



IN A SPOT
Singer Sona Mohapatra says lockdown has left her with no means of income **LEISURE P2**



POPE CHALLENGES SCRIBES
Pope Francis challenged the in-house journalists asking them how many people actually consume their news **INTERNATIONAL P10**



AGUERO BIDS FARWELL
Sergio Aguero bids farewell to Premier League after Man City's final league match of the season against Everton **SPORTS P12**

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Yaas landfall near Balasore

Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur are likely to be most impacted by the cyclonic storm: IMD

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 24: The India Meteorological Department Monday said cyclonic storm Yaas (pronounced as 'Yass') formed over east-central Bay of Bengal is likely to make landfall near Balasore May 26 noon as a very severe cyclonic storm.

As per the latest weather bulletin, the cyclone was moving north-north-westwards with a speed of about 12 kmph and lay centred at about 420 km south-southeast of Paradip, 510 km south-southeast of Balasore and 500 km south-southeast of Digha.

The very severe cyclonic storm is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal coasts between Paradip and Sagar Island around Balasore during noon on the same day.

The windfall will be 155-165 kmph with gusting up to 185 kmph along and off West Bengal & north Odisha including Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Balasore during landfall.

Wind speed will be about 90-120 kmph gusting up to 145 kmph over Mayurbhanj district. Gale wind speed reaching 70-90 kmph gusting up to 100 kmph would also prevail over Puri, Cuttack, Khurda, Jajpur districts from early hours May 26.

Under its impact, heavy to very heavy rainfall would occur at a few places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Puri, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal and Ganjam districts Tuesday.

Similarly, some places in Balasore,



An IAF plane transporting NDRF personnel to Odisha ahead of cyclone Yaas. PTI PHOTO

Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Angul, Deogarh, Khurda, Puri and Sundargarh are likely to experience heavy to extremely heavy downpour on the next day (May 26). Tidal waves of height 2-4 meters above astronomical tide are likely to inundate low-lying coastal areas of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts around the time of the landfall, the Met department said.

Local warning signal No 4 (LW-4) was hoisted at Paradip and Dhamra Ports while local cautionary signal No 3 (LC-3) was issued for Gopalpur and Puri ports. Considering the inputs given by the weather office, the state government is preparing for the possible landfall in Balasore or Bhadrak district,

of sensitive districts have been instructed to commence evacuation process keeping in mind the prevailing weather condition in their respective areas. The SRC also stressed strict adherence to Covid protocols at all cyclone centres. Anganwadi and ASHA workers will remain present in the cyclone centres due to Covid situation, he added. The state government has already deployed 53 teams of NDRF, 60 teams of ODRAF, 260 fire services personnel and 86 tree-cutting teams in the vulnerable districts.

Over 12,000 electricity restoration workers have also been deployed with required machines and equipment. All arrangements have been made to ensure that there is no disruption to manufacturing and transportation of medical oxygen to other states as well within the state. Meanwhile, the state government has allowed shops to operate from 7 am to 1 pm during Monday and Tuesday in 10 districts in order to give more time to people for buying essential items before the impact of the cyclonic storm Yaas.

These districts are Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Puri, Jajpur, Cuttack and Khurda. Similarly, professionals, who will arrive in Odisha for cyclone management works, will not need to get RTPCR negative reports. Such officials won't need to go for 14-day quarantine. Over 10,000 persons have been evacuated and the process was going on at the time of going to the press.

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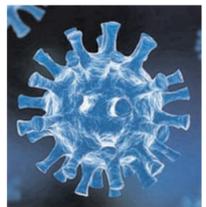
State's daily Covid toll 32; tally tops 7L

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 24: Odisha's COVID-19 case-load crossed the 7-lakh mark Monday with 11,059 more people testing positive for the infection, a health official said. The state also registered its highest single-day fatalities at 32, taking its death toll to 2,516, he said.

As many as 6,193 new Covid cases were reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining 4,866 infections were detected during contact tracing, he said. The fresh infections have pushed the state's coronavirus caseload to 7,03,441, the official said.

Cuttack district reported the highest number of fresh cases at 1,133 which was followed by Khurda (1,010) and Angul (859).

Of the 32 fresh fatalities, Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, reported the highest at six,



IRREGULAR by MANJUL

18 days to arrest a wrestler? You should be happy that no runners are involved in the crime!

No vaccination in six districts today

Bhubaneswar: In view of cyclone Yaas, there will be no Covid-19 vaccination in Balasore, Bhadrak, Mayurbhanj, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Jajpur districts, Tuesday. Earlier in the day, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, PK Mohapatra wrote to concerned Collectors for suspension of Covid-19 testing, vaccination and door-to-door survey in Balasore, Bhadrak and Mayurbhanj districts between May 25 and May 27. For Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Keonjhar, the Collectors have been asked to take a call on suspension of the Covid related activities in these areas that are likely to be affected by the cyclone.

10 Sr Officers sent to 5 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, May 24: The state government Monday deployed 10 senior IAS and IPS officers as well as engineers and doctors in five highly vulnerable districts to supervise relief, rehabilitation and restoration works.

While senior IAS officer Hemant Sharma was sent to Kendrapara district, Saswat Mishra has been appointed for Jagatsinghpur; Vir Vikram Yadav for Bhadrak, Vishal Dev for Balasore and Suresh Vashishth for Mayurbhanj.

Similarly, Director-General of Police Abhay assigned five senior IPS officers to different districts. JN Pankaj was sent to Kendrapara, Amitabh Thakur to Jagatsinghpur, AN Sinha to Bhadrak, Diptesh Kumar Pattnayak to Balasore and Anirudh Kumar Singh was sent to Mayurbhanj.

Similarly, the works department has directed senior engineers to rush to five districts. Anil Kanta Tripathy has been directed to stay put in Balasore, Pradip Kumar Samal at Bhadrak, Gaurang Charan Sahu at Jagatsinghpur, Jibananda Nayak at Kendrapara and Bibhudendra Meher

LEAVE CANCELLED

BHUBANESWAR: The state government Monday cancelled leave and holidays of its employees till May 31 to facilitate the management of human resources, materials and logistics in areas likely to be affected by cyclone Yaas. "To expedite pre-cyclonic arrangements and ensure post-cyclonic rescue/relief operations in vulnerable districts and facilitate unaffected districts and state-level offices to provide human resources, material and logistics support to the affected, it is imperative that all state government offices and officials remain in a state of readiness," General Administration department said in an order. The government has directed all officials to remain in their respective headquarters.

at Mayurbhanj district to supervise restoration works.

The government has also sent additional doctors to Balasore and Bhadrak to ensure smooth management of Covid-related work and treatment of patients during the cyclone.

Besides, the housing and urban development department has deployed eight senior ORS officers

in five urban local bodies of Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts for the cyclone. The department has opened a dedicated control room at the state urban development agency (SUDA) in Bhubaneswar to address the grievances relating to cyclone Yaas.

All arrangements have been made to ensure that there is no disruption to manufacturing and transportation of medical oxygen to other states as well within the state. The most vulnerable Balasore district has an 84-kilometer-long coastline and is covered by 10 police stations, including three marine police stations, DGP Abhay said.

The 136 villages in 26 gram panchayat areas near the coast in the low-lying areas have been identified for evacuation, he said. As many as 140 cyclone shelters and 1,102 alternative shelters have been readied to house the evacuated people in Balasore, the DGP said. The IMD forecast said that tidal waves of height 2-4 meters above astronomical tide are likely to inundate low-lying coastal areas of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts around the time of landfall.

SAVING A LIFE



An elderly man of Hariabanka village under Kharinasi panchayat in Mahakalapara block of Kendrapara district is being shifted through a sling to a multi-purpose cyclone centre ahead of Yaas, Monday OP PHOTO

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	50651.90 ↑ 111.42
NIFTY	15197.70 ↑ 22.40
DOLLAR	73.65 ↑ ₹0.07
EURO	89.55 ↓ ₹0.38
GOLD	₹48,603 ↑ ₹199
SILVER	₹71,889 ↑ ₹840

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	36.0°C	36.4°C
TEMP MIN	27.8°C	26.8°C
Humidity	98%	98%
Rainfall	5.5mm	4.8mm
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

EU to respond to Belarus diverting plane to nab scribe

AGENCIES
Brussels, May 24: Angry European Union leaders were set to consider a joint response Monday to Belarus' diversion of a plane travelling between EU member nations in order to arrest a prominent Belarusian opposition journalist.

