were booked for April 27. They again visited the Bant PHC April 27 to get jabs but had to return with-

out being vaccinated as the PHC had run out of stock.

On visiting CoWIN website May 18, they knew that they had already taken their second doses of vaccine at Agarapada CHC. Moreover, they were surprised to see their certificates in the website, declaring that they have received their second doses. "If we have been marked as recipients of the second doses, how we can now get our second doses," the worried couple wondered.

Bengal migrant found dead in bus

Bhadrak: A migrant worker of West Bengal returning from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu was found dead in a bus at Bhadrak Thursday. According to reports, a bus was carrying migrants from Tamil Nadu. After the bus reached Bant Chhak here, many migrants got down. But one of them was found dead. On being informed, Town police rushed to the spot and registered a case of unnatural death. The body was sent for post mortem. "The cause of the migrant worker's death will be ascertained only after the autopsy report is available," Town police station IIC Umashankar Nayak said.

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No. L-18:-		
1	No. of work	6 nos.
2	Tendered amount in Rs.	Rs. 2252103/- to Rs. 4407714/-
3	Period of completion	180 days
4	Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	From 17.00 Hrs. of 17.05.2021 to 17.00 Hrs. of 29.05.2021
5	Last date & time of receipt of bids in the portal	Upto 17.00 Hrs. of 29.05.2021
6	Date & time of opening of bid	11.00 Hrs. of 03.06.2021
7	Name and address of the officer inviting bid	Executive Engineer (Agril.), Balasore Division, Balasore, PIN-756056

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FOCUS ENVIRONMENT

MULTILATERALISM OR BUST



Between 1991 and 2019 alone, the world emitted more CO2 into the atmosphere than between 1751 and 1990. Faced with this reality, global climate summits such as this November's United Nations COP26 gathering in Glasgow are vitally important. We simply cannot afford more time-wasting and failures

The most obvious example is COVID-19 - another risk that caught us unprepared despite repeated warnings, and that many governments have subsequently managed in an excessively self-absorbed way. Earlier this month, two expert panels associated with the World Health Organization praised an initiative - sponsored by some 30 world leaders - to establish an international treaty on pandemic prevention and preparedness.

Nor should we overlook the shortcomings of pandemic cooperation in the economic sphere. The G20 has not been up to the task in the current crisis, doing too little to alleviate developing countries' debt. Like the WHO and the World Trade Organization, two other fundamental pillars of global governance, the G20 is in urgent need of reform to shore up its legitimacy and responsiveness.

Regulation of cyberspace also should be a high priority. The world's leading powers have remarkable offensive capabilities in this realm, but their high degree of digital connectivity makes them vulnerable, as the recent cyber-attack on the largest US oil pipeline has shown. These powers must urgently agree on a set of ground rules that promote security in cyberspace and address the potentially harmful effects of artificial intelligence. Some progress is already being made in this regard within the UN.

On climate change and other issues requiring multilateral responses, a critical mass of countries can alter the course of events, for better or worse. Although we live in an era of rising geopolitical tension, we must never lose sight of the major challenges that threaten us all and force us to find common ground. Anticipating crises, isolating areas of friction, competing peacefully, and cooperating in areas of mutual interest is the recipe for a safer, more prosperous, and sustainable twenty-first century.

The writer is President of *EsadeGeo - Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics* and *Distinguished Fellow at the Brookings Institution.*

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Javier Solana

ECONOMIC TRENDS ARE INCREASINGLY FAVOURABLE. THE COST OF SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY IS PLUMMETING, HELPING TO DRIVE THE GREEN TRANSITION EVEN WHEN GOVERNMENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES ARE OUT OF STEP

In early 1981, a few days before Jimmy Carter handed over the US presidency to Ronald Reagan, a short story on page 13 of *The New York Times* mentioned a report from the Council on Environmental Quality. This body, tasked with advising the US president, sounded the alarm about the link between the increasing atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and global warming. "Efforts should be begun immediately to develop and examine alternative global energy futures," the report stated, also emphasizing that "international collaboration in assessing the CO2 problem is particularly important."

Despite this and many other warnings dating back to the 1960s, Reagan distanced himself from the Carter administration's environmentalist agenda. In a symbolic gesture, the new president even removed the solar panels that his predecessor had installed on the White House.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, intergovernmental cooperation on climate change only took its first concrete steps in the late 1980s. And not until the 2015 Paris agreement did the world finally establish a binding framework mobilizing all countries in a determined quest to mitigate global warming.

Reaching such a consensus was not easy. How to distribute responsibilities adequately has always been a thorny question in multilateral negotiations on climate action. But no obstacle or aspiration - no matter how legitimate - justifies the many years of international discord and neglect regarding this issue.

The threat that already disturbed scientists a half-century ago has steadily grown since then. Between 1991 and 2019 alone, the world emitted more CO2 into the atmosphere than between 1751 and 1990. Faced with this reality, global climate summits such as this November's United Nations COP26 gathering in Glasgow are vitally important. We simply cannot afford more time-wasting and failures.

Fortunately there are reasons for hope. Many who previously regarded international relations as a struggle to preserve or alter the balance of power now assume that

states will have to adjust their priorities in view of twenty-first-century challenges. Although climate change will not affect everyone equally, the threat to our ecosystems and to humanity as a whole is so great that shortsighted tactics are out of the question. The only way out is for governments to build strategic trust aimed at generating shared benefits.

Moreover, economic trends are increasingly favorable. The cost of solar and wind energy is plummeting, helping to drive the green transition even when governments' environmental policies are out of step. In the United States, for example, former President Donald Trump's deregulatory crusade did not allow him to fulfill his promise of revitalizing coal (the most polluting of fossil fuels), owing to fierce competition from cheaper natural gas and renewables.

But market forces alone will not suffice. If we want the energy transition to materialize on time, governments must play an essential role. The European Union has embedded this philosophy in its European Green Deal, which aims to develop cutting-edge technologies, improve energy efficiency, and compensate the groups most affected by the transition. The Chinese government's industrial policies have led to spectacular

growth in renewables, although the country's economy remains heavily dependent on coal. For its part, US President Joe Biden's administration intends to launch a huge post-pandemic stimulus plan focused on building sustainable infrastructure.

Whereas Trump despised renewables - as if nothing had changed since Reagan's days - Biden doesn't want to lose ground in the race to dominate the green technologies of the future. This competitive dynamic can generate a virtuous cycle. Add in the growing environmental awareness of citizens everywhere, and leaders have greater incentive than ever to be ambitious - as generally reflected in the new emissions-reduction commitments that many countries have already made ahead of COP26.

Still, we will not succeed unless we redouble our efforts. For example, the world should also agree on common indicators that allow each country's climate objectives to be measured and compared easily, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently urged.

Closer international cooperation on environmental challenges should spill over into other spheres. After all, there is no shortage of global problems that require coordinated action.

Sex and Chinese Economy

While doing work if the mind continues to be active let it be so, but there must be at the same time a capacity for silence.

SRI AUROBINDO



China's recently released population census confirms the persistence of the country's alarming excess of males relative to the global norm. This numerical imbalance from birth onward has several significant economic implications - and not only for China.

Because women live longer than men on average, most countries' populations have more females than males. In the United States, for example, there were 96 males per 100 females in 2020. China, by contrast, has 105 males for every 100 females, according to the latest census. Chinese women live about three years longer than Chinese men on average, so the "excess males" are entirely the result of an unusually high ratio of boys to girls at birth.

The sex ratio at birth is normally around 106 boys per 100 girls. Because boys and young men have a slightly higher mortality rate, and because husbands tend to be somewhat older than wives, such a ratio at birth is nature's way of ensuring a roughly 1:1 ratio by the time they reach reproductive age.

Although China's male-to-female ratio at birth was close to this natural rate in the 1970s, a combination of factors fueled its steady rise. The most significant were a preference for sons, the availability of ultrasound and other technologies that enable expectant parents to know a fetus's sex, and the government's imposition in 1980 of a strict family-planning policy that prevented most families from having as many children as they desire.

Some parents have opted for sex-selective abortions. The government tried to forbid the practice, but it is hard to prevent as long as abortions are used as a means of complying with birth limits. As a result, the sex ratio at birth increased steadily, peaking at about 121 boys per 100 girls in 2009. According to the recent population census, this ratio has since declined to 111.3 boys for every 100 girls - more balanced than before, but still significantly higher than it would be in the absence of sex-selective abortions.

China's "excess" of male births results in a large number of young men being unable to marry. In mathematical terms, about one in nine young men in China cannot find a girlfriend or wife. This problem is even more serious in regions such as rural Anhui and Guangdong, where as many as one in six young men have difficulty finding a marriage partner.

In a series of research papers with various co-authors, I have documented some of the large and sometimes surprising economic consequences of this skewed sex ratio for China and the world. For starters, young men - and especially parents with unmarried sons - increase their savings rates substantially in order to enhance their relative competitiveness in the dating and marriage markets. In a 2011 paper, Xiaobo Zhang and I found that the rise in the male-female ratio in China's pre-marital-age cohort from 1990 to 2007 accounted for about half of the increase in the household savings rate during that period.

An increase in the savings rate tends to boost a country's trade surplus. In 2013, Qingyuan Du and I showed that a rise in China's male-female ratio may have contributed to between one-third and one-half of the increase in its trade surplus with other countries. The sex imbalance thus likely underpins an important source of tension between China and the US. Yet bilateral engagement has paid scant attention to this linkage.

As I show in a forthcoming research paper with Zhibo Tan and Xiaobo Zhang in the *Journal of Development Economics*, China's unbalanced male-female ratio also contributes to unsafe workplace practices, leading to many preventable injuries and deaths. A shortage of potential brides causes many parents with sons of marriageable age to work more and seek higher-paying but potentially dangerous jobs in sectors such as mining and construction, or jobs exposing them to hazardous materials and extreme heat or cold. Because people are more willing to accept such jobs, employers often invest less in workplace safety, which in turn increases work-related injuries and mortality.

My co-authors and I found that accidental injuries and workplace deaths are significantly higher in areas with a more severe shortage of young women relative to men. And parents with sons of marriageable age account for a disproportionate share of the victims.

The sex-ratio imbalance can self-correct, but only slowly. Seeing parents with sons shouldering greater financial and physical burdens to help their sons avoid involuntary bachelorhood, many young couples may decide that having a daughter is as good or better. But the latest population census, which shows that the sex ratio at birth remains unbalanced, tells us that discrimination against girls persists.

As China worries about the country's low population growth, it has progressively relaxed (but not yet ended) its family-planning policy. Policymakers should now go further, and provide a significant financial reward to parents of baby girls. Such a measure would simultaneously hasten the correction of the sex-ratio imbalance at birth and arrest the decline in the overall birth rate.

A more balanced sex ratio will lessen the need for many Chinese households to sacrifice current consumption for higher savings, and foster safer working environments. It would also help to reduce trade tensions with other countries.

Shang-Jin Wei, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is Professor of Finance and Economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

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WISDOM CORNER

If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much. JIM ROHN

If you want to succeed you should strike out on new paths, rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self. ALDOUS HUXLEY

LOL

'Get the quarterback'

A guy took his blonde girlfriend to her first football game. They had great seats right behind their team's bench. After the game, he asked her how she liked the experience. "Oh, I really liked it," she replied, "especially the tight pants and all the big muscles, but I just couldn't



understand why they were killing each other over 25 cents." Dumbfounded, her date asked, "What do you mean?" "Well, they flipped a coin, one team got it, and then for the rest of the game, all they kept screaming was, 'Get the quarterback! Get the quarterback!' I'm like, hello? It's only 25 cents!"

SPECTRUM QUAD

Is the QUAD losing steam?



Bimal Prasad Mohapatra

MANY QUAD OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT IT IS PRIMARILY A GROUPING OF DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES TO CONTAIN COMMUNIST CHINA DURING POST-TSUNAMI IN 2004

Four nations' Quadrilateral Security Dialogue shortly called QUAD has seen many up and down between its inception post-devastating 2004 Tsunami and its first Summit level meeting amidst rampaging run of Covid19 - through virtual mode - held March 12, 2021. The Summit meeting is significant as the event held within two months of the US President Joe Biden taking oath of office. The event followed two ministerial level meetings among member countries' Foreign Ministers in quick successions.

"We're united by our democratic values and our commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Our agenda, covering area like vaccines, climate change, and emerging technologies make the Quad a force for global good. We will work together, closer than ever before on advancing our shared values and promoting a secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific," said PM Narendra Modi in the Summit meeting, and later expressing satisfaction, he furthered, "The quadrilateral framework will be an important pillar of stability in the region."

Thus, he sounded very optimistic. Australian PM Scott Morrison, while laying out the agenda of the QUAD, said, "We join together as leaders of nations to welcome what I think will be a new dawn in the Indo-Pacific through our gathering." While Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga said, "With the four countries working together, I wish to firmly advance our cooperation to realise a free and open Indo-Pacific, and to make a tangible contribution to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region, including overcoming Covid19." "And we're renewing our commitment to ensure that our region is governed by international law, committed to upholding universal values and free from coercion. We've got a big agenda ahead of us," said President Joe Biden, the prime-mover of Summit meeting.

The Summit's joint statement under the title 'The Spirit of the Quad', read, "We will join forces to expand safe, affordable, and effective vaccine production and equitable access to speed economic recovery and benefit global health." Means the major deliverable at the Summit was the vaccine initiative under which vaccines against Covid-19 would be developed in the US, manufactured in India, financed by Japan

and US, and supported by Australia. But, many QUAD observers do not agree fully as they believe that the QUAD is primarily a grouping of democratic countries to contain Communist China during post-Tsunami in 2004 and now during re- Chinese belligerence amidst the run of dreaded pandemic - allegedly developed in China - in the region threatening regional peace. Apart from the above, Russian leadership expressed concern making it clear that the QUAD is China-centric. And in the meantime, Russia was found cozying with China though they have unsettled border in Russia's eastern region and fought bloody war in 1969, and both are struggling diplomatically for influence in resource rich Central Asia countries, which were once part of USSR.

But, all the hope of 'Finally, Quad, if not Asian-NATO, has come up age' has been dashed when Indian PM announced to hold 2+2 ministerial meeting between Foreign and Defence Ministers of India and Russia after a telephonic talk with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the last week of April 2021.

Post-first QUAD Summit meeting, have the four incidents that took place in quick succession forced PM

Modi to go for second thought while distancing from Russia in favour of QUAD which is virtually led by the super-power US? Are they (1) downgrading India's ranking in US government funded influential Freedom House Report-2021, (2) US Navy's 7th Fleet's warships and guided missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones have asserted navigational rights and freedoms around 130 nautical miles west of Lakshadweep that India considers its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), (3) blocking raw materials for Covid pandemic vaccines invoking war time laws, and (4) the US media onslaughts on Indian government's pandemic management.

In view of the above, to assume that the US could remain a dependable ally of India - particularly so long as Biden-Harris combined is in the US's helms of the affairs - during the crisis is foolhardy. So, why should India lose Russia, which has been a dependably military ally during crisis and arms suppliers for long six decades, in favour of QUAD?

The writer is a Research Fellow in DRAs. Views are individual.

Manpower for rehabilitation

Sir, It is welcome to note that The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has launched a 6-monthly Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Programme on rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities. This CBID course has been co-designed by the Rehabilitation Council of India and the University of Melbourne for cooperation in the disability sector. The programme aims to create a pool of grassroots rehabilitation workers at the community level who can work alongside ASHA and Anganwadi workers to handle cross-disability issues and facilitate inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society. The programme provides competency-based knowledge and skills among these workers to enhance their ability to successfully discharge their duties. Initially, the programme will be available in English, Hindi, and seven regional languages, namely, Gujarati, Marathi, Odia, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, and Garo. This year, the classes for the first batch of about 600 students are expected to commence in August. Hope that the programme will create trained manpower in identifying risk cases.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Why CT scan is dangerous

Sir, Covid-19 second wave has engulfed the entire country creating an atmosphere of fear among the people. This new strain is so terrible that it is not even visible in the RT-PCR. As a result, some people are taking the help of CT scans and steroids which are very dangerous for health. The AIIMS, Delhi director Dr Randeep Guleria has warned people about this. Before going into details we must know, what is a CT scan and why is it dangerous to health? CT scans are computerized tomography scans and are a type of three-dimensional X-ray. The CT scans performed by doctors on Covid cases are called HRCT. The test shows the lungs with 3D images. This allows accurate information about lung infections. Experts advise not to undertake CT scan without a doctor's advice. People need to know that even after 2/3 of a corona infection, CT scan is not required. There is no need for a CT scan if there are mild symptoms or no symptoms. "CT scans increase the risk of cancer," said Dr. Guleria. "People are doing CT scan every three days," he said. Home isolation does not require CT scan. One city scan is the same as an X-ray 400 times. This radiation enters into our body and if it is done repeatedly it damages our health.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Maha village breaks coronavirus infection chain

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 20: Bhoosi, a village in Maharashtra's Nanded district, has set an example of how to break the chain of Covid-19 pandemic in rural areas and save villagers from the impact of the deadly disease.

The village of 6,000 people in the Bhokar taluka of Nanded showed the way of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic by simply adopting the path of isolating the infected.

All residents of the village cooperated in the endeavour and managed to defeat the Covid onslaught in next 20 days of adopting the method that grabbed attention of the Central government as well. Two months ago, after a wedding ceremony a girl of the village was found infected with coronavirus. Subsequently, five more were found Covid-19 positive the following week, leading to a commotion in the whole village.

At this time, Zilla Parishad member Prakash Deshmukh Bhosikar took the initiative to organise a health camp in the village in coordination with the Gram Panchayat and the Health Department to conduct Covid tests.

Rapid Antigen Test and RT-PCR tests revealed that 119 people were Covid-19 positive. Then, it was decided to isolate these patients to break the chain of Covid-19 spreading to others.

Accordingly, all the infected people were persuaded to go and live on their fields for a period of 15-17 days, as mandated by the guidelines of Union Ministry of Health and



THE VILLAGE OF 6,000 PEOPLE IN THE BHOKAR TALUKA OF NANDED SHOWED THE WAY OF FIGHTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY SIMPLY ADOPTING THE PATH OF ISOLATING THE INFECTED

TWO MONTHS AGO, AFTER A WEDDING CEREMONY, A GIRL OF THE VILLAGE WAS FOUND INFECTED WITH CORONAVIRUS. SUBSEQUENTLY, FIVE MORE WERE FOUND COVID-19 POSITIVE THE FOLLOWING WEEK

Family Welfare for people with mild infections. Among them, farm labourers and others who did not own their farm land, were accommodated in a makeshift shed on Bhosikar's own farm land.

Asha, the village health worker and Anganwadi sevika, would visit the fields every day and interact with patients. Food and medicines were also provided.

"After 15 to 20 days of isolation, the villagers returned home as corona-free persons only after a health check-up," said Union Health Minister, which circulated a message to other villagers follow such methods to avoid spread of Covid.

Bhosikar said that a month and a half has passed since then and no new patient has been

found in the village. "Covid can be fought effectively by adopting the age-old path of isolation - as was being done during the days of plague - even in villages without adequate health facilities," he said.

Lakshmi Bai Akkemwad, who spent a fortnight in quarantine on the fields, said "separation is the only way to save the villagers from getting infected".

Nanded Zilla Parishad CEO Varsha Thakur Ghuge said that the Bhoosi pattern is a good example of the joint coordination between the villagers, people's representatives and the administration, worthy of implementation in other villages of the district and elsewhere. As fresh challenges are

being posed with the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic spreading to rural areas, the method adopted by residents of Bhoosi village is really a laudable effort at a time when 2,57,72,440 people (including 31,29,878 active cases) have so far been infected and 2,87,122 have succumbed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned about this and said, "Creating awareness about Covid-19 among rural people and cooperation of Panchayat Raj institutions are equally important".

Preventing the spread of Covid-19 in rural is a relatively complicated process due to the lack of testing facilities and health infrastructure, as compared to urban areas.

49 dead, 37 from ill-fated barge still missing; Navy continues search

The Navy Thursday morning launched a fresh aerial search and rescue mission, deploying helicopters to scour the waters off Mumbai coast where the accommodation barge P305 went adrift in Cyclone Tauktae fury

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 20: With 49 people on board a barge that sank in the Arabian Sea four days ago still missing, Indian Navy ships worked through the night, using searchlights to trace any movement in the pitch dark waters, as hopes of finding more survivors began to recede Thursday.

The Navy Thursday morning launched a fresh aerial search and rescue mission, deploying helicopters to scour the waters off Mumbai coast, where the accommodation barge P305 went adrift in Cyclone Tauktae fury before it sank Monday. As many as 37 personnel on board the barge are dead and 38 still missing, after Navy personnel, battling extreme weather, so far rescued 186 of the 261 people who were on board the barge P305 and two personnel from tugboat Varaprada.

Naval ships INS Kochi Wednesday morning and INS Kolkata late Wednesday night brought the bodies of these "Brave Nature's Victims" to Mumbai, a Navy spokesperson told this news agency. Chances of finding more survivors are looking bleak, another official said.

Mumbai police have announced they will conduct a probe as to why



the ill-fated barge remained in the turbulent area despite warnings about cyclone Tauktae, an official said. They registered an accidental death report (ADR) Wednesday in connection with the death of the personnel on the barge.

"The Navy's Search and Rescue (SAR) operations entered the fourth day today. Naval ships and aircraft are presently undertaking SAR of the missing crew members of Accommodation Barge P-305, which sank Monday 35 miles off Mumbai," a Navy spokesperson said.

Navy ships INS Kochi, INS Kolkata, INS Beas, INS Betwa, INS Teg, P81 maritime surveillance aircraft, Chetak, ALH and Seaking helicopters are involved in the SAR operations, he said.

Left to observe 'Black Day' on Modi govt's 7th anniv

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 20: Major Left organisations have given a nationwide call to observe a 'Black Day' May 26, which marks the 7th anniversary of the Narendra Modi-led Central government, activists said here Thursday.

The groups which include the All India Democratic Women's Association, the Democratic Youth Federation of India and the Students Federation of India - have also announced their support to the ongoing Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) agitation, which completes six months May 26.

"The historic farmers' struggle and the all-India strike by trade unions will complete half a year May 26 which is also the 7th anniversary of the Modi government, which has proved to be the most bankrupt, heartless, communal, anti-people, and pro-corporate entity in Independent India," said SKM leader and All India Kisan Sabha President Ashok Dhawale.

As part of the May 26 action, black flags will be put up over houses, vehicles and Modi's effigies shall be burnt in villages and slums, thousands of men, women and youth will join protests all over India, he said.

AIDWA President Malini Bhattacharya and general secretary Mariam Dhawale, DYFI President Mohammed Riyas and General Secretary Avoy Mukherjee, SFI President VP Sanu and general secretary Yavukh Biswas have also released a set of demands which will be highlighted that day.

They condemned the Centre for its "criminal culpability and abject failure in dealing with the Covid pandemic."

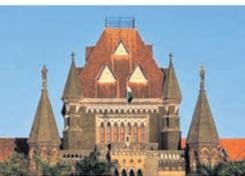
Rethink policy on door-to-door Covid vax: HC to Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 20: The Bombay High Court Thursday said it was disheartened and disappointed with the Centre's insensitivity and with the Mumbai civic body for not starting door-to-door Covid-19 vaccination for senior citizens and specially-abled, bed-ridden and wheelchair-bound people.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni reiterated that the Centre needs to rethink its policy that says door-to-door inoculation drive was not possible due to various reasons, including wastage of vaccines and probability of adverse reaction to the vaccine.