Raman Pratasevich, who ran a popular messaging app that played a key role in helping organise massive protests against Belarus' authoritarian president, was on board the Ryanair flight from Athens, Greece, to Vilnius, Lithuania, when it was diverted to the Belarusian capital, Minsk while flying over Belarus.

Belarusian flight controllers had warned the plane crew of an alleged bomb threat and ordered it to land in Minsk, and a Belarusian fighter jet was scrambled to escort the Ryanair airliner.

Shortly after the landing, the 26-year-old Pratasevich and his Russian girl-



The Ryanair flight was diverted to Belarusian capital Minsk while flying over Belarus Inset: Raman Pratasevich, 26-year-old activist and journalist, being arrested

friend were led out of the plane. The jet was eventually allowed to continue its flight and landed in Vilnius hours behind schedule.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda on Sunday called the incident a "state-sponsored terror act" and proposed banning Belarusian planes from European Union airports and "serious sanctions" against the Belarusian government.

The 27 EU leaders open a two-day summit later Monday and the issue immediately shot to the top the agenda

amid united condemnation of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called it "yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices." He called the diversion of the plane an "inadmissible step" highlighting a further worsening in relations between both sides. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the incident "shocking" and accused the Belarusian government of endangering the lives of those aboard the aircraft, including some Americans. He called for the release of Pratasevich and for the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization to review the incident.

Flight tracker sites indicated the plane was about 10 kilometers (six miles) from the Lithuanian border when it was diverted. "I saw this Belarusian guy with girlfriend sitting right behind us. He freaked out when the pilot said the plane is diverted

to Minsk. He said there's death penalty awaiting him there," passenger Marius Rutkauskas said after the plane finally arrived in Vilnius.

"We sat for an hour after the landing. Then they started releasing passengers and took those two. We did not see them again." Pratasevich was a co-founder of the Telegram messaging app's Nexta channel, which played a prominent role in helping organize major protests against Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko.

The Belarusian authorities have designated it as extremist and levied charges of inciting riots against Pratasevich, who could face 15 years in prison if convicted.

Months of protests in Belarus were fueled by Lukashenko's election to a sixth presidential term in an August vote that the opposition denounced as rigged. More than 34,000 people have been arrested in Belarus since August, and thousands were brutally beaten. **MORE P10**

On-site entry for 18-44 now enabled on CoWin

AGENCIES
New Delhi, May 24: On-site registration and appointment has now been enabled for the 18-44 years age group on the CoWin platform for COVID-19 vaccination, the Centre said Monday.

However, this feature is being enabled only for government COVID Vaccination Centers (CVCs) at present, it said. This feature will not be available for private CVCs and they will have to publish their vaccination schedules exclusively with slots for on-line appointments. This feature will be used only upon decision of respective states and UT governments.

States and UTs must decide on opening of on-site registrations/facilitated cohorts' registration and appointments for 18-44 years age group based on the local context just as an additional measure to minimize vaccine wastage and for facilitating vaccination of eligible beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years, the ministry said in its statement.

The coverage of vaccination was expanded to people in the age group of 18 to 44 years May 1 with the implementation of the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy. The facility of only online appointment mode initially to people in the age group of 18 to 44 years helped to avoid overcrowding at vaccination centres, the statement.

leisure



MADONNA'S 'BRAVE NEW WORLD' GETS HIGHLIGHTED IN LATEST POST

Singer Madonna posted Monday three pictures on Instagram, where she holds a placard that reads: "Clean and Sanitized for your city." The first image has a caption that reads: "Brave," with earth and drink emoji. The second photo read: "New", while the third has the word "World" captioning it.

BROOKE WORKING ON SOLO ALBUM

Singer Ally Brooke, a former member of the girl group *Fifth Harmony*, says she has secretly been working on her first solo album. The singer is busy recording songs and says it will be 'a huge piece of her heart'.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will share wonderful moments with your beloved today. Go ahead and learn some musical instrument, suggests Ganesh. It's a beautiful way to convey emotions. And it provides a perfect means to woo someone anew. Join a class before the mood wanes.

TAURUS
This opt a good day for being too firm or demanding. Ganesh advises you to steer clear of conflicts, arguments disputes. If you cannot avoid confrontation be sure you are the one who will have to step back. Loss of face and self esteem may be unavoidable.

GEMINI
Today is an important day to completely immerse yourself in your favourite activities, says Ganesh. But don't forget that loved ones come first as lack of warmth may affect family life. Show your family members that you care. New relationships are also on the anvil.

CANCER
It is likely that you will reach an important milestone in life today. Keep in mind that your success may be a cause of envy for a few people, some of whom may want to harm you.

LEO
Financial gains will make you happy today. You will have the opportunity to participate in social functions. All your work will get completed as per schedule. You will be able to channel your energy effectively, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Business acumen is natural to you. Your management skills are immaculate. Move with imagination, innovation and motivation to further your enterprise, advises Ganesh. Feel free to express and exercise your sense of judgement, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
You will be very active today, especially when it comes to finishing tasks in office. Your thoughts will reach new heights and you will be able to motivate and stimulate others to perform. Your motto for the day is 'Arise, awake and sleep not till the goal is reached'.

SCORPIO
Despite a secured job and a harmonious home environment, you are still looking for something else. Long-term, financial security keeps bothering you. And your worries are solved to some extent as unexpected monetary gains are on cards today, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
You may have women swooning over you today; such is your charm and way with them, says Ganesh. But friends are highly valuable to you, and you shall spend much time with them cherishing their company and reliving amazing times spent together.

CAPRICORN
It may seem to be an unusual combination, but you will experience pain and pleasure in equal measure today, says Ganesh. The errands you may have to run for at home will leave you exhausted, so conserve some energy for the rest of the day.

AQUARIUS
Good news may hit home today. Promotion, profit, scholarship, anything you've been working for will probably materialise. You are ingenious, and will crack the toughest of problems with consummate ease. Ganesh sees money lenders and brokers doing well.

PISCES
Being a friend in need is what today will be about, says Ganesh. Making new acquaintances and associations is also on the cards. Try not to let jealousy mar your better judgement while you are at it.

BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARDS

The Weeknd, BTS, Bad Bunny win big



Los Angeles: Canadian singer-songwriter The Weeknd won big at the Billboard Music Awards (BBMA) that took place at Los Angeles, Sunday night. He won a total of 10 awards from 16 nominations. While the Korean boy band sensation BTS won all categories nominated for and Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny also won multiple awards.

Rapper Drake was named the artist of the decade. He accepted the award with his 3-year-old son. Singer-songwriter Pink received the Icon Award and was joined onstage by her 9-year-old daughter.

The Weeknd was awarded as the top male artist, top radio songs artist, top R&B artist and top R&B male artist. Bad Bunny was named Top Latin artist and also won top Latin male artist, top Latin song and top Latin album. BTS won multiple awards including top duo/group, top song sales artist and top social artist.

Country music singer Gabby Barrett bagged three awards while singer Machine Gun Kelly won the Top Rock Artist awards. Singer Morgan Wallen also won three awards, for top coun-

try album, top country artist and top country male artists. The other winners included Taylor Swift, Kanye West, Lady Gaga.



Priyanka, Nick Jonas set mercury soaring

Celebrity couple Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas took the style quotient high with their red carpet look at BBMA. Priyanka was one of the presenters while her husband performed and hosted the ceremony. According to *Page Six*, Nick is recovering from a cracked rib injury and the actress stepped in to help her husband and agreed to be a presenter at BBMA. Priyanka wore a thigh-high slit gown with a plunging neckline and a custom Dolce Gabbana ensemble.

Nick donned a designer number from Fendi. Priyanka shared a picture of Nick hugging her at the awards. She wrote: "Husband appreciation post. Not even a cracked rib can stop this force of nature. So proud of you baby. With everything you do! You inspire me everyday! I love you so much!"

IAN S

CULTURE CINEMA 2021

Unesco sponsored film fest to be held July 17 to 21

Mumbai: Culture Cinema 2021, an upcoming film festival aimed at celebrating world cultures through the medium of cinema is set to take place in July this year.

Talking about the same, Praveen Nagda, Festival Director, Culture Cinema 2021 shared: "We have received over a hundred entries already from 27 countries so far and the deadlines of submission have still a month to go." "We identified 21 unique categories including History, Music, Festivals, Art and Artisans, Architectural Heritage, Education, Social Practices, Travel and Tourism, Literature, Mythology, Traditional Sports, Biodiversity, Cultural Reforms, and Philosophy for this festival," he further informed.

The festival is being supported by UNESCO New Delhi Office, CIFEJ, and JLF Litfest, among others.