The HC directed chairman of the 'National Expert Group for Vaccine Administration of COVID-19' (NEGVAC) set up by the Centre to consider the issue of introducing door-to-door drive and posted the matter for further hearing June 2.



"If the NEGVAC decides favourably to start the door-to-door drive, then the same shall be implemented without waiting for the court's order," the bench said.

"We are very much disheartened with the Central government. Central government officials are really disappointed us. Your officials are completely insensitive. Instead of making elderly people rush to the (vaccination) centres, you (government) must reach out to them," the court said.

The bench noted that the Centre's expert committee was working on surmises by saying door-to-door vaccination was not possible at present, because of the probability that people might develop an adverse reaction to the vaccine.

"Is there any scientific data which shows that because of a particular vaccine a person has developed complications? Where is the data that even a single person has died after taking the vaccine? The expert committee should opine one way or the other. There cannot be any ifs and buts," the HC said.

The court noted that in the United Kingdom, the same Covishield vaccine is being used and door-to-door vaccination drive has been undertaken there.

The court also lashed out at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for filing an affidavit saying it would start door-to-door vaccination only after the central government issues guidelines for the same.

Vijayan sworn-in as CM for second straight term

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to Vijayan and 20 of his Cabinet colleagues at a function at the Central Stadium

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, May 20: It was a day that members and supporters of the Left Democratic Front were eagerly awaiting since the results for the April 6 Assembly elections came out May 2, as Pinarayi Vijayan Thursday took oath as Kerala Chief Minister for a second consecutive term, breaking an over four-decade pattern of alternating governments.

The LDF comfortably retained power, winning a record 99 seats in the 140-member Assembly and leaving the Congress-led united Democratic Front, which was hopeful of returning to power, with only 41. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to Vijayan and 20 of his Cabinet colleagues at a function at the Central Stadium here.

The venue, spanning around 80,000 square feet, and comprising an impressive dais, decked with red flowers sourced from a local flower farm, was ready since morning and across the state, people were glued to TV sets since 2 p.m. waiting for their hero Vijayan to arrive. By 2 pm, the around 400 invitees started arriving, with new CPI-M ministers, Saji Cherian, ac-



panied by his wife, and VN Vasavan, among the first ones to reach. Around 2.45 pm, Vijayan drove into the stadium along with his wife Kamala Vijayan and his grandson and went around wishing the invited guests with folded hands. Religious leaders including bishops, Hindu seers and Muslim clerics from the city and other VVIPs were also present.

Soon the seats started getting filled, according to Covid protocols, with the only ones missing being the ordinary rank and file.

Why Shailaja was dropped from Cabinet

Thiruvananthapuram: Justifying KK Shailaja's omission from the new LDF Cabinet, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said Thursday the decision to bring in new faces in the government in Kerala was taken in the long term interest of the party and for the state. Responding to a question on the exclusion of Shailaja from the new Cabinet, he said the question of who will contest the election and which of the elected MLAs become ministers are matters within the domain of the respective state committees in every state.

companied by his wife, and VN Vasavan, among the first ones to reach. Around 2.45 pm, Vijayan drove into the stadium along with his wife Kamala Vijayan and his grandson and went around wishing the invited guests with folded hands. Religious leaders including bishops, Hindu seers and Muslim clerics from the city and other VVIPs were also present.

Soon the seats started getting filled, according to Covid protocols, with the only ones missing being the ordinary rank and file.

FROM THE CLAWS OF DEATH



A man who was stranded at sea aboard Barge P305 due to Cyclone Tauktae looks out of a bus window after he was rescued by the Indian Navy aboard the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kochi at Naval Dockyard in Mumbai

Teen merges 50K images of moon to create detailed picture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, May 20: A 16-year-old amateur astro-photographer from Pune has captured over 50,000 images of the moon and ultimately pieced them together to create a detailed image of the earth's only natural satellite.

Prathamesh Jaju is associated with Jyotirvidya Parisanstha (JVP), one of the oldest astronomy clubs in the country, where he learned about basic astrophotography over the last three to four years.

Talking to PTI, Jaju, a Class X student, said he was finally able to take the time to do the project earlier this month, after his board exams were cancelled amid the



Covid-19 lockdown.

It took him around five hours to capture the moon using his telescope and camera, and another 40 hours to process the image using different editing software.

Many may wonder why he had to take 50,000 images and not a single shot, Jaju said. "Often single images get pixelated and blurred when we zoom into them. To avoid that I used a mosaic technique, which in

layman's terms is called panoramic photography," the teen explains.

Using huge magnifications, Jaju captured multiple videos of the moon, in which small craters were also captured.

"I shot around 38 videos of the moon. From each video, which was around a minute long, I could get around 2,000 images. From each video, one image was generated by merging all the images. So, from over 50,000 shortlisted images of 38 videos, I got 38 different frames (panels)," he said.

The 38 frames were stitched together to create a detailed and clear image of the full panoramic moon, said the student of Vidya Bhavan High School here.

For 'headmaster' Vijayan, how smooth would be his second innings?

VIJAYAN HAS A TOUGH TASK ON HAND AND ONE THING IS CERTAIN THAT THERE WILL BE NO HONEYMOON PERIOD FOR HIM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 20: Even though a lot has been written about the way Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who single handedly led the ruling Left to a stunning historical win in the April 6 Assembly elections, all eyes are on him, who by now through his mannerism and the way he conducts himself has turned into the mould of a 'headmaster' of an yesteryear school, where his one word and one look can send shivers down the spine of many.

Such is the stamp of authority, Vijayan has now, as he gets ready to start his second innings Thursday and given his now hugely increased stature, where everything is decided by himself, it remains to be

seen how smooth would his second innings be.

In the CPI-M, Vijayan through his iron grip by being the party secretary from 1997 to 2015 turned the clincher when he was able to get everything he wanted and if one looks into yesteryears, always the Chief Minister of the CPI-M stature is a shade below than the party secretary.

A media critic on condition of anonymity said it was Vijayan who changed that and that happened because each and everyone in his party is known well to him and through the long years of being the secretary, it's his handpicked people who are now there at all the various levels of committees.

"Just look when he was the party secretary during VS



Achuthanandan's tenure as Chief Minister (2006-11), there was always a clash and Vijayan always won. And now look into the past five years of Vijayan's tenure as Chief Minister:

Here again, he was the final word and even the State Secretary took orders from him. Such is his grip over the party and the government. I doubt, if any Chief Minister in our

state ever was in such a sound position," said the critic.

Vijayan showed his stamp of authority when he handpicked his state Cabinet of 20 Ministers and there was not a whimper of protest from any quarters in his party or in the Left, when he decided to drop hugely popular Health Minister KK Shailaja.

"Just look at the ministers from his party this time and in his first innings. In his first tenure, there were seasoned veterans with previous experience in the Cabinet like Thomas Isaac, G Sudhakaran and AK Balan and not to mention EP Jayarajan, a towering personality in the party. Look at his team now, barring the soft spoken K Radhakrishnan, all the remaining 10 from his party are first time

ministers and they will all be wary of the 'headmaster' and will dare not to rub Vijayan the wrong way, when they go about in their respective portfolio," added the critic.

Incidentally if one looks into his Cabinet, he has included his 'new' son-in-law PA Mohammed Riyaz, a first time legislator; when there are among the party, legislators with more experience.

The biggest teething problem facing Vijayan is going to be the way how he tackles the Covid surge and the test positivity rate is hovering around 25 per cent mark for a while now and the total number of active cases has crossed 3 lakhs. Another issue which he will have to surmount is that the per capita debt of every Kerala state stands at ₹1,05,000 up from ₹46,075 in 2016.



The economic cost of this pandemic has already run into hundreds of billions of dollars leading to a significant contraction in the global economy. The road to recovery may be hard and shall only pick up pace once the entire world is able to put the pandemic behind it together

COVID WREAKS HAVOC IN UP VILLAGE

The second Covid wave is wreaking havoc in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. Just 30 minutes drive from Delhi, a village in Ghaziabad has lost up to 100 people due to Covid like symptoms in just over a month



of the day quote

Proper supply of oxygen cylinders should be maintained in the state so that patients do not suffer for want of oxygen

JAI RAM THAKUR | HIMACHAL PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

Most of the kutcha houses in Una were destroyed. Standing crops as well as mango and coconut trees were also uprooted. A survey to assess the loss has been initiated from today and compensation will be announced accordingly

VIJAY RUPANI | GUJARAT CHIEF MINISTER

Every death is sad and the state government's condolences to each employee of state government, State Election Commission, teachers, educationists, instructors, police personnel, and every employee who died during election duty or who was infected with Corona during that period and later died

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

Aerosol can travel up to 10 mtrs from infected person: Govt

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 20: The government Thursday said that the aerosol can travel up to ten metres from the infected person, and that aerosol through the infected person can fall within two meters but can be carried to ten meters through the air

sors office said, "Ventilation is a community defense that protects all of us at home or at work. Introducing outdoor air in offices, homes and larger public spaces is advised.

Measures to improve ventilation in these spaces must be taken up on urgent priority in urban and rural areas alike, recommendations for hutments, homes, offices and large centralised buildings are given. Simple strategic placement of fans, open windows and doors, even slightly open windows can introduce outdoor air and im-



prove the air quality inside. Introduction of cross ventilation and exhaust fans will be beneficial in curtailing the spread of the disease. In buildings with central

air-management systems improving central air filtration/increased filtration efficiency is especially helpful when enhanced outdoor air delivery options are limited.

In offices, auditoriums, shopping malls etc use of gable fan systems and roof ventilators are recommended. Frequent cleaning and replacement of filters is highly recommended.

Saliva and nasal discharged in the form of droplets and aerosols, by an infected person while exhaling, talking, speaking, singing, laughing, coughing or sneezing etc is the primary mode of virus transmissions. Infected person who shows no symptoms also transmit the virus. People without symptoms can spread the virus.

NIA arrests Davinder Singh in terror case

The police officer was arrested January 11, 2020 in Kulgam when he was shifting a cop-turned-militant commander and his close associate in his car outside the Valley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, May 20: Disgraced police officer Davinder Singh, who was arrested and chargesheeted by the NIA in a terror case, was Thursday dismissed by the Jammu and Kashmir administration, an official order said.

Singh was arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir Police in January last year when he was ferrying terrorists of the banned Hizbul Mujahideen to Jammu from Kashmir. The case was investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) who filed a chargesheet against Singh and others.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha ordered Singh's dismissal from service with "immediate effect" under Article 311 of the Constitution. This provision enables the government to withdraw presidential pleasure without holding an inquiry and the decision can only be contested in the high court.

A notification issued by the General Department of the Jammu and Kashmir administration said "Accordingly, the Lieutenant Governor hereby dismisses Mr. Davinder Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Under Suspension). From service, with immediate effect." According to the NIA chargesheet filed before a special court in Jammu last year, Singh, who was posted in the sen-



sitive anti-hijacking unit of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, had been in constant touch with his handlers in the Pakistan High Commission who have since been repatriated to Islamabad.

Singh, who has been accused by the NIA of providing support to banned terror group Hizbul Mujahideen, was tasked by his Pakistani handler with establishing a "contact" in the Ministry of External Affairs for carrying out espionage activities.

The 3,064-page chargesheet, filed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and sections of the Indian Penal Code against Singh and five others, gave a graphic description of the police officer's involvement in providing shelter to the terrorists of the banned group.

'India-China ties at crossroads'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: The relationship between India and China is at a crossroads and its direction depends on whether the neighbouring country adheres to various agreements on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Thursday referring to the eastern Ladakh standoff.

Jaishankar said the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit in 1988 to China 26 years after the 1962 conflict led to a consensus on having stability along the frontier which was followed by the signing of two important agreements in 1993 and 1996 on maintaining peace and tranquillity at the border.