IAN S

When Sunny's 'army' battled to zip her up



'Exhausted all savings in Shut Up Sona'

Mumbai: Singer Sona Mohapatra took to social media on Monday to open up on how all her savings went into making her documentary film *Shut Up Sona* just before the pandemic, and the ensuing lockdown has left her with no means of income. "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.. making happy when-

ever I can. My film #ShutUpSona is yet travelling to places around the world & winning festivals. All my savings went into this film, just before the pandemic broke & stopped us in our tracks with no means of income," Sona tweeted.

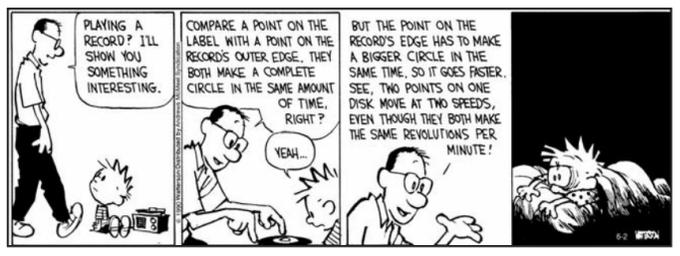
In a separate tweet, the singer also announced that her documentary film has been nominated in the category of Best Documentary at the New York Indian Film Festival 2022. Directed by Deepti Gupta, *Shut Up Sona* revolves around her journey as a singer, her brand of music, love for her country's roots and culture and how she has become a symbol of hope for a larger movement.

IAN S

PEANUTS



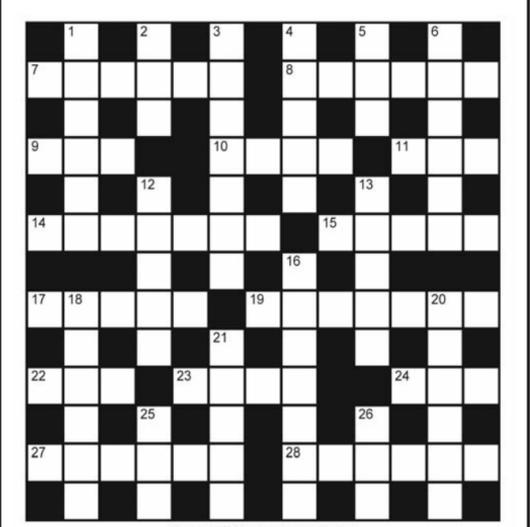
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



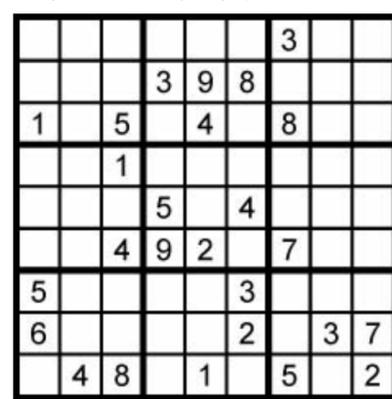
FUN post CROSSWORD



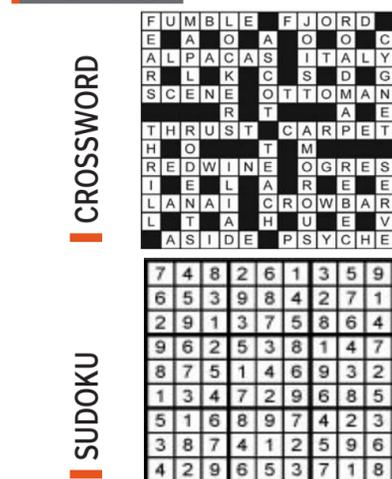
- Across**
- 7 Grand Canal locale
 - 8 Sycophant
 - 9 Headlight setting
 - 10 Widespread
 - 11 Rainbow shape
 - 14 Round-tripper, in baseball (4,3)
 - 15 Correct, as text
 - 17 Hard to pin down
 - 19 Supercilious
 - 22 Attempt
 - 23 Lockup
 - 24 Assistance
 - 27 Slender
 - 28 Go against
 - 4 Whiskey holder
 - 5 Rink surface
 - 6 Brain cell
 - 12 Cafe handouts
 - 13 24th letter of the Greek alphabet
 - 16 Party item
 - 18 Show up
 - 20 Craving
 - 21 Vacillate
 - 25 Passé
 - 26 To the point
- Down**
- 1 Juarez locale
 - 2 Tout's offering
 - 3 Passion

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

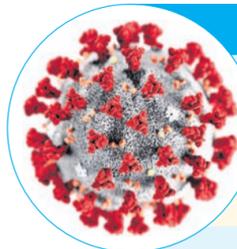


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



TIMELY CHECK

An Anganwadi worker checks the oxygen level of a resident of Sankarpur in Cuttack as part of the house-to-house survey on Covid-19, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,76,53,596	14,86,87,724	34,80,642
India	2,67,52,447	2,37,28,011	3,03,720
Odisha	7,03,441	6,01,224	2,516

Wear double masks, move to safety: CM

Cyclones are nothing new to us, but a slight negligence can trigger huge problems. Lives of all 4.5 crore people are precious to me as I consider them my family members. Please cooperate with the administration and shift to shelter homes: Naveen



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik appeals to people through a video message

TWIN CHALLENGES

In a video message, Naveen said the state is facing twin challenges - Covid-19 and cyclone - and the government is well prepared to tackle both the disasters

The state administration is in pressure for the last two months due to Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, he appealed to people to cooperate with the administration in the evacuation process.

"As this is Covid time, we need to take more caution. Whether you are in a cyclone shelter or a building, wear double masks to face double risks. In the present situation, wearing two masks is very crucial for our health," the Chief Minister said.

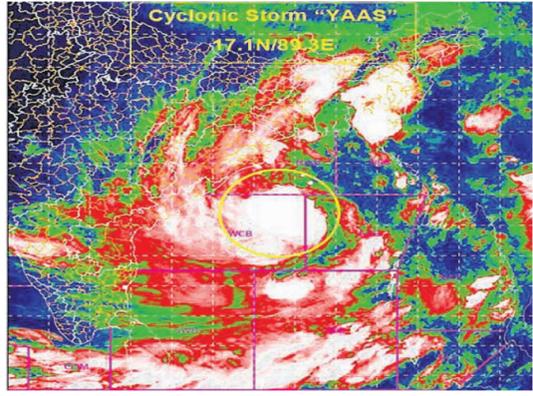
Further cautioning the people, Patnaik said that he has directed district Collectors to provide masks to people through Mission Shakti. Stating that cyclone is not new to Odisha, he said, "We have to be

careful because minor negligence could pose bigger risks. In May last year, we also faced Cyclone Amphan along with Covid. We successfully dealt with the situation with the cooperation of people."

He expressed hope that the co-operation of the people will further strengthen the state's preparedness to tackle the cyclonic storm Yaas. Again appealing the people to go for double-masking during and after the cyclone, he said, "We all will fight together against these two threats and win."

Yaas will be as intense as Titli: IMD DG

Even as Odisha is bracing for yet another tropical cyclone, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra Monday said that the cyclone will be as intense as Cyclone Titli that wreaked havoc in 2018. Orissa POST's Delhi correspondent Kuldeep Singh speaks to Mohapatra on the impending storm. Excerpts...



Sea not over Bay of Bengal. It remains the same over Bay of Bengal. There are many coastal activities which have some relationship with respect to the impact of cyclone. It does not have any relation with respect to frequency or intensity of the storm. When I say impact of cyclone that means activities on the coast will be associated with the land use and land cover. Land use and land cover affect the surface run-off, river system etc if the development is taking place in that ecological place. In that sense, when cyclone comes it will have indirect impact in terms of flooding and others.

Where will Cyclone Yaas make landfall and when?

Cyclone Yaas will make landfall between Paradip and Sagar Islands, around Balasore, in the afternoon of May 26.

Which areas of the state will be affected and what would be the intensity of the summer storm?

It will have wind speed upto 155 to 165 kmph gusting upto 185 kmph at the time of landfall. And these wind speeds will prevail over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts. The wind speed will diminish as it would move towards the hinterland. For Mayurbhanj, we can expect wind speed upto 120 to 130 kmph while areas like Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Bhubaneswar will also have wind speed in different ranges. We would be providing district-wise wind warning.

How severe Yaas would be as compared to previous cyclones that had hit Odisha like Fani?

Fani's wind speed was 205 kmph and here we are telling of wind speed upto 165 kmph. It is far less than that of Fani but it will have same intensity as that of Cyclone Titli which crossed south of Gopalpur in 2018. The intensity of Yaas would be almost the same but slightly less than the Sunderbans in 2020. Yaas will have less intensity as compared to storms like Tauktae and Amphan.