The stability at the border led to the expansion of relations in several sectors, but it was adversely impacted following what happened in eastern Ladakh, he said at a webinar organised jointly organised by the Financial Times and the Indian Express.

At a media briefing, Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Arindam Bagchi said full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas would enable progress in the bilateral relationship.

The ties between the two countries came under severe strain following a deadly clash in the Galwan valley in eastern Ladakh in June last, over a month after the border standoff began between the Indian and Chinese militaries in multiple friction points in the region. Asked about China's attempts to expand influence in the region



I do not have a clear cut answer at this point of time. We had the border conflict of 1962 and it took us really 26 years to have the first PM's visit in 1988 when Rajiv Gandhi went to China. There was a 1988 sort of consensus which stabilised the border

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

and competition between the two countries, Jaishankar said India is ready to compete and it has its inherent strength as well as the influence that goes deep into the Indo-Pacific on the one side and Africa and Europe on the other.

"It is one thing to compete, it is another thing to have violence on the border," he said.

"I am ready to compete. That is not the issue for me. The issue for me is how do I manage a relationship if the basis of the relationship has been violated by one side," he said. The external affairs minister said the economic relationship and ties in other sectors between the two countries were driven by the stabilisation of the border through the 1980s and 1990s.

He was asked about where things stand now in ties between the two

nations. Jaishankar said the agreements in 1993 and 1996 on border management paved the way for the expansion of overall ties.

There was no visible forward movement in disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points as the Chinese side did not show flexibility in their approach on it at the 11th round of military talks with the Indian Army on April 9. The Chinese military is currently conducting a drill in its training areas near the Ladakh region. Chief of Army Staff Gen M M Naravane said on Wednesday said India is keeping a constant eye on activities by the Chinese military. He also hoped that both sides will be able to make forward movement in resolving issues in other areas.

SHORT TAKES

130-yr-old road bridge collapses

Patna: A 136-year-old road bridge in Patna collapsed Thursday, following a heavy spell of rain. The bridge, located in Fatuha sub-town, 25 km away from Patna, had been built in 1884, and local residents claim that it was not being properly maintained. It connected the market with the office of the municipal council. The incident occurred at 12.30 p.m. as a truck laden with construction materials was crossing it. The driver and helper were injured and were admitted to the sub-divisional hospital.

BB to ramp up Covaxin production

Hyderabad: Bharat Biotech (BB) Thursday announced the quick ramp up of additional manufacturing capacities for Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin by an additional 200 million. The manufacturing capacities for India's first indigenous Covid vaccine have been ramped up at Chiron Behring Vaccines, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bharat Biotech at Ankleshwar, Gujarat. The company plans to produce 200 million doses of Covaxin per annum in the GMP facilities that are already operational for the production of vaccines based on Inactivated Vero Cell Platform Technology, under stringent levels of GMP and biosafety, Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech said in a statement.

Leopard found dead

Gondia: A carcass of an adult leopard was found near a village in Tirora forest range of Maharashtra's Gondia district, an official said Thursday. The decomposed carcass was found by a patrolling team near Malhi village under Kodelohara beat of Tirora forest range on Wednesday, the official said.

Rajnath lauds armed forces

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Thursday lauded the efforts of the armed forces and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in conducting search and rescue operations in areas affected due to Cyclone Tauktae. With 38 people on board a barge that sank in the Arabian Sea four days ago still missing, the Indian Navy ships worked through the night, using searchlights to trace any movement in the pitch dark waters as hopes of finding more survivors began to recede Thursday.

nCoV test at home in 15 minutes

AGENCIES

Pune, May 20: The ICMR has granted approval to a Pune-based company for its new self-use rapid home-test kit for Covid-19 with results available in just 15 minutes.

Named 'CoviSelf', the country's first Covid-19 home-test kit, priced at Rs 250, has been developed by Mylab Discovery Solutions, Pune, and will hit the markets within a few days. The company had also given India its first RT-PCR Test kit last year which is now commonly used for Covid-19 tests.

Mylab Discovery Solutions currently has a capacity of 70 lakh test kits per week and will enhance it to 1 crore test kits by early-June, its Managing Director Hasmukh Rawal said. The self-use test kit can be used by any symptomatic persons, or their immediate contacts of confirmed cases as per ICMR guidelines, and they can test themselves, go into isolation and get treatment



quickly. Rawal said that each kit would comprise the requisite testing materials, instructions for use leaflet and a biohazard bag to safely dispose it off after testing. The test is done using nasal swab as compared to the deep nasopharyngeal swab to reduce the user's discomfort. CoviSelf will provide the results in just 15 minutes, and each pack has a unique QR code which must be entered along with the test outcome to get a report on the App.

"Since this eliminates the need for sample collection by a healthcare

professional, it will greatly ease pressures on the overburdened testing labs, besides reducing delays in the test results, which is more than 72 hours in some parts of the country," said Rawal.

With its CoviSelf, MDS hopes to reach Covid-19 testing virtually to the doorsteps of every Indian to help them fight the second pandemic wave and any subsequent waves, as it can be bought without prescription from any pharmacy, said Director Sujit Jain.

"Most western countries have allowed self-test for their citizens and consider it as a powerful tool to break the chain. CoviSelf combines with Mylab's AI-powered mobile App so that a user can know his/her positive status, submit the result to ICMR directly for traceability, and know what to do next in either case of result. We are sure this small step will be a big leap in mitigating the second and subsequent waves," said Jain.

EXTREMELY HAPPY



Monkeys eat tomatoes, offered by people in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: A Court here Thursday rejected the plea of Delhi Police seeking five more days of custodial interrogation of businessman Navneet Kalra in connection with allegedly hoarding and black marketing life-saving oxygen concentrators amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kalra, who was produced before the court on expiry of his three days of police custody, was sent to 14 days of judicial custody. The order was passed by Metropolitan Magistrate Akanksha Garg.

The police sought extension of his custody on the grounds that he is required to be confronted with voluminous transactions, while Kalra's lawyer said that his interrogation is no more required. During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Kalra. The absconding businessman was nabbed from Gurugram May 16 night and formally arrested the next day.

Rohingyas battle Covid symptoms with home remedies

THE ROHINGYA MUSLIMS ARE THE MOST PERSECUTED MINORITY IN THE WORLD, THE UN HAS SAID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: With no money for treatment and no documents that will enable them to get vaccinated or tested, they are the Rohingyas, the nowhere people fending for themselves as a continuing pandemic pushes them further into the shadows of a city they call home.

The helplessness in the face of Covid-19 plays out in southeast Delhi's Madanpur Khadar, one of the several camps in the city for Rohingya Muslims where the refugees battle it out on their own without access to testing centres, vaccines or doctors. The government has eased testing and vaccine

guidelines even for those who don't have the requisite documentation, but many refugees said it hasn't made a tangible difference at the ground level.

The Madanpur Khadar camp is home to about 270 Rohingya Muslims, who fled their homes in Myanmar to escape persecution. Many of those living in the slum cluster said they have learnt to battle symptoms on their own - depending on home remedies such as saltwater gargles and withdrawing indoors into their cramped tenements to quarantine when they think it has gotten worse.

Among those showing symptoms is Amir, a young daily wageer who has been gargling with hot



Representative image

water four times a day to make his cough go away. It is helping somewhat but he doesn't know what he will do if the situation

aggravates. He doesn't have an Aadhaar card or any other document, and neither do his neighbours. Last month, when the pan-

demic was at its peak, about 50-60 Rohingya refugees in the Madanpur Khadar camp displayed Covid symptoms. It has now come down to about 20-25, the residents said. According to NGOs, there are around 40,000 Rohingyas living in India. There are about 900 Rohingyas living in Delhi in camps in Madanpur Khadar, Kalindi Kunj and Shaheen Bagh.

Naseer lost his wife six months ago. He thinks it was COVID-19 but can't be sure even though he somehow managed to take her to hospital. Many others are scared of doing so because they fear they will be deported if identified as refugees. "People feel if they go to hospital they will be identified

as outsiders," said the father of two. While untreated COVID-19 poses a risk not just for individuals but the community, it is not just about health for Rohingya Muslim refugees.

The majority of those in the Madanpur Khadar settlement and others work as daily wage and contract labourers, ragpickers and other odd jobs.

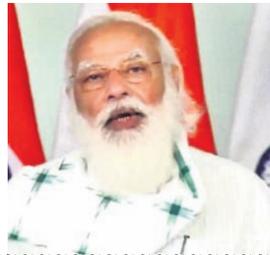
According to NGOs, there are about 40,000 Rohingyas in India. Of these, about 900 live in Delhi in camps in Madanpur Khadar, Kalindi Kunj and Shaheen Bagh. A representative of the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative said health facilities have always been a problem for the Rohingya refugees.

of the day quote

When the country needs to speak in one voice, the act of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a meeting of district magistrates with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is deeply regrettable and condemnable

In the seven elections that we won in Bengal, the central leadership had no role in selecting cabinet ministers. It's the job of the respective State Committees and here too that has happened

To effectively monitor the pandemic, India established a digitally enabled Covid War room at the central level as well as the state level to increase agility and enhance efforts in the fight against the virus



Every epidemic has taught us the importance of continuous innovation. The methods and strategies to deal with the pandemic should be dynamic as the virus is expert in mutation and changing form

NORTHEAST REPORTS 1ST 'BLACK FUNGUS' DEATH The northeast recorded its first death due to mucormycosis, commonly known as 'black fungus' when a 27-year-old man died at a private hospital here after his recovery from Covid, health officials said Thursday



'Black fungus' surges

The Union Health Ministry has urged states and union territories to make black fungus or mucormycosis a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, stating that the infection is leading to prolonged morbidity and mortality amongst Covid-19 patients

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 20: India has ordered tighter surveillance of a rare fungal disease hitting Covid-19 patients, officials said Thursday...

Mucormycosis, or "black fungus" usually infects people whose immune system has been compromised, causing blackening or discoloration over the nose, blurred or double vision, chest pain, breathing difficulties and coughing blood.

Doctors believe that the use of steroids to treat severe Covid-19 could be causing the rash of cases because those drugs reduce immunity and push up sugar levels.

Health Secretary Lav Agarwal said in a letter to state governments that mucormycosis had emerged as a new challenge for Covid-19 patients on steroid therapy and those with pre-existing diabetes.

"This fungal infection is leading to prolonged morbidity and mortality among Covid-19 patients," he said in the letter reviewed by Reuters Thursday.

He gave no numbers of the Mucormycosis cases nationwide but Maharashtra, one of the states worst hit in the second wave of coronavirus infections, has re-



ported 1,500 cases of it. Agarwal asked state governments to declare it as a "notifiable disease" under the Epidemics Act, meaning they have to identify and track every case.

India Thursday reported 276,110 new coronavirus infections over the previous 24 hours, slightly higher than a day earlier but well below the 400,000 high seen at the beginning of this month in a devastating second wave. The total caseload stands at 25.77 million, the world's second highest after the United States. Deaths rose by 3,874 overnight, taking the total tally 287,122.

But with hospitals and crema-

toria overflowing and the health system overwhelmed, it is widely accepted that the official figures grossly underestimate the real impact of the epidemic, with some experts saying infections and deaths could be five to 10 times higher.

The second wave has penetrated deep into the countryside and the additional burden of mucormycosis has hit a rural health system ill-equipped to cope.

SP Kalantari, a doctor based in Sevagram, a town in Maharashtra, said that a team including ear, nose, and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists and neurologists was needed to treat mucormycosis.

WHITE FUNGUS 'NEW HEADACHE'

Even as the Centre asks various state governments to declare mucormycosis or black fungus an epidemic amid the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a reason to worry as four cases of white fungus infection said to be more dangerous than black fungus have been reported from Patna, Bihar. The white fungus infection, which is said to be more dangerous than black fungus infection, affects lungs besides other body parts, including mouth, kidney, brain, stomach, nails, skin and private parts.