Andhra coast, which may not be the case now.

Will it affect the arrival of southwest monsoon in the state?

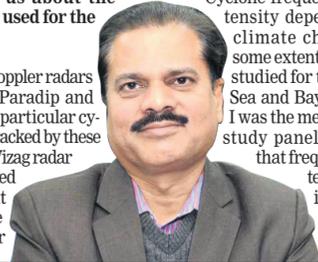
The cyclone will not have any impact on arrival of the monsoon. The southwest monsoon comes to Odisha around June 10/12. So, it is far away now. We have predicted that monsoon may hit Kerala around May 31.

Do you think that human activities make coasts vulnerable to cyclonic storms?

It's a very tricky question. Cyclone frequency and intensity depends on the climate change upto some extent. It has been studied for the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. I was the member of the study panel. We found that frequency of intense cyclones is increasing over Arabian

How is IMD tracking the storm? Tell us about the radars being used for the purpose.

We have got Doppler radars at Gopalpur, Paradip and Kolkata. This particular cyclone will be tracked by these three radars. Vizag radar will also be used to some extent if the cyclone comes near



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: With the state bracing for Cyclone Yaas which is likely to make landfall in Balasore district May 26, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday urged the people of the vulnerable areas to move to nearby cyclone shelters or pucca houses.

In a video message, Naveen said the state is facing twin challenges - Covid-19 and cyclone - and the government is well prepared to tackle both the disasters.

"Four-and-a-half crore people of Odisha are my family and their safety is my top priority. Our aim is to shift all the people to safer places. Therefore, I appeal to all to move to nearest cyclone centres or pucca houses," he said.

The state administration is in pressure for the last two months due to Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, he appealed to people to cooperate with the administration in the evacua-

HELPING HAND



Red Cross volunteers in Bhubaneswar, Monday, pack dry food to be distributed among the cyclone-hit in the coastal state

Shah takes stock of Yaas preparations

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 24: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Monday held a virtual review meeting with Chief Ministers of Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh and Lt Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to assess the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of Cyclone 'Yaas', which is forming in the Bay of Bengal.

The Union Home minister asked the administrations of the states and the UTs to make adequate power backup arrangements in all Covid-19 hospitals, labs, vaccine cold chains and other medical facilities.

He also advised them to ensure adequate stock of essential medicines and supplies in hospitals, keeping in view likely disruption of movement of vehicles.

Reviewing the impact of the cyclone on oxygen generation plants in states of Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, Shah advised the state governments to make advanced planning for keeping a buffer stock of oxygen for two days. The Home minister asked the state governments to make necessary arrangements for safety of power plants to ensure uninterrupted power supply to hospitals and health facilities.

7 fire services teams for storm aftermath

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: The Director General for state Fire Services, M Akhaya, Monday reviewed the cyclone preparedness by district fire services units in coastal areas ahead of impending Cyclone Yaas.

Holding a videoconference, the Fire Services DG discussed with the senior fire officials at the state and district levels on the steps taken for relief and rehabilitation operations during and after the cyclone.

He also stressed upon the need for proper coordination with district administrations for adequate deployment of forces in the areas that are expected to be hit the most. He urged the officials to fully utilise their past experience in connection with rehabilitation work during cyclones.

Akhaya instructed the officers to clear roads by cutting tree branches, shifting utility poles and other materials that would have fallen on the roads during the cyclone with the advanced equipment supplied to them. He directed the officials to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour while on duty in cyclone-affected areas.

The officials were also directed to keep ready water pumps to tackle the waterlogging problem due to heavy rain during cyclone in cities like Puri, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. According to sources, around seven fire services teams have been kept ready in Bhubaneswar to tackle the effects of cyclone. The fire services officials in the city have as many as 36 power saws and 26 water pumps to meet the eventualities.

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Pradhan assures supply of oil, gas & other essentials

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 24: Union Petroleum & Natural Gas, and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Monday said that oil, gas and steel industry is fully prepared to tackle the situation arising out of very severe cyclonic storm Yaas, which is likely to make landfall May 26.

Pradhan along with Union ministers Piyush Goyal and Mansukh L Mandaviya held a meeting with the officials of Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand to review the preparedness in dealing with the situation arising out of Cyclone Yaas. The meeting was also attended by the economic stakeholders on the east coast and representatives from industry associations like FICCI and ASSOCHAM.

The Union minister said that he assured all the stakeholders that there would be no dearth of medical oxygen and the steel industry will continue to supply medical oxygen to hospitals even in the aftermath of cyclone.



“Our companies are fully prepared to ensure continuous supply of petroleum products, other essential commodities, including medical oxygen for Covid-19 management”

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION PETROLEUM MINISTER

pared to ensure continuous supply of petroleum products, other essential commodities, including medical oxygen for Covid-19 management,” Pradhan said. He said as a precautionary meas-

ure, all vital installations and major industrial units along the east coast, including those of the ministries of Petroleum and Steel are operating on minimum manpower for the next two-three days. He said preparations have also been made to secure all assets in the sea.

Pradhan said that NDRF has pre-positioned 99 teams in five states/UTs, including 52 teams in Odisha to strengthen emergency preparedness.

“Teams have been deployed in Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur;

Mayurbhanj and Jajpur to facilitate relief & rescue operations from the impending Cyclone Yaas,” Pradhan said.

Pradhan said that he had also spoken to Union Home Minister Amit Shah about the situation arising out of cyclonic storm Yaas.

“Union Home Minister has assured me of all possible assistance in overcoming Cyclone Yaas and providing relief, rescue and rehabilitation to people of Odisha,” Pradhan added.

Govt exempts taxes on buses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: The state government Monday exempted road tax for two months (April and May) in respect of stage/contract carriage buses and educational institution buses.



The Commerce and Transport department said that on account of second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, plying of inter-state buses has been stopped and on account of imposition of lockdown and weekend shutdown, the normal fleet of intra-state buses in the state has been affected.

Therefore, in exercise of powers conferred Under Section 15(1) of the Odisha Motor Vehicle Taxation Act-1975 and in consideration of the demands of the bus owners, the department has been pleased to exempt the payment of taxes, additional taxes of stage/contract carriages and buses of all educational institutions in the state for the month of April and May 2021.

Srimandir rituals to continue amidst storm

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 24: With Cyclone Yaas fast approaching towards Odisha, the Puri administration Monday decided to continue with the rituals inside Srimandir ensuring safety of the devotees.

A decision to this effect was taken at a virtual meeting held by SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar and attended by Puri Collector Samarth Verma and other senior officials here, Monday. The officials were instructed to make necessary arrangements for the safety of Chapa (boats) used for Chandan Yatra.

However, the officials have decided to suspend the work at Rath Khala for Tuesday. Sources said that post Guja Anukula ritual, the work at Rath Khala will be suspended and a dedicated team will be deployed at Rath Khala. Furthermore, discussions were held to take necessary steps for making arrangements at Covid Care Centre (at Neeladari Bhakta Niwas) and providing sufficient back-up for oxygen cylinders for the patients.

“Moreover, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was requested to minimise the scaffoldings around



Discussions were held to take necessary steps for making arrangements at Covid Care Centre opened in Neeladari Bhakta Niwas

the temple so as to prevent any damage. Items such as the LED screens, fans in open areas will be removed and secured. High-mast lights will be lowered to prevent any possible damage. A dedicated team to be formed including officials from CESU/Municipality/SJTA to undertake post cyclone restoration works as per requirement,” an official said.

BPIA BRACES FOR CYCLONE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: With the state capital set to experience turbulence owing to cyclone Yaas for two days, the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here has readied itself to face any unprecedented catastrophe.

In a preparatory meeting held with all Heads of Departments (HODs), the BPIA Director VV Rao discussed the progress path of the cyclone and its possible landfall in Odisha. The HODs were advised to be prepared in advance for the contingencies that might arise due to the cyclone.

“During the meeting, we discussed a thorough inspection of the operational area of the airport and the arrangement of sandbags and other men and materials. About 20 labours are positioned in the terminal building for removing the trees and other obstructions. We also have decided to set up a round the clock control room for cyclone,” an official said.

Moreover, all airlines operating from the BPIA were also suggested to moor their aircrafts to avoid any possible damage. Sources also said that all flight services will remain suspended till the time the cyclone is expected to make landfall Wednesday.

GOVT INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESTORATION WORKERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: The State government Monday gave several instructions for manpower and labourers deployed for post cyclone Yaas restoration work.

In the first instruction, Health and Family Welfare department instructed Collectors, Municipal Commissioners and CDMs to arrange for Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) of the workmen deployed in the restoration sites.

This instruction was given because it is expected that due to cyclone Yaas the electricity distribution network will suffer heavy damage. About 20,000 men have been mobilised by TPCCDL and TPNODL for restoration of electricity distribution network. So it is necessary to prevent Covid-19 infection among these workers so that restoration work goes on smoothly.

The state government also informed that the government will provide food and other charges of Rs 175 per day per labourer to be deployed in post cyclone restoration work. One triple layer mask will also be provided to each worker per day out of this amount. This instruction was given by the Energy department.

The department also approved special labour rates for the post cy-



clone restoration work of the damaged electrical infrastructure.

These rates are applicable for the post cyclone restoration work only.

For unskilled labour the rate is Rs 462, for semi skilled Rs 522 and for skilled Rs 597.

Finally, the government also instructed that during electric restoration work, use of generator sets for private purpose is prohibited from 6am to 6pm as the back current of the generator may endanger the lives of electrical workers.

Any person violating this order will be proceeded against in accordance with the provision of section 51 of disaster management act 2005.

ECoR gears up for cyclonic storm Yaas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: East Coast Railway (ECoR) has carried out preparations and ground work to meet the challenges posed by Cyclone Yaas. Taking advantage of the meteorological forecasts and having the experiences of devastation to Railway property during Amphan in May, 2020; Fani in 2019, Titli in 2018, Hudhud in 2014, Phailin in 2013 and Super Cyclone of 1999, ECoR has planned for early restoration of train traffic and railway track, if affected by Yaas.

Round the clock Disaster Management Cells have been opened at ECoR Headquarters at Rail Sadan and at Divisional Headquarters at Visakhapatnam, Khurda Road and Sambalpur.

ECoR has also taken steps for avoiding risk to train traffic by positioning of Special Teams for early restoration of tracks, signaling system and electrification, safety of train operations and to run trains, in absence of electric supply. Diesel locomotives have been kept in position for utilisation during failure of electricity. As red alert has been given in coastal areas, ECoR is keeping a watchful eye at all the stations between Bhubaneswar and Bhadrak in Bhubaneswar-Kharagpur Railway Section.

General Manager, East Coast Railway has directed the concerned

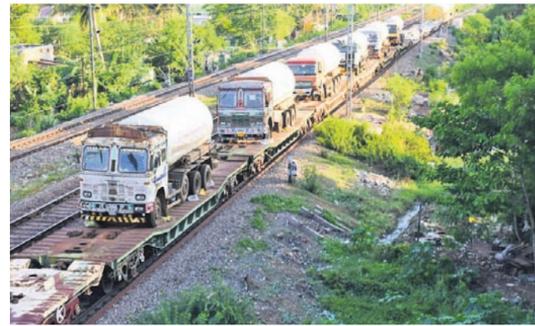
officials to be on full alert towards any incident like flood situation near railway track and to ensure safety of trains and smooth operations.

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

Close coordination is being maintained with the State government officials at different levels. Full Supply Level (FSL) in case of canals and Danger Level (DL) in case of bridges have been painted with bright red band across each pier adjacent to the abutment so as to be clearly visible to the Patrolmen, Stationary Watchmen and Drivers. Arrangements have been made not to allow water to stagnate on the track. In station yards, the cross drains and longitudinal drains have been cleared/provided proper grades.

Patrolling of Railway tracks by Patrolmen has also been planned. They observe danger or interruption if any and protect the trains from any unusual occurrence. Stationary Patrolmen and Watchmen along with mobile Patrolmen have been deployed in vulnerable sections.

Milestone in handling O2 special trains



With a view to providing relief to Covid-hit people in areas having insufficient oxygen, the Indian Railways is running Oxygen Express Special trains and has

transported 15,000 tonne liquid medical oxygen (LMO) so far. The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has so far handled 106 oxygen special trains During the Covid-19 upsurge,

East Coast Railway has taken up the mantle of transporting LMO in a major way for saving lives of patients. ECoR has carried 2252 tonne LMO from different steel plants under its jurisdiction towards different states till Monday.

The mission began April 22, 2021 when the first rake from Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, Visakhapatnam went to Nasik. So far, the ECoR has handled about 106 Oxygen Express Special Trains in its jurisdiction out of which 35 Oxygen Express Special Trains loaded with LMO were sent from ECoR jurisdiction towards different states of the country.

This apart, 33 loaded oxygen express trains from South Eastern Railway and Eastern Railway have also been handled by ECoR.

Instructions have been given for smooth functioning of Signal and Telecommunication Systems with uninterrupted power supply. All batteries are to be charged and kept ready. Over Head Equipments which should be switched off at the vulnerable locations has been permitted. All satellite phones and VHF sets are tested and kept ready. Diesel Generators are being kept ready to face any kind of eventuality. Tree cutting machines are also being kept handy.

Instructions have been issued that whenever there is heavy rain, the sectional Gangmen will organise patrolling of track on their own in their beat to make sure that the track is safe for passage of trains and ensure protection at all locations where washouts/slips are likely to occur. Arrangements have been made

to stock sufficient quantities of track and bridge repair reserve materials, such as boulders, sand, cinder, quarry dust, ballast at identified locations. The engineering relief vans and their equipment are kept ready. Bridge materials are kept in readiness so that they can be moved as per requirement. ECoR is in constant touch with India Meteorological Department and getting regular weather alerts.

Lady alleges murder bid by havildar

Bhubaneswar: A 36-year-old woman has accused her husband and his relative of trying to kill her through road accident. The Lingaraj police have been investigating into the hit-to-kill allegation after a case was registered in this regard. The accused husband of the victim, Sadasiva Swain, 52, works as a havildar at the Dhauil police station in Commissionerate Police. According to sources, the victim lady came into contact with the havildar two years back. She had gone to file a case against her ex-husband at Lingaraj police station where Swain was deployed at the time. They got married soon and started living in a rented house in the city. However, the victim lady alleged Swain of keeping her in the dark in connection with his marital status. Recently, she came to know that Swain had married another woman too. As per the victim's claims, she escaped a murder bid by Swain and her in-laws, who tried to hit her with a vehicle last week. Meanwhile, police sources revealed that Swain has been undergoing treatment after he tested positive for Covid for the last 15 days.



CYCLONE FEAR TAKES OVER COVID

As the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack opened up after a two-day weekend shutdown, people rushed to stock up groceries and other essentials ahead of the impending cyclone Yaas. Although the state government extended the lockdown relaxation by two more hours for May 24 and 25 to allow people buy essentials in view of the cyclone, many thronged markets with vehicles (inset) even without maintaining social distance

₹10L ex gratia for electricity workers

Bhubaneswar: The state government Monday announced that it would provide accidental benefits and compensation of Rs 10 lakh to the kin of the workers who would lose life during relief and restoration works during Cyclone Yaas. The Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) stated that it will provide accident benefits for casual electricity workers and will bear full cost of treatment in case of injuries. Moreover, it will give compensation of Rs 10 lakh to legal heir of the workers in case of death during restoration work.

Child rescued

Bhubaneswar: The Childline foundation here Monday rescued a 4-year-old child near Big Bazar in Infocity area of the city. Locals spotted the child wandering the spot alone during the lockdown. They informed the Childline authorities who rescued the child with the help of police. The child failed to reveal any details regarding his parents or address. Police has started a probe to find out the parents of the victim. The child was later handed over to Subhadra Mahatab Seva Sadan, a CCI at Kolathia.

AIIMS helpdesk for info on nCoV patients' health

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 24: If you are worried about the health of a Covid positive friend or a relative admitted to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Bhubaneswar, there is a breather as the premier healthcare facility has introduced four services in this regard.

As relatives of Covid patients are unable to meet them in person, they are facing a lot of issues to know the patients' health status, said a source, adding that the new services would help address the communication gap.

According to the institution, people can now check the health status of their near and dear ones admitted to AIIMS for Covid treatment by entering the patient's CR number on the hospital's website. This apart, people can also avail the tele-nursing services by calling 7655073027. “Under the facility, nursing officials will speak to the family of those admitted to AIIMS for Covid and learn about the patients' health,” said a statement



from the hospital.

Besides, Covid-specific consultation is also being offered dedicated telemedicine OPD number 8280346684. People can also call 0674-2476789, a round-the-clock helpline number, to know about the availability of beds.

According to sources, to further ease the process, a 24x7 helpdesk and control room are also established on the hospital premises. “AIIMS-Bhubaneswar has been catering to the health needs of the non-Covid patients through telemedicine Swasthya App and OPD service,” the hospital sources said.