"Unfortunately, this kind of team does not exist in rural areas," Kalantari said. The Tamil Nadu government Thursday declared 'black fungus' or Mucormycosis as a notifiable disease after nine people were found to have been infected with it in the state.

"Currently nine people are being treated for the disease, of which six are old cases and three, new ones. Seven of them are diabetic... All are stable," health secretary J Radhakrishnan told reporters here.

Miscalculation led to ONGC barge disaster

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 20: Allegations are flying thick and fast after barge 'Pappa 305' sank due to Cyclone Tauktae leading to the death of 49 persons with 37 still missing. The Indian Navy and the Coast Guard have managed to rescue 186 people from the vessel which sunk.

Sources close to the ONGC and in the know of things attributed wrong information and miscalculation that led to the disaster. However, a section of the officials also held the captain responsible, stating he had the final decision to make.

Inadequate advance notice and miscalculations of Cyclone Tauktae's ferocity and its path may have contributed to a false belief that oilfield operations in the Arabian Sea need not be paused, said top sources close to ONGC.

"Installations used to find and produce oil and gas from under seabed is built to work in difficult weather conditions. In Mumbai offshore, these installations stand in water depth of between 75 metres and 200 metres," said an ONGC

source with direct knowledge of the matter.

"World over offshore oil and gas operations are shut down only if it is assessed that an event would be hard to handle. Such assessment depends on the weather inputs received by the operator. In the case of Tauktae, the predictions on speed, atmospheric pressure and route all went wrong," the source added.

Another source said the captains of the ships are the final decision-making authority. "We don't know yet why the captains choose to do what they did during the cyclone," the source said.

The Oil Ministry constituted Wednesday a high-level committee to enquire into the sequence of events leading to the stranding of the vessels. It will submit its report within one month. The committee comprising Amitabh Kumar, Director General of Shipping, SCL Das, Director General of Hydrocarbons, and Nazli Jafri Shayin, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence will submit its report within one month.



SHORT TAKES

Tauktae: Toll in Gujarat rises

Ahmedabad: As many as 53 people have lost their lives in incidents related to cyclone Tauktae in different parts of Gujarat, officials said Thursday. Most of the casualties were due to incidents of wall collapse due to the cyclone, which made a landfall Monday night near Una town in Gir-Somnath and wreaked havoc for around 28 hours before it weakened into a depression, an official from the State Emergency Operations Centre said.

Fire erupts in Delhi's ESI Hosp

New Delhi: A fire broke out at the ESI Hospital here Thursday, following which seven fire tenders have rushed to the spot, officials said. An official said that a call of fire from the OT room on the third floor of the hospital in Punjabi Bagh area was received at 1.16 p.m. He said that following the call, seven fire tenders were rushed to the hospital to douse the flames.

AP gov't presents Budget for 2021-22

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday presented its annual budget for the financial year 2021-22 and allotted a whopping ₹48,000 crore towards implementing 22 freebie schemes as the ruling YSR incorporated a 'gender budget' and 'child budget.' Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath presented the budget in the state Legislative Assembly after Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan's customary address to a joint sitting of the Council and the Assembly during the one-day session. Principal opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) boycotted the session over YSRP's 'misrule'.

DU postpones UG, PG final yr exams

New Delhi: The Delhi University Thursday postponed the undergraduate and postgraduate final year exams for the second time. The exams were earlier scheduled to start from May 15 but were postponed to June 1 owing to the spike in coronavirus cases across the country. On Thursday, the varsity released a new notification saying final semester/annual exams will commence from June 7, instead of June 1. The exams will be in the 'open book format' and will be held online.

329 DOCTORS SUCCUMBED TO nCoV DURING 2ND WAVE: IMA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: The Indian Medical Association Thursday released fresh figures on Covid-related fatalities among doctors, saying 329 of them succumbed to the disease during the ongoing second wave of the pandemic.



Bihar alone saw 80 deaths, the maximum among states, followed by Delhi (73), Uttar Pradesh (41), Andhra Pradesh (22) and Telangana (20), the IMA said.

According to the IMA Covid-19 registry, 748 doctors had died due

to the disease during the first wave of the pandemic. IMA President Dr JA Jayalal said the IMA maintains a registry based only on the input of its various branches across the country.

"We do not want to release the name list as it is a sensitive matter," he said. Asked as to how many of these doctors had been fully vaccinated, Dr Jayalal said, "We are not confident about the vaccination status of all. But by the data we got, not (being) fully vaccinated is the main cause (of the deaths)."

He further stated that on an average, at least 20 doctors are dying per day due to Covid-19. These include doctors working in government facilities, private hospitals and medical colleges. "The second wave of the pandemic is turning out to be extremely fatal for all and especially those who are at the forefront of the fight against Covid-19," Jayalal had said earlier.

WATER, WATER EVERY WHERE



Children play after heavy rain near a waterlogged underpass at Prahladpur area in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

'Provide free edu to kids orphaned during Covid-19'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: Congress president Sonia Gandhi Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free education in Navodaya Vidyalayas to children orphaned due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In her letter, Sonia Gandhi said the nation owes it to children to give them hope and provide them a robust future after their tragedy.

"I am writing to request you to consider providing free education at the Navodaya Vidyalayas to children who have lost either both parents or an earning parent on account of the Covid-19 pandemic," the Congress chief said. "I feel that as a nation, we owe it to them to give them hope for a robust future after the unimaginable tragedy that has befallen them," Sonia Gandhi said.

The BJP, however, took a swipe at the Congress chief, saying her idea of looking after kids orphaned during the pandemic is "outdated and copied". "Several state governments are already doing it except perhaps those run by the Congress. Instead of writing to the PM, she should have written to Amarinder Singh and Ashok Gehlot," BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said.

FIR against 350 farmers over violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hisar (Har), May 20: The Haryana police have registered a case against 350 unnamed farmers for allegedly attacking government employees and stone pelting during the protest against Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar who had inaugurated a Covid hospital here last week.

The case has been registered on the complaint of Inspector Virendra

PROTEST AGAINST HARYANA CM

Kumar, in-charge of Urban Estate Police Station, police said Thursday. The case has been registered under sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with a deadly weapon), 188 (obstructing public servant in discharge of his public functions), 307 (attempt to murder), 353 (assault or use of criminal force to

deter a public servant from discharge of his duty) of the Indian Penal Code, a district police spokesperson said. Twenty policemen, including five women officials, were injured in the clash between the farmers and the police Sunday, officials said. The police had lobbed tear gas shells and used force to disperse a group of farmers who tried to march towards the venue where Khattar had gone to inaugurate the Covid hospital May 16.

Police thrash woman for not wearing mask

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sagar, May 20: A woman was allegedly beaten up and dragged by some police personnel on a road for not wearing a face mask while going out to buy vegetables in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district, leading the administration to suspend two cops Thursday.

After a video of the incident, which took place Monday in Rahli town, went viral, a police official said the woman allegedly hit a female cop first. Taking the incident

seriously, Sagar districts Superintendent of Police (SP) Atul Singh, after a probe, suspended Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) LN Tiwari and woman constable Archana Dimha. "The two did not handle the situation in a professional manner and damaged the image of police," said an order issued by the SP. The victim and her daughter were stopped by police around 11 am Monday for not wearing face masks, a mandatory requirement during the coronavirus pandemic, as per case details.

'PoK separatists trying to foment trouble in Kashmir'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, May 20: Peeved over the silence of leaders of separatist groups, their factions in Pakistan and in occupied-Kashmir are making desperate attempts to foment trouble in Jammu and Kashmir by giving calls from across the border for 'bandhs' and strikes to mark the death anniversary of Mirwaiz Farooq and Abdul Gani Lone, officials said Thursday.

The death anniversary of both the leaders falls Friday. Farooq and Lone were killed by terrorists in 1990 and 2002 for opposing growing gun culture in the Kashmir Valley. They were both considered



advocates of finding a lasting solution through peaceful means.

Officials keeping a watch on developments in the union territory as well as monitoring activities of separatists and terror activities

from across the border, noted that a release issued by the Awami Action Committee (AAC) earlier this week had urged people to pray for Mirwaiz Farooq at their homes due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The AAC is being headed by Umer Farooq, who is the son of the assassinated religious leader and an anointed Mirwaiz or religious head.

However, peeved over this continued approach of not holding protests or giving 'hartal' calls, the faction of the moderate Hurriyat Conference in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir Wednesday issued a release calling for total shutdown besides holding demonstrations.

Separatists in Jammu and Kashmir have been maintaining a low profile after a series of raids by the Income Tax Department, the National Investigation Agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate. The agencies have questioned their

funding pattern and even booked several second-rung leaders for indulging in anti-India activities.

Mirwaiz Farooq was shot dead by three terrorists May 21, 1990, and it was conspired by then so-called commander of banned Hizbul Mujahideen Abduallah Bangroo.

Abdul Gani Lone was shot dead on the same day in 2002 at an eidgah when he was on his way to pay homage to Farooq Mirwaiz. What these two killings had in common was that both these leaders wanted Pakistan to stop aiding terror groups in the Valley, the officials said.

In the later part of 2000, Lone during a meeting had made it clear to the then Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf that Islamabad should

stop arming terror groups in Kashmir, the officials said citing records of investigations carried out.

Lone before his assassination had indicated to the Pakistani establishment and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) during a meeting in Dubai that he would be participating in the assembly elections that were slated to be held in 2002, they said.

However, before he could announce the same, he was silenced by the terrorists. Lone's difference of opinion with the Pakistani establishment and continued rift with the ISI was becoming a major obstacle for Islamabad's Kashmir policy and his soft corner for democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir resulted in his assassination, the officials said.

international



Refugees are not commodities that can be traded by wealthier nations. To do so is dehumanizing, exploitative and dangerous. UNHCR remains firmly opposed to externalization initiatives that forcibly transfer asylum seekers to other countries
GILLIAN TRIGGS | ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, UNHCR

CHINA'S BYTEDANCE FOUNDER ZHANG YIMING STEPS DOWN

ByteDance Ltd co-founder billionaire Zhang Yiming Thursday announced that he will step down as CEO, a major leadership shake-up at the technology firm which created the popular short-video app TikTok



of the day quote

Out of 1.4 billion doses administered around the world today, only 24 million have reached Africa - less than two per cent. Equitable and sustainable vaccine roll-out worldwide is the quickest path towards a fast and fair recovery

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

To date, the US has provided over USD 500 million in Covid relief to India, including contributions from the US federal and state governments, American companies and organizations and private citizens

JEN PSAKI | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY, US

The economic sections of Defence Ministry, along with the Iranian private sectors, are ready to participate in the reconstruction of Syria to meet the needs of our friend and brother country

AMIR HATAMI | DEFENCE MINISTER, IRAN

US-Russia crisis looms as envoys meet

The nuclear powers are at odds on myriad issues including Ukraine, the Arctic, Russia's treatment of Alexey Navalny and accusations of cyber malfeasance, including claims for a ransomware attack on a key US pipeline

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Reykjavik, May 20: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met here for the first time, expressing willingness to cooperate but also admitted "serious differences" amid tense relations between the two countries.

Meeting with his counterpart on the sidelines of an Arctic Council meeting in the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik, Lavrov Wednesday said Moscow and Washington have to decide on their further cooperation despite the "serious differences" on a series of issues between the two sides, reports Xinhua news agency. "We have serious differences in the assessment of the international situation, we have serious differences in the approaches to the tasks which have to be solved for its normalisation," Lavrov said.

"Our position is very simple," the Russian diplomat said. For his part, Blinken said the administration of President Joe Biden seeks "a predictable, stable relationship" with Russia, noting that Washington wants to work with Moscow on some areas of mutual interests, including the anti-pandemic fight, climate change, as well as the nuclear issues related to Iran and the Korean Peninsula.