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Potable water still a pipe dream for many in Jajpur district

OAS OFFICER DANCES AT BROTHER'S MARRIAGE

'Tehsildar will get show cause notice on joining'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

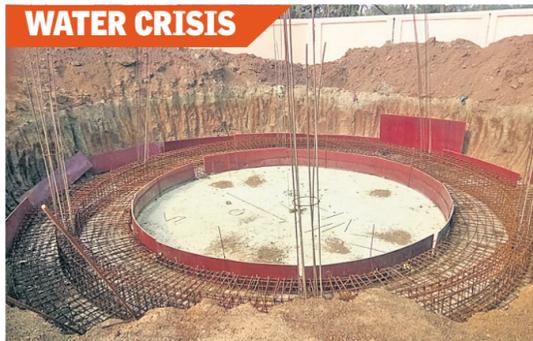


The woman officer was working as a tehsildar of Sukinda block. She was found in a video dancing without having face mask or social distancing at a time when the state government has completely banned marriage processions and made a ceiling of 25 participants to attend such an event. The woman officer was also assigned the responsibility to impose the Covid-19 guidelines and ensure that the general public abides by the rules. Though the woman officer was working in Jajpur district, she had gone to attend the *barat* of her brother in nearby Jagannathpur village under Tirtol block of Jagatsinghpur district May 21.

Jajpur, May 24: A woman Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) officer was found dancing at a marriage function of her brother violating the Covid-19 lockdown guidelines imposed by the state government in the wake of surge in Covid cases across Odisha. A video of the woman officer dancing at the marriage procession of her brother came to the fore through social media platform prompting Jajpur District Collector, Chakravarti Singh Rathore to say that: "The woman tehsildar is on leave right now. Once she joins, an explanation will be called. Based on the explanation, a further course of action will be decided".

The District Collector said this is not the time for anyone to violate Covid lockdown guidelines. "Be it an officer or the public. All should have some rationality in their approach," he added.

WATER CRISIS



spread of many water-borne diseases among the people in the district, claimed locals.

The state government sanctioned ₹79.56 crore for a mega PWS for 37 villages under Sukinda block, ₹351.44 crore for a project in Barchana and Dharmasala blocks and ₹191.85 crore for Dasarathpur block. It has also sanctioned ₹106.91 crore and ₹34.46 crore in two phases for two projects for the mineral-rich areas of Sukinda block. However, in spite

of allocation of huge funds, throats remain parched.

Reports said that work on 95 piped water projects worth ₹88.84 crore was yet to be completed till the end of January this year. A report published May 5, 2021 says that 42 PWS built at an outlay of ₹58.99 crore are yet to be implemented. Moreover, five mega PWS projects to be built at a cost of ₹764.22 crore have remained non-starters. The report has been jointly published by Engineer-in-

Five are mega projects, while 42 are in the PWS category. Even though many of the projects are past their deadlines, residents are still waiting for the clean water to arrive in their taps

Scenes of villagers digging pits near the river banks in Ghagiasahi under Kaliapani panchayat of Sukinda block, Kadam and Aichpur villages under Korei blocks to collect water are cases in point. The consumption of unhealthy pit water has led to spread of many water-borne diseases among the people, claimed locals

Villagers alleged that they continue to wait for drinking water supply to their households as many of the completed projects have become defunct within four to five months of their operation. This has happened due to the use of sub-standard pipes, sanitary fittings and raw materials during construction of the projects, they alleged

Chief and Accounts Officer of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department. Moreover, water supply is yet to resume from many of the projects marked complete.

Villagers alleged that they continue to wait for drinking water supply to their households as many of the completed projects have become defunct within four to five months of their operation. This has happened due to the use of sub-standard pipes, sanitary fittings and raw materials during construction of the projects, they alleged.

Sources said that the state government has sanctioned around 200 PWS projects during last two years. However, influential contractors, who are stated to be in hand in gloves with the public representatives and concerned officials, have allegedly spoiled the projects by using sub-standard raw materials.

When contacted, Motilal Tiwari, executive engineer of RWSS, said the concerned contractors have been asked to execute the projects as per agreements.

WATER WOES



Women staging a road blockade at Manpur on Nayagarh-Kesharpur road demanding water supply to their village OP PHOTO

Murram smuggling continues unabated in Danagadi tehsil

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kalinganagar, May 24: Even as the state government has imposed lockdown and weekend shutdowns in the state to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, murram smuggling goes on unabated under Danagadi tehsil in Jajpur district.

It is alleged that hundreds of tons of murram have been excavated from a Sal forest under Trijanga panchayat of the tehsil using machines and smuggled out in tippers and dumpers during the period by greasing the palms of some unscrupulous tehsil officials. This has been going on when people have been asked to stay home during the lockdown and weekend shutdowns to check the spread of Covid-19.

Surprisingly, murram smuggling is taking place despite the tehsil office being located just around 500 metres from the mining site. Recently, heavy vehicles like dumpers and Hyva were seen smuggling minor minerals from the jungle. The illegality was caught again when five Hyva vehicles transporting the minerals to a land site for leveling work got stuck in rain induced mud at



Mangalpur village under the tehsil, May 14.

After the reports surfaced, the smuggling of the minor minerals has sparked resentment and anger among the residents. They alleged that some tehsil officials who been here since last seven to eight years were responsible for the mineral smuggling.

During verification, it was found that the Hyva vehicles engaged in murram smuggling had a sticker of a consultancy agency engaged in national highway construction work. This has been done to avoid

getting caught by the law enforcement agencies and locals.

Later, the vehicles were found unloading the smuggled minerals at a site by an influential middlemen of the area. In the latest incident, tractors and Hyva vehicles were seen transporting murram from the forest land Sunday. According to a rough estimate, the dispatch might be over 200 trips of murram transported to various locations, Sunday

Phone calls to tehsildar Namrata Modi for her comments on the issue went unanswered.

Youth held for assaulting girl's kin over one-sided love affair

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, May 24: A youth allegedly attacked four members of a girl's family over unrequited love at Bandhabahal Sapada village under Banharpali police limits in Jharsuguda district, Monday.

The accused was identified as Siba Bhainsal, 20, from the same area. Police arrested him and produced him in court, Monday. A case was registered in this connection over a complaint filed by the girl's mother Dulamani Lakra, wife of Panu Lakra at Banharpali police station, Sunday.



As per reports, Dulamani has two daughters. The accused has been professing his love to the younger daughter since last one year. Despite repeated rejection by the girl. Later, he started molesting and harassing her on different occasions on the village road and near the ponds when she refused to oblige him.

Fed up, the girl time and again asked him to stay away from her. Enraged over the girl's rejection, the Siba visited the house of the girl in the absence of her father and beat up her elder sister. He even beat up Dulamani and his lover when they raised an alarm and opposed his advances.

The girl's father was informed about the development when he returned home in the evening. Enraged over the development, he went to the accused's house and questioned him about his audacity. The accused is reported to have also assaulted him brutally. The accused also warned the family members of the girl of dire consequences if they reported the matter to the police. Unnerved, Dulamani, with the help of a social activist Padmini Singh, lodged a complaint at police station leading to his arrest.

Youth hacks father to death over property dispute

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, May 24: A man allegedly hacked his father to death with a sharp-edged weapon over a property dispute at Dangapal village under Kankadahal police limits in the district Sunday night, police said Monday.

The deceased was identified as Sanatan Mahunta, father of the accused Tapan Mahunta.

According to sources, Tapan has been demanding his share from his father's property, which his father denied. The issue has often led to heated altercations between the father and son.

The issue took an ugly turn Sunday night when Tapan attacked Sanatan while he was asleep and killed him. Tapan's sister also sustained minor injuries when she tried to stop her brother from attacking her father.

The accused however, managed to escape from the spot after executing the crime. When informed, the police reached the spot and sent the body for postmortem. They also seized the weapon used in the crime. A case was registered in this connection and further investigation is underway.

Twin brothers Lav and Kush die of Covid-19



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagannathprasad, May 24: A pall of gloom descended on Chikili village under this block in Ganjam district after Covid-19 claimed the lives of two identical twins in the village.

The twins were identified as Lav and Kush, sons of late Dhableswar Behera of the village.

The death of the identical twins was very similar to the tragic death of Malayali twin brothers Joefred and Ralfred in Meerut, who also endured the sufferings of the pan-

demic. The duo passed away within two days after paying tribute to their late father on his first death anniversary last week. While Kusha died of the deadly virus at Bhanjanagar Hospital May 20, Lav died two days later at MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Sunday. The deceased are survived only by their elderly widowed mother.

According to reports, the 26-year-old twin brothers Lav and Kush were working at a private company in Bhubaneswar. They had visited their native place recently to participate in the rituals of first death anniversary of their late father Dhableswar Behera May 17.

Kusha fell sick two days later. While being treated at the Bhanjanagar Sub-Divisional Hospital, his Covid test report came out as positive and he succumbed to the disease May 20 night.

His body was cremated as per Covid-19 protocol without being brought to his village. Lav suffered from Covid-19 complications the next day and passed away, Sunday. The death of the twins within a short span of two days has shattered their old mother as well as the villagers.

DEMO OVER TAX WAIVER



Congress party workers staging a demonstration over waiving of tax on liquor despite rise in price of petroleum products and edible items in Sundargarh, Monday OP PHOTO

Water conservation project demolished for farmland

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 24: Forest land is being levelled to make space for farmlands near Suakati village under Bansapal block in Keonjhar district. This development has given rise to resentment among the people in the area.

According to reports, locals alleged that a water conservation project used to be in the area. An influential person of the locality claimed ownership of the land and levelled the watershed project.

Locals apprehend that water rolling down from the nearby hills will cause havoc in the area during monsoon. Besides, the levelling of the water project will create water shortage in summer.

They pointed out that the project was meant to check soil erosion as

Locals apprehend that water rolling down from the nearby hills will cause havoc in the area during monsoon. Besides, the levelling of the water project will create water shortage in summer

Locals claimed that the ownership claim on the land in the hilly area is debatable. They demanded an investigation into the matter by the Revenue and the Forest departments

Allegations are rife that people are trying to grab Forest and government land in Suakati area as the Forest and the Revenue departments have been turning a blind eye to encroachments

LAND GRABBING ISSUE



well as water conservation for farming. The person concerned has used machines to cut the dam and fill

the area with soil. "As he is an influential person, locals don't dare to oppose him. The

water project is also beneficial to wildlife in summer. It helps retain humidity of the farmlands in the downhill area," they observed.

Locals have demanded that the ownership claim on the land in the hilly area is debatable. They demanded an investigation into the matter by the Revenue and the Forest departments. Land grabbing cases are on the rise in Suakati area, it has been alleged.

It is alleged that people are trying to grab Forest and other government lands in Suakati area as the Forest and the Revenue departments have been turning a blind eye to the menace.

On the other hand, the person accused of land grabbing asserted that the land measuring five acres belong to his father. It is being levelled for farmland, he added.

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Email:- rw_dharmagarh@yahoo.com
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. DMGH/Online-01
OF 2021-22 Date: 19.05.2021
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

No. O-254- Bid documents consisting of Work, Estimate Cost, Cost of tender Paper, Bid Security, Time of Completion, Class of Contractor and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

- Name of the Work : Road works in the District of Kalahandi as mentioned in DTCN
- Total No. of Works : 17 Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Rs. 1.77 Lakhs to 46.19 Lakhs
- Period of : 01 (One calendar month)
- Completion : 01 (One calendar month)

Other Details:

Availability of Tender online for bidding	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of Opening of tender
From 26.05.2021 at 10.00 AM	To 04.06.2021 Up to 5.00 PM	01.06.2021 Up to 5.00 PM
		05.06.2021 at 11.00 AM

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in
 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Dharmagarh
 OIPR-25100/11/0001/2122

FOCUS ECONOMY

GRIM PROSPECTS



Back in November many analysts believed the growth rate for fiscal 2021-22 could be as high as 12 or 13 per cent...But now that assessment is being pared down, and the most optimistic estimate for current fiscal is around 8 per cent

Thankfully, the second wave which rose steeply in the past two months seems to be also coming down rapidly. At least in the major metro cities, the panic cries for oxygen, beds and ventilators are fewer. But the situation in the rural areas is still precarious, at least in some states. Hence many states are persisting with lockdowns, which curtail economic activity.

Which brings us to an assessment of the impact on the economy. Back in November many analysts believed that the growth rate for fiscal year 2021-22 could be as high as 12 or 13 per cent. This was mainly due to a V-shaped recovery from the economic contraction last year. But now that assessment is being pared down, and the most optimistic estimate for the current fiscal is around 8 per cent. This would mean that after two years, the economy's size would be still a bit smaller than it was in 2019. Also, since tax collection is related to economic growth, lower growth this year, would mean a further shortfall in tax revenue to the tune of around Rs 1 to 1.5 lakh crore. This would make the fiscal deficit wider than projected in the Union Budget in February. That would mean an increase in borrowing by the Central government, making it difficult to keep the interest rates (i.e. the cost of borrowing) low.

The latest data on inflation shows wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation to be at an 11-year high of 10.5 per cent. Of that the fuel and power subcomponent is at 20 per cent. This high inflation is predicted to continue for the next few months. The non-food inflation captured in WPI is at 15.6 per cent. These are alarmingly high numbers. The WPI inflation mainly reflects the input cost escalation experienced by producers. Sooner or later this input cost pressure will be passed on to consumers. In that case even the consumer price index (CPI) based inflation will start going up. Right now, the consumer inflation is below 6 per cent which is the upper limit of the tolerable band. CPI inflation has a very big food component. With a normal monsoon and a bumper crop expected later, the foodgrain inflation may not spike up. But meat, poultry, milk, pulses and other sources of proteins might become costlier. Ironically some tomato farmers have chosen to destroy their current bumper crop, since prices have crashed much below their cost of production. The input costs like electricity, fertiliser, labour have gone up significantly. Maybe that is the reason why the Prime Minister chose to keep fertiliser prices low and unchanged despite a big

increase internationally, and hence allowed a bigger subsidy to farmers this year. Internationally the Food and Agricultural Association says that the food price index is at a seven-year high. Edible oil prices have doubled from last year, and even sugar has gone up by sixty per cent. In India at the retail pump petrol prices have crossed Rs 100, which will hurt transportation costs, including that of food.

Coupled with inflation is the worrying trend in unemployment. In April unemployment shot up to 8 per cent as per CMIE data. The labour force participation rate is down to just 40 per cent. That means 60 per cent of the able-bodied workforce between the ages of 16 and 60 are out. They have either given up on the prospects of finding a job, or are tending to homes or are in school, college or training. It is well known that the pandemic has caused a very large proportion of women to drop out of the workforce altogether. India's female labour force participation rates are among the lowest in the world.

With such grim unemployment and inflation prospects, the government has its work cut out. There must be a substantial fiscal injection in the form of enhanced foodgrain allocation to households from the PDS, free and universal rapid vaccination, much higher allotment to rural employment guarantee (MNREGA), quick ramp up of infrastructure projects already sanctioned by the national infrastructure pipeline, and filling up of all vacancies in government and government-owned bodies to the extent possible. Such fiscal action will of course be aided by the accommodative monetary policy of cheap money, and support for the government's borrowing programme. Policymakers and administrators have their work cut out as we struggle to make our way out of the health and economic crisis.

The writer is an economist and Senior Fellow, Takshashila Institution.

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POLICYMAKERS AND ADMINISTRATORS HAVE THEIR WORK CUT OUT AS WE STRUGGLE TO MAKE OUR WAY OUT OF THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISIS



Ajit Ranade

The official economic data for the first quarter will be published by the end of May. Last year from October onwards the mood was upbeat and anticipating a sharp V-shaped recovery. This was accompanied by a sharp drop in the official count of Covid infections, so much so that by the end of January a victory was declared. In a speech to the World Economic Forum on January 28, describing India's success in its fight against the virus, Prime Minister Modi said "In a country which is home to 18 per cent of the world population, that country has saved humanity from a big disaster by containing corona effectively." Unfortunately, the celebration proved to be premature as the second wave of the pandemic hit India viciously.

In just a couple of months the country's unpreparedness was starkly exposed, as the daily number of infections rose about forty times, to reach nearly half a million per day. Fatalities mounted caused by lack of oxygen, ICU beds, ventilators, medicines and emergency facilities. Even space in cremation and burial grounds ran out as bodies waited sometimes for days for the final rites. Topping it all has been the spectre of corpses hastily buried in the sandy banks of the holy river Ganga, or thrown into the water. Based on ground reports the number of these unclaimed, unacknowledged, uncounted bodies are estimated to be several thousand. One of the reasons for the furtive dumping of bodies is that the poor cannot even afford to buy the expensive firewood required for the funeral pyre, the other is the fear of the disease. Or perhaps there is the stigma associated with it. The fact is that the virus has spread to remote villages, even distant hilly areas of Uttarakhand, the deep forests of Chhattisgarh, and small towns across India. Since many rural areas are utterly lacking even in basic healthcare facilities, the illness and deaths are often even attributed to Covid. So, the official count of infections and fatalities may be severely underestimated.