But at the beginning of his



It would be our preference to have a more stable and more predictable relationship with Russia. At the same time, we'll respond if Russia chooses to take aggressive actions that target our interests or those of our allies

ANTONY BLINKEN | US SECRETARY OF STATE

We are ready to discuss all the issues without exception, but under the perception that the discussion will be honest, with the facts on the table, and of course on the basis of mutual respect

SERGEY LAVROV | RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

speech, Blinken said that it was "no secret that we have our differences" and that Washington would respond "if Russia acts aggressively".

In a tweet later, the Secretary of State said that he "also reiterated our resolve in response to Russian actions" against Ukraine and opposition figure Alexei Navalny,

who is currently jailed.

Wednesday's meeting will be the first between a member of US President Joe Biden's administration and a high-ranking Russian official.

Last week, the State Department had said that the focus of the talks between Blinken and Lavrov will be whether an agreement will

HUNGARY OPTS OUT

EU signs new deal with Pfizer-BioNTech

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, May 20: The European Union's executive arm Thursday finalised a third vaccine contract with Pfizer and BioNTech through 2023 for an additional 1.8 billion doses of their Covid-19 shot to share between the bloc's countries except for Hungary, which opted out of the deal.

The European commission said the contract, which was agreed on behalf of all 27 EU countries earlier this month, will allow the buying of 900 million doses of the current shots and of a serum adapted to the 'virus' variants, with an option to purchase an extra 900 million shots.

Although EU nations agreed to keep on with their strategy of buying doses collectively, Hungary decided not to be part of the new purchase agreement that followed previous agreements with the two companies for 600 million shots.

"Therefore it will not be covered by the contract," EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said following a meeting with health ministers from the region. "All other member states will have the opportunity to purchase vaccines under the new contract."

Hungary is using vaccines from China and Russia in addition to



The Commission said that under the new deal EU countries will have the possibility to donate some of their allocated doses to non-EU countries or through the UN-backed effort known as COVAX

Western jabs. About 40 per cent of Hungary's population has received at least one dose of vaccine, the second-highest vaccination rate in the EU.

EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen told an event organized by Germany's WDR public television that, by the end of this week, 260 million doses of vaccine will have been delivered in Europe. She acknowledged that countries such as the US and UK were faster to start with, but said "that has been put into perspective over time."

SHORT TAKES

Annual defence summit cancelled

Singapore: An upcoming annual meeting of Defence Ministers and security officials in Singapore has been cancelled for the second year in a row due to "uncertainty" over the Covid-19 pandemic, organisers said Thursday. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London-based think tank, said that holding an in-person Shangri-la Dialogue "has become infeasible" due to uncertainty caused by "the deteriorating global Covid-19 situation."

US House approves Capitol riot probe

Washington: The US House of Representatives voted to pass a legislation to create an independent commission to probe the January 6 Capitol riot, that resulted in five deaths. The bill passed Wednesday mostly along party lines, with 35 defected Republicans joining 217 Democrats in supporting the creation of the investigative panel. The legislation now goes to the Senate, Mitch McConnell, said he opposed the measure, casting further doubt over it becoming law, which will require at least 10 party Senators to sign on to it so as to overcome the filibuster.

Oli flouts election code of conduct

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has faced flak for violating the election code of conduct by appealing for votes for a candidate, contesting the National Assembly by-election, during the silence period. The Election Commission Wednesday indirectly mentioned in a press statement that Oli violated the election code of conduct by asking to vote for Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, a candidate for the National Assembly by-election in Bagmati being held Thursday.

UK Prince jabbed

London: Prince William said Thursday he has received his first dose of Covid-19 vaccine as Britain's National Health Service expands its inoculation program to younger people. William, 38, received his shot at London's Science Museum, one of the large-scale vaccination centers opened around the country. A photo of the prince receiving his shot was posted on his social media account.

UK's train network back under government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, May 20: Britain plans to bring the national rail network back under government control, reversing one of the most controversial elements of the privatization drive carried out by the Conservative governments of the 1980's and '90s.

Under plans announced Thursday, the government will create a new entity known as Great British Railways that will own all railroad infrastructure, set most fares and schedules, collect ticket revenue and run a single ticketing website. Private companies will continue to operate trains under contracts with the state.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government said the move would end "a quarter-century of frag-



mentation" that created a confusing, expensive patchwork of privately run rail franchises.

That system was created after the railroads were privatised in the 1990's under former Prime Minister John Major who, like Johnson, led a Conservative Party government.

While the government continued to own infrastructure such as railroad tracks and stations, rail services were run by private companies

The government will create a new entity known as Great British Railways that will own all railroad infrastructure, set most fares and schedules, collect ticket revenue and run a single ticketing website

under a series of regional franchises. That led to high prices, inefficiency and a series of embarrassing episodes in recent years when the rollout of new schedules left commuters stranded and frustrated by a shortage of trains.

PM's prospects bolstered amid Gaza conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, May 20: Israel is at war with Hamas, Jewish-Arab mob violence has erupted inside Israel, and the West Bank is experiencing its deadliest unrest in years. Yet this may all bolster Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Just over a week ago, the long-time Israeli leader's political career seemed all but over: He had failed to form a coalition government following an indecisive parliamentary election, and his political rivals were on the cusp of pushing him out of office.

Now, as Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers wage their fourth war in just over a decade, Netanyahu's fortunes have changed dramatically. His rivals' prospects have crumbled,



Netanyahu is back in his comfortable role as Mr Security, and the country could soon be headed for yet another election campaign that

would guarantee him at least several more months in office.

While opponents have stopped short of accusing him of hatching just such a conspiracy, they say the fact that these questions are being asked is disturbing enough.

"If we had a government, security considerations would not be mixed with political considerations," opposition leader Yair Lapid wrote on Facebook. "No one would ask themselves why the fire always breaks out just when it's most convenient for the prime minister."

Itamar Ben-Gvir, a leader of a racist anti-Arab party aligned with Netanyahu, temporarily set up what he called a "parliamentary office" in the neighborhood, further enraging residents.

BLAZING BUSHFIRE



Flames rise as firefighters and volunteers try to extinguish a fire burning in the village of Schinos, near Corinth, Greece

Vienna talks to end in Iran's victory: Rouhani

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tehran, May 20: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that the ongoing talks in Vienna on the 2015 nuclear deal will end in Tehran's victory.

"I promise to the Iranian nation that the end of the Vienna talks is the victory belonging to us," Xinhua news agency quoted Rouhani as saying Wednesday. He added that Iran has "taken great steps" in the talks over the past days.

The current talks in the Austrian capital between Iran and the P4+1 (the UK, France, Russia and China plus Germany) are aimed at the revival of the 2015 nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The Iranian government's goal in the negotiations was to make the "enemy" accept its

US-IRAN N-DEAL



mistakes, Rouhani said in a cabinet meeting.

"Today, we have done this. The new US government has repeatedly said maximum pressure on the Iranian people and government (via sanctions) was wrong, and it has accepted the defeat," the President added.

Earlier in the day, Iran's senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi said "good progress" has been made in the Vienna talks over the past two weeks.

4 TIMES BIGGER THAN NEW YORK

World's largest iceberg breaks off in Antarctica as glaciers retreat

THE NEWLY CALVED ICEBERG A-76'S SURFACE AREA SPANS 4,320 SQUARE KM AND MEASURES 175 KM LONG BY 25 KM WIDE

AGENCIES

Washington, May 20: A giant slab of ice bigger than the Spanish island of Majorca has sheared off from the frozen edge of Antarctica into the Weddell Sea, becoming the largest iceberg afloat in the world, the European Space Agency said Wednesday.

The newly calved berg, designated A-76 by scientists, was spotted in recent satellite images captured by the Copernicus Sentinel-1 mission, the space agency said in a statement posted on its website with a photo of the enormous, oblong ice sheet.

Its surface area spans 4,320 square

km and measures 175 km long by 25 km wide. By comparison, Spain's tourist island of Majorca in the Mediterranean occupies 3,640 square km. The US state of Rhode Island is smaller still, with a land mass of just 2,678 square km.

The enormity of A-76, which broke away from Antarctica's Ronne Ice Shelf, ranks as the largest existing iceberg on the planet, surpassing the now second-place A-23A, about 3,380 square km in size and also floating in the Weddell Sea.

Another massive Antarctic iceberg that had threatened a penguin-populated island off the southern tip of South America has since lost much of its mass and broken



into pieces, scientists said earlier this year.

A-76 was first detected by the British Antarctic Survey and confirmed by the Maryland-based US

National Ice Center using imagery from Copernicus Sentinel-1, consisting of two polar-orbiting satellites.

The Ronne Ice Shelf near the

Some ice shelves along the Antarctic peninsula, farther from the South Pole, have undergone rapid disintegration in recent years, a phenomenon scientists believe may be related to global warming

base of the Antarctic Peninsula is one of the largest of several enormous floating sheets of ice that connect to the continent's landmass and extend out into sur-

rounding seas.

Periodic calving of large chunks of those shelves is part of a natural cycle, and the breaking off of A-76, which is likely to split into two or three pieces soon, is not linked to climate change, said Ted Scambos, a research glaciologist at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Scambos said the Ronne and another vast ice shelf, the Ross, have "behaved in a stable, quasi-periodic fashion" over the past century or more. Because the ice was already floating in the sea before dislodging from the coast, its break-away does not raise ocean levels.

business



I do not have any doubt why we will not be buying Iranian crude if sanctions are lifted. Iranian crude is favourable to Indian refineries
SK GUPTA | DIRECTOR (FINANCE), IOC

ADANI, NOW 2ND RICHEST ASIAN

Indian business magnate Gautam Adani has surged past Chinese billionaire Zong Shanshan to emerge as Asia's second richest person, according to a Billionaires Index. The Adani Group chief's net worth stood at \$66.5bn against Zhong Shanshan's \$63.6 bn. Adani, now stands only behind RIL's Mukesh Ambani, in terms of most wealth owned by an individual in Asia



of the day quote

Modi government is fully committed to farmers' welfare. The Centre has recently transferred more than ₹20,000 crore to farmers under the PM-KISAN programme. In view of the rising global prices of DAP fertiliser, the PM called a meeting and decided to hike subsidy to ensure domestic retail prices remain unchanged
NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has inundated India's health infrastructure. To support India in combating this unprecedented health crisis, we have collaborated with the state governments to augment the scarce supply of life-saving oxygen
ABHILESH GUPTA | MD, CITY GAS DISTRIBUTION, AG&P PRATHAM, INDIA

There is a rise in cyber frauds amid a massive surge in online transactions during the second wave of the pandemic. Airtel is working relentlessly and coming out with safety features to ensure that the customers are not vulnerable to fraudsters
GOPAL VITTAL | CEO, AIRTEL

India 2nd to US in asking FB for 'user data' in H2 2020

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 20: Social media giant Facebook said it has received 40,300 requests from the Indian government for user data in the second half of 2020. This was 13.3 per cent higher than the January-June 2020 period when India had made 35,560 total requests, according to the Facebook's latest Transparency Report.

The US-based company restricted access to 878 items in India during the second half of 2020 in response to directions from the IT Ministry for violating Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, including content against security of the state and public order. According to the report, India made 40,300 total requests in the July-December 2020 period, of which 37,865 were legal process re-



quests and 2,435 were emergency disclosure requests.

The number of total requests made by India ranked second to the US, which had made 61,262 requests during the July-December 2020 period. Globally, government requests for user data increased by about 10 per cent to 1,91,013 in the second half of 2020 from 173,592 in the first half of 2020. Information related to 62,754

users/accounts were requested in India, and some data was produced for 52 per cent of the requests.

"Facebook responds to government requests for data in accordance with applicable law and our terms of service. Each and every request we receive is carefully reviewed for legal sufficiency and we may reject or require greater specificity on requests that appear overly broad or vague," the report said.