SPECTRUM HEALTHCARE

The scourge of neglected tropical diseases

US President Joe Biden's decision to back the call for waiving intellectual-property protections for COVID-19 vaccines reflects the extent of global pressure for universal vaccine access. Yet the world's poor suffer from many other preventable and treatable diseases, with dire social and economic consequences. Neglected tropical diseases – such as elephantiasis, trachoma, river blindness, and intestinal worm infections – are virtually nonexistent in advanced economies. But among people living in extreme poverty, they are the most common infections. About a billion people worldwide – including more than 750 million people living below the World Bank poverty line of \$1.90 per day – suffer from NTDs every year.

Their suffering can be extreme. NTDs cause severe pain and long-term disability, often leading to social stigmatisation. Among children, infection interrupts education and causes malnutrition, impairing intellectual and cognitive development and stunting growth. And by interfering with education and employment, NTDs keep people trapped in poverty. And yet, while nearly 17 mil-

lion healthy years of life are lost annually to NTDs, these diseases are largely preventable, and many can be treated with a few simple pills. Ensuring broad access to these medications would not only bring obvious health and humanitarian benefits, but also pay remarkably high and sustained social and economic dividends.

Consider intestinal worms, the most prevalent – and among the most treatable – NTDs. Starting in 1998, we studied a public-health programme providing treatment for intestinal worms to tens of thousands of primary-school children in Kenya. Using a randomised control trial, we could reliably measure the programme's causal impact by comparing schools where treatment was provided with otherwise identical schools where it wasn't.

In the schools that received treatment, we recorded gains in child-health measures and considerably higher school attendance. We then engaged in a two-decade effort to track a representative subsample of thousands of the same children. Roughly every five years, the research team carried out surveys to gather information on these individuals' earnings and living standards, as well as residential choices

and other life outcomes. The results from this unusual longitudinal data set are stunning. Twenty years later, individuals who had received additional deworming treatment in school – now in their late twenties and early thirties – reported 13 per cent higher hourly wages and 14 per cent higher spending on consumption goods than those who did not. They had also moved to large urban areas, like Nairobi, in far greater numbers, affording them better economic opportunities.

Considering that an annual deworming treatment costs about \$0.50 per child when delivered at scale, the rate of return on this investment in child health is astronomical and pays for itself many times over. Fortunately, governments in India, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Pakistan have recognised this, and are working with NGOs to implement mass deworming programmes that currently reach over 280 million children each year. But there is still much work to be done to reach the nearly 600 million children who remain at risk of parasitic worm infections.

With the COVID-19 pandemic pushing even more of the world's

population into poverty – and increasing the risk of debilitating illness – now is the time to redouble our efforts to combat NTDs. But growing demands on government budgets and more competition for funding seem set to halt progress – and even reverse it.

The British government – a global leader in innovative foreign-assistance programmes – recently announced that it would cut 90 per cent of its funding for NTDs. As a result of this decision, millions of people will miss out on treatments, and many medicines that are already in-country could expire on the shelf, owing to a lack of funds to distribute them. For the world's most vulnerable populations, the consequences will be catastrophic. That is why we urge the British government to reverse its decision, and encourage other governments to fill the gaps in funding. To end the scourge of NTDs and protect the world's poorest people, we must neglect neglected tropical diseases no more.

Michael Kremer is 2019 Nobel laureate in Economics. Edward Miguel is Professor at University of California.

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The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being.

SRI AUROBINDO



Bibi Biden Balance

US President Joe Biden once famously told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressing him by his nickname, Bibi, that he did not agree with a "damn thing" he said, but he loved him. This was in response to Netanyahu's endearing words for Biden whom he described, using the Hebrew word, "mishpucha", meaning family, as part of Israel's family.

The same symbiosis is still working when Biden declared May 21, a day after Israel and Hamas declared an unconditional ceasefire ending an 11 day-long bloody conflict, that a two-state solution was the 'only answer' to the Israel-Palestine conflict. He thus emphatically iterated the US' decades-old policy that had been reversed by his immediate predecessor, Donald Trump, who had batted for Israel ignoring the Palestinians. In the same breath, Biden did not deviate from the position he had been consistently taking in favour of Israel that "there will be no peace" in the region if Israel's right to exist as an independent Jewish nation is not acknowledged and accepted.

This is typical of Biden who, throughout his political career, advocated a US policy that never flinched from providing billions of dollars of aid to Israel to equip and defend itself from attacks from Palestinians and the Hamas.

Biden was sceptical of President Barack Obama's advocacy for the nuke deal with Iran as well. He, as Vice President, argued that a nuclear-powered Iran would harm the interests of Israel. However, taking a middle of the road position, he did argue with his friends in Israel that a nuke deal with Iran with proper restrictions would help promote peace in the region.

With the US mentoring and Egypt brokering peace, Israel and Hamas declared ceasefire. Strangely enough, Hamas even went ahead to claim victory. If the unrelenting bombardment by Israel on the Hamas' "infrastructure of terror" represents Israel's victory, the firing of rockets by the Hamas into Israel is being construed as a signal of triumph for the Palestinians. But, the situation is still fragile. Palestinians are waiting for the Supreme Court verdict on Israel's plan for evicting Palestinian families in East Jerusalem.

On the other hand, the increased assertion of rightists in Israel demanding total occupation of East Jerusalem to the exclusion of the Palestinians poses a real danger to the peace plan. Netanyahu had unnecessarily sided with these elements when trouble broke out in East Jerusalem during the Ramadan month and started bombarding the Hamas "infrastructure" in Gaza after the latter fired rockets in protest against harassment to Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The precarious position of Netanyahu's party in the March election prompted him to take the calculated risk of military engagement with the Hamas.

President Biden finds himself in an unenviable position as his top priority now is to focus on passing trillions in economic packages at home while competing with China abroad. Wading into yet another Middle East conflict is the last thing the Biden government would want. Moreover, Biden has also time and again championed the rights of the Arabs residing in East Jerusalem whom Israeli authorities had been evicting to settle Israelis there, instead. This is the reason that triggered the conflict on May 6 that led to the killing of at least 240 people, mostly Palestinians, and including about a dozen Israelis. In the past, Biden had tried to convince Israeli leadership that its policy of evicting Palestinians from East Jerusalem to occupy the entire territory won't receive support from the US administration. Because of his empathy for Israel, which he inherited from his parents, he has always adopted a soft policy officially towards Israel and mounted pressure on the latter "privately". This time too, US efforts to end the Israel-Palestine strife included upwards of 80 phone calls made by its officials to their counterparts in the region and six between Biden and Netanyahu to agree to a peace plan.

Two things become clear about Biden's current handling of the Israel-Gaza crisis. First, Biden is unlikely to back away from defending Israel when it's faced with a security threat. Incidentally, Israel had got the Iron Dome defence system, that it used to intercept Hamas rockets, thanks to lobbying by Biden as Vice President. Second, if Biden disagrees with his friend Netanyahu, he might keep it private and not articulate his position publicly. This seems to be the case so far with the current conflict. But, it is questionable how long the ceasefire will continue.

Facing a wave of criticism from US legislators about US weapons sale to Israel, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said the Biden administration remains committed to "giving Israel the means to defend itself." Hamas, on the other hand, is now seeking to unite Palestinians and is positioning itself as a leader in the political scene rather than just a party or a movement. This truce could be short-lived.

WISDOM CORNER

- To me, every hour of the day and night is an unspeakably perfect miracle. **WALT WHITMAN**
- Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal. **HENRY FORD**
- Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers. **VOLTAIRE**

WORDSWORTH

Nerd

Nerd has become firmly established in the language since its first appearance in print a little over half a century ago but we don't know enough to be sure where it comes from. The Oxford English Dictionary says "Origin uncertain and disputed". It's worth noting that nerd (also nurd) has evolved in meaning. Early on, it meant a dull, unattractive, or offensive person. The associations with obsessive technical expertise and fussy dressing (remember nerd pack for a pocket protector?) only came along in the 1970s – illustrated in the National Lampoon's "Are you a Nurd?" poster of 1977 (see right). Compare and contrast geek, which once had similar links (if you disregard the stories about biting the heads off live chickens in fairground booths) but has largely been rehabilitated. Geeks are intelligent, hugely knowledgeable about a technical subject but able to get ahead in life (Time had a headline in 1995: "The Geek