Globally, government requests for user data increased by about 10% to 1,91,013 in the second half of 2020 from 1,73,592 in the first half of 2020

Facebook said that during the July-December 2020 period, it had "restricted access in India to 878 items in response to directions from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for violating Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, including content against security of the state and public order". Of these, 10 were restricted temporarily, it added.

"We also restricted access to 54 items in compliance with court

orders. In response to an order from Justice Alexandre de Moraes of Brazil's Supreme Court related to 12 profiles and Pages of supporters of Brazilian President Bolsonaro, we restricted access globally to this content, including in India," it added.

Facebook noted that while it respects the law in countries where it operates, it "strongly" opposes extraterritorial legal demands such as the one resulting in these restrictions. The social media giant also released its Community Standards Enforcement Report for the first quarter of 2021.

As per the Community Standards Enforcement Report, content actioned on adult nudity and sexual activity increased to 31.8 million in first quarter of 2021 from 28.1 million pieces of content in the preceding quarter.

Centre extends FY21 ITR filing deadline by two months



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: The government Thursday extended the due date of filing income tax returns for 2020-21 for individuals by two months till September 30. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has also extended the ITR filing deadline for companies by a month till November 30.

As per the income tax law, for individuals whose accounts are not required to be audited and who usually file their income tax return using ITR-1 or ITR-4 forms the deadline to file ITR is July 31. The deadline for taxpayers, like companies or firms, whose accounts are required to be audited is October 31.

In a circular, the CBDT said an extension of time limits is being given for certain tax compliances "to provide relief to taxpayers in view of the severe pandemic".

Also, the deadline for issuing Form 16 by employers to employees has been extended by a month till July 15, 2021, the CBDT said.

The due date for filing the tax audit report and transfer pricing certificate has been extended by a month till October 31 and November 30, respectively. For filing belated or revised return of income, the due date is now January 31, 2022.

Besides, the deadline for financial institutions to furnish the Statement of Financial Transaction (SFT) report has been extended till June 30, from May 31, 2021.

DOMESTIC AUTO INDUSTRY

'Second wave derails recovery momentum'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 20: The second wave of the pandemic in the country has derailed the recovery momentum of the domestic auto industry, which was poised for a comeback in the current fiscal after witnessing the two consecutive challenging years, ratings agency ICRA said Thursday.

Unlike the first wave where infections were largely localised to urban clusters, the second wave has seen deeper and wider penetration, including into rural hinterlands. Accordingly, outlook for various segments has been revised downwards, it said.

While pick-up in the vaccination drive is expected to support flattening of the curve going forward, an elongated recovery cycle or possibility of a third wave offers further downside risks to ICRA's volume estimates, according to ICRA.

Many auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and auto ancillaries resorted to plant shutdowns as a restrictive measure. The automotive dealerships across regions have also not been operational in light of regional restrictions imposed by various states and local authorities in order to



The second wave of the pandemic, the intensity of which has taken the entire country by surprise, is expected to impact near-term automobile purchases across segments

SHAMSHER DEWAN | VICE-PRESIDENT AND GROUP HEAD, ICRA RATINGS

curb the pandemic, it said.

The agency added that as per an ICRA note, while these would cause near-term supply disruptions in the sector, the larger and prolonged impact is likely to be on account of the impact on various demand drivers. Accordingly,

the ratings agency has revised the growth estimates for most of the different automotive segments downwards.

Segment-wise, ICRA said, the two-wheeler volumes are expected to be the most impacted, with the target consumer segment's affordability and demand sentiment sharply hit by the second wave.

Accordingly, domestic two-wheeler volumes in 2021-22 are expected to grow 10-12 per cent now as against 16-18 per cent earlier. The passenger vehicle segment may see a lower growth of 17-20 per cent now as against 22-25 per cent expected earlier, as per ICRA estimates.

SHORT TAKES

Britain clears \$44bn merger

London: Britain's competition regulator cleared a \$44 billion merger between broadband company Virgin Media and Telefonica's UK mobile network O2 Thursday, after a months-long review. Virgin owner Liberty Global and Spain's Telefonica, who agreed a year ago to forge a broadband and mobile powerhouse to challenge market leader BT, hailed the decision as "a watershed moment in the history of telecommunications in the UK".

Bosch Q4 net jumps six-fold

New Delhi: Auto component major Bosch Thursday posted a six-fold increase in its consolidated net profit to ₹482 crore for the fourth quarter ended on March 31, 2021, driven by robust sales. The company had reported a net profit of ₹81 crore during the January-March quarter of 2019-20. Revenue from operations rose to ₹3,218 crore during Q4, Bosch Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

Mercedes-Benz extends warranty

New Delhi: German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz Thursday said it has extended warranty and free service period for its customers till June 30 in view of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in the country. Standard warranty cases expiring between April 15 and May 31 will be honoured up to June 30, while claims related to advance assurance extended warranty lapsed within the same time period can be reported till June 30, Mercedes-Benz India said.

KMBL issues first FPI license

Mumbai: Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL Bank) Thursday announced that it has issued the first-ever FPI license to the GIFT IFSC AIF of True Beacon Global. This is the first FPI license issued to an AIF incorporated in GIFT IFSC by any custodian bank/DDP in the country. KMBL's President, BFIG, Sachin Samant said, "FPIs are now a reality through GIFT IFSC. We look forward to on-boarding new investors and providing them with a wide range of services."

TPCODL'S VIOLATION

AOECA seeks state govt's intervention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 20: All Orissa Electrical Contractors' Association (AOECA) sought state government's intervention concerning the matter on Tata Power Discoms' violation against OERC rules and Odisha Electricity Act.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, AOECA president Asis Kumar Some said, "Tata Power (TPCODL) implemented the release of system-based new connection process vide its Sandesh dated May 2, 2021 where they abolish the 6% deposit works scheme by deviating the OERC norms."

If it is implemented, over 3,000 licensed contractors, 5,000 sub-contractors, thousands of MSME manufacturing units and traders will be jobless, resulting in reduction of state economy which will also minimise the additional employment to Odisha Electrical Engineers," Some added.

AOECA also alleged that TPCODL is exploiting the electrical contractors in Odisha. The association also claimed that Tata Power has allotted maximum number of construction and maintenance contracts and started execution of the maintenance works through the contractors of other states.

Tourism sector seeks GST cut

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 20: FAITH, the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry in India, has made suggestions to the Finance Ministry and Tourism Ministry for GST rationalisation of Indian tourism value chain, to be taken up in the upcoming GST council meeting next week.

FAITH has suggested to initiate the process of undertaking a review and rationalisation of GST applicable across different aspects of the Indian tourism, travel and hospitality industry. It said that this rationalisation will enable some rationale support once the tourism industry attempts to begin its long crawl back from the pandemic. Some of the measures suggested



are hotels to be allowed to charge IGT which will enable seamless availability of credit across India to all travel agents and tour operators and will thereby lead to building up a sustainable domestic holidays, meetings and conventions business within the country.

Tour operators to be enabled a special presumptive GST rate of 1.8 per cent with full GST setoffs. The current rate of 5 per cent without setoffs structurally implies that tour operators have an inbuilt

margin of around 27.8 per cent which is an inherently flawed assumption in the internet economy.

Travel Agents be also allowed the option of exploring the reseller model for charging as they are distribution arms for airlines. This option will enable travel agents to structure optimal partnerships as per their business requirements between their clients and their airline partners.

Tourist transporters be allowed the provision for availing GST setoffs on interstate tourist transport taxes, taxes on parking fees and on taxes on fuel which is their biggest input costs.

Restaurants should be also allowed the option of charging GST at 12 per cent with full input tax credits and the rate should be delinked from any room tariffs if they are part of hotels.

Second wave humanitarian crisis, not economic: Report

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 20: The second wave of the pandemic in India is more of a humanitarian crisis rather than an economic one, and is likely to have peaked, a Japanese brokerage said Thursday.

Nomura said it expects the overall hit to sequential growth in April-June to be much less severe than last year when there was a complete nationwide lockdown, and less than what the drop in mobility suggests. It estimated the economy to contract by only 3.8 per cent in June quarter as compared with March quarter.

"...Lockdowns are more nuanced



NOMURA EXPECTS COST PRESSURES TO INTENSIFY FROM SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS, HIGH GLOBAL COMMODITY PRICES AND RISING RURAL WAGES, AND THE CORE INFLATION REMAINING AT AN ELEVATED 5.3% FOR 2021

MAN-MADE DISASTER

The Japanese financial holding company expects the overall hit to sequential growth in April-June to be much less severe than last year when there was a complete nationwide lockdown

Highlighting that the improving global growth will act as a tailwind, Nomura said it expects the current lockdowns to last six more weeks

Maintaining its 10.8% GDP growth estimate for 2021-22, the brokerage said the full impact of easy financial conditions should become visible as the pandemic's uncertainty ebbs and vaccinations rise

this time and consumers and businesses have adapted," it said, adding that international experience also suggests the same.

Highlighting that the improving global growth will act as a tailwind, the brokerage said it expects the current lockdowns to last six more weeks.

The brokerage said vaccinations are "trailing" at present, but the pace of inoculation will pick up after June as its analysis indicates increased supply.

"We expect half of the population to be fully vaccinated by end-2021 and India to reach its vaccine pivot point in Q3 (September quarter), which should boost domestic

consumption," it added.

Maintaining its 10.8 per cent GDP growth estimate for 2021-22, Nomura said the full impact of easy financial conditions should become visible as the pandemic's uncertainty ebbs and vaccinations rise. However, in what can be a potential area of concern, the brokerage said it expects cost pressures to intensify from supply chain disruptions, high global commodity prices and rising rural wages, and the core inflation remaining at an elevated 5.3 per cent for 2021.

"We expect a reverse repo rate hike in October and maintain our call for 0.50 per cent of repo rate hikes in H12022," it said.

REDS BACK IN TOP 4



RIGHT ON TRACK: Liverpool players celebrate after scoring one of their three goals against Burnley in their away fixture, Wednesday

With only final round to go, Liverpool displace Leicester on goal difference to occupy 4th position in Premier League standings and in contention for Champions League berth

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, May 20: There was no need for a goalkeeping goalkeeper this time. Liverpool's latest win in the Premier League — 3-0 at Burnley Wednesday — was far more routine than the one secured by goalkeeper Alisson's sensational stoppage-time header at the weekend. It was no less vital, though. Liverpool will head into Sunday's final round back in the top four, if only on goal difference, as last season's runaway champions look to clinch qualification for the Champions League — a possibility that looked so unlikely a month ago.

With two qualifying spots up for grabs to join Manchester City and Manchester United, Chelsea are in third place on 67 points, one more than both Liverpool and fifth-place Leicester.

Liverpool have a superior goal difference to Leicester of four, so any kind of victory over Crystal Palace should be enough for Jurgen Klopp's team to finish in the top four.

Leicester closes the season at home to Tottenham and will need to pile up the goals if Chelsea and Liverpool win. Chelsea are away to Aston Villa.

Since a 1-1 home draw with Newcastle April 24 that left Klopp fearing the worst, Liverpool has won four straight games — against Southampton, Manchester United, West Bromwich Albion and now Burnley — to reel in Leicester.

Three days after Alisson's winner at West Brom, it was another Brazil international — Roberto Firmino — who put Liverpool ahead at Turf Moor by converting a cross from Andrew Robertson in the 43rd minute.

Nat Phillips, the reserve center back filling in so admirably amid a glut of injuries in that position, scored the second goal with a header from Sadio Mane's cross in the 52nd. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain added a third in the 88th.

The other thing to be decided on the final day of the season will be which teams qualify for UEFA's minor European competitions, the

Europa League and the newly created Europa Conference League.

West Ham is in a good position to finish sixth and qualify for the Europa League after beating West Brom 3-1. Seventh-place Tottenham lost 1-2 to Aston Villa, in what could be Harry Kane's final home game for the club, and is now tied on points with Everton, who beat Wolverhampton 1-0 at home thanks to Richarlison's header.

Arsenal are a point further back in ninth after a 3-1 win at Crystal Palace. Newcastle won 1-0 at home to Sheffield United in Wednesday's other game.

KANE FAREWELL!

Kane looked emotional after the final whistle of the Villa game as he walked around the field away from his teammates at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, applauding the fans who had stayed behind.

The England captain has reportedly asked to be sold after becoming unhappy with the lack of progress at the club. The manner of the defeat to Villa highlighted that, with the team jeered by sup-

porters who were back in the stadium in small numbers after an easing of pandemic restrictions.

Villa recovered from conceding an eighth-minute goal by Steven Bergwijn to score twice before half-time, with Tottenham left back Sergio Reguilon slicing in a comical own-goal and then twice failing to clear to allow Ollie Watkins to run through and finish.

There was worse to come Wednesday for Tottenham, with Arsenal winning at Palace an hour later to close within a point of their north London rival. Tottenham visit Leicester and Arsenal host Brighton on the final day.

Gabriel Martinelli and Nicolas Pepe, with his second of the match, scored in second-half stoppage time to secure the win for Arsenal. Christian Benteke netted for Palace for the fourth straight game.

CLOSE TO EUROPE

West Ham only need a point at home to Southampton to secure sixth place and a spot in the Europa League. That would mark the team's highest position in the league since 1999.

Juventus win Italian Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Reggio Emilia (Italy), May 20: Gianluigi Buffon lifted the last trophy of his glittering Juventus career after his team beat Atalanta 2-1 in the Italian Cup to put some shine on a disappointing season.

It was a record-extending 14th Italian Cup title for Juventus Wednesday, and a first for star forward Cristiano Ronaldo after the Bianconeri lost the final last year. "Today was a great emotion. To finish like this makes me proud and I was delighted to share with my teammates many adventures up to this final," the 43-year-old Buffon said.

"The fans today were the icing on the cake. They, the Juventus people, the managers, the president and my teammates will always be a part of my life. I think I have given so much love, professionalism, pride and courage every time I took to the field with this shirt and I am proud of this."

Fans were able to celebrate inside the stadium for one of the first times in Italy in more than a year. About 4,300 supporters were

allowed to attend after the Italian government gave its approval for the Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia to be at 20 per cent capacity.

Fans have been barred from matches in Italy for the majority of the past year because of the coronavirus pandemic, apart from a brief period shortly after the start of the season when up to 1,000 spectators were allowed into stadiums.

Dejan Kulusevski and Federico Chiesa scored for Juventus, either side of Ruslan Malinovsky's equaliser for Atalanta shortly before half-time. It was Pirlo's second trophy in his first season as a coach, having steered Juventus to the Italian Super Cup in January.

However, Juventus saw their nine-year reign as Serie A champion ended by Inter Milan and is in danger of finishing outside the top four and missing out on a Champions League place.

Atalanta were bidding for their first Italian Cup trophy since 1963. They had lost three previous finals, including in 2019 to Lazio.

Gian Piero Gasperini's lineup almost got off to the perfect start as Duvan Zapata forced his way

into the left side of the area before pulling back for José Palomino but Buffon saved the shot with his legs.

The World Cup-winning goalkeeper is set to leave Juventus — for the second time — at the end of the season.

Juventus took the lead against the run of play in the 31st minute as Juan Cuadrado sparked a counterattack and Weston McKennie rolled across for Kulusevski to curl into the far corner.

Atalanta levelled 10 minutes later when Remo Freuler managed to win the ball in a duel with Juventus midfielder Adrien Rabiot and spread it to the right. It was then rolled across for Malinovsky to smash it into the roof of the net.

Juventus almost restored its lead on the hour as Ronaldo's back-heeled flick released Chiesa, but his effort came off the right post, with Atalanta goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini beaten.

The Bianconeri did score the winner 12 minutes later when Chiesa played a one-two with Kulusevski before drilling into the left side of the net from close range.



PARISIANS DEFEAT MONACO 2-0 TO RETAIN FRENCH CUP TITLE Mbappe brilliance lifts PSG

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, May 20: Kylian Mbappe scored one goal and set up the other as Paris Saint-Germain stayed on course for a domestic double by beating Monaco 2-0 to retain the French Cup.

PSG's record-extending 14th cup win was given a helping hand after a terrible defensive error gifted an early goal to striker Mauro Icardi Wednesday. He was set up by Mbappe, who then netted his 41st goal of the season late on.

French President Emmanuel Macron met the players before the game at Stade de France, speaking at length to Monaco striker Wissam Ben Yedder and several others.

The sides met for the third time in the final, with PSG triumphing by the same score in 1985.

Monaco beat PSG twice in the league this season, but flopped this time and never looked like winning the competition for the sixth time and first since '91.

PSG was in control but without



STAR OF THE SHOW: Kylian Mbappe poses with the winners' trophy for a photograph as his teammates busy with celebration, Wednesday

creating a chance until a big mistake from Monaco central defender Axel Disasi in the 19th minute. He failed to control a simple pass from his goalkeeper on the edge of the penalty area, and Mbappe took the ball off him before giving Icardi an open goal.

PSG created little after that, but neither did Monaco and coach Niko Kovac replaced the surprisingly ineffective Ben Yedder with Stevan Jovetic with about 30 minutes left.

PSG had a narrow escape soon after when a right-wing cross from Gelson Martins looped over goalkeeper Keylor Navas and hit the crossbar.

Mbappe also hit the bar with a fine chip in the 80th, but clipped a shot into the bottom corner from Angel Di Maria's pass moments later.

PSG trails league leader Lille by one point heading into Sunday's final round of games.

CRICKET ROUND-UP

Dravid to be head coach for Sri Lanka series

NEW DELHI: National Cricket Academy (NCA) chief and former India captain Rahul Dravid is set to be the head coach of the Indian white-ball squad that will tour Sri Lanka in July. Dravid, who stopped travelling with the India A and U-19 teams after taking over as NCA head in Bangalore, will be the head coach of the second-string side in the absence of Ravi Shastri, who will be busy with the Test side in England at the same time. "He will travel with the team to Sri Lanka in all likelihood," a BCCI source told PTI. Bowling coach Paras Mhambrey will also be a part of the support staff. India are expected to play three ODIs and as many T20s in Sri Lanka in July though the schedule has not been announced yet. Hardik Pandya, Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer are in the running for captaincy.

World T20 should be held elsewhere: Hussey

SYDNEY: Former Australia batsman Mike Hussey, who tested positive for COVID-19 in IPL's bio-bubble, has advocated moving this year's T20 World Cup from India to the UAE as he feels teams will be 'nervous' to travel there because of the raging pandemic. "I think it's going to be very difficult in my view to play that tournament in India," Hussey told 'Fox Cricket' upon his return to Sydney, where he is undergoing a 14-day quarantine. "We're talking about eight teams in the IPL. I think there are probably similar number, maybe more teams coming in from overseas (for the World T20), there'd be more venues. As I said earlier, if they're playing in different cities, that is when the risk goes up. I think they'll have to look some pretty big contingency plans, perhaps looking at the UAE or somewhere like that that could host the World T20. I think there will be a lot of cricket boards around the world that'd be pretty nervous about going back to India for a cricket tournament," said Hussey. UAE has already emerged as the back-up venue and the ICC is likely to take a call on the tournament June 1.

4,000 fans to be allowed for WTC final

SOUTHAMPTON: The World Test Championship (WTC) final between India and New Zealand in Southampton will be held in the presence of 4000 spectators, Hampshire County Club head Rod Bransgrove has said. The COVID-19 situation has improved in the UK and around 1500 people were allowed to watch the county game between Leicestershire and Hampshire at the Ageas Bowl, which hosts the WTC final from June 18. "We're staging a four-day county game from today and for the first time since September 2019 fans were allowed for a cricket match in England," Rod Bransgrove, the head of Hampshire County Club, told Cricbuzz Wednesday. Bransgrove told the website that the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the ICC are permitting a crowd of "4000 people" in the eagerly-awaited clash. The Indian team, currently quarantining in Mumbai for two weeks, depart for the UK June 2. Virat Kohli and his men will undergo a 10-day quarantine in Southampton.

Milkha Singh tests positive for COVID



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chandigarh, May 20: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh has tested positive for COVID-19 and is in isolation at his Chandigarh residence. The 91-year-old, popularly known as Flying Sikh, is asymptomatic and claims to be in "high spirits".

"A couple of our helpers earlier tested positive and so all the family members did the tests. Only I returned positive Wednesday and I am surprised," Milkha told this agency. "I am fine and there is no fever or cough. My doctor told me I will be alright in three-four days. I did jogging just yesterday. I am in high spirits," he added.

None of the other family members, including Milkha's wife Nirmal Kaur, a former India volleyball captain, returned a positive test. Milkha's son and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh is in Dubai and said he would be returning to the country this week itself. "I will be flying back home Saturday," said Jeev. "I have also undergone COVID test here, which is mandatory for travel and the report will come Friday," he added.

Nirmal Kaur said that Milkha was checked by PGIMER doctors and they have given requisite medicines. About her husband contracting the infection, she said, "a cook, who had been with the family for the last 50 years, reported high fever a few days ago."

"He used to mostly stay here, but occasionally he used to go to his village Kishangarh here. A few days ago he told our driver to check his temperature and he found him running a high fever. He had concealed from us that he had been running a fever for the past few days. He was sent home and tested positive," she said.

EVES FACE PINK BALL TEST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 20: The Indian women's cricket team will compete in their maiden day-night Test from September 30 to October 3 when they tour Australia this year.

The match will be played in Perth, which hasn't hosted a day-night game as yet, Cricket Australia said after BCCI secretary Jay Shah Shah made the initial announcement.

"Taking forward our commitment towards women's cricket, I am extremely pleased to announce that Team India @BCCIwomen will play in their first-ever pink ball day-night Test later this year in Australia," Shah tweeted.

The Indian women's team, who will play their first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will compete in another one dur-

THE SCHEDULE

- SEPT 19:** 1st ODI, North Sydney Oval (D/N)
- SEPT 22:** 2nd ODI, Junction Oval
- SEPT 24:** 3rd ODI, Junction Oval
- SEPT 30 - OCT 3:** D/N Test, WACA Ground
- OCT 7:** 1st T20, North Sydney Oval
- OCT 9:** 2nd T20, North Sydney Oval
- OCT 11:** 3rd T20, North Sydney Oval.



day-night women's game played so far was between Australia and England at Sydney in November 2017. The match ended in a draw.

Preparing for both the England and Australia Test will be a challenge since the women don't play with red ball even on the do-

mestic circuit.

England and Australia are the only two teams which regularly play Test cricket, mainly against each other in the Women's Ashes. Going forward, India will also be seen playing the longest format against the two teams.

PR Sreejesh appointed as FIH Athletes' Committee member

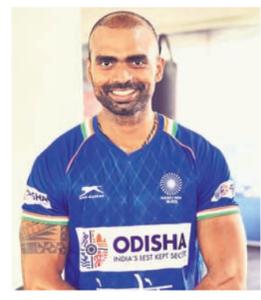
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lausanne, May 20: Star India hockey team goalkeeper PR Sreejesh was Thursday appointed as a member of the FIH Athletes' Committee during the virtual meeting of the world body's Executive Board.

The experienced Sreejesh, who has led the Indian team in the past, was one of the four new members appointed by the EB which met two days before the 47th FIH Congress, which will also be held online.

"The EB confirmed the appointment of four new members for the Athletes' Committee. Sreejesh Parattu (IND), Marlena Rybacha (POL), Mohamed Mea (RSA) and Matt Swann (AUS) are now joining the Committee," the FIH said in a release.

The 33-year-old Sreejesh is one of the senior-most and decorated players of the Indian team. The



EB also approved a five-year partnership with a gaming company - Gold Town Games (GTG) - which will develop a hockey manager game, available on mobile, planned to be released globally before the end of this year on Google Play and the App Store. The game will be free to download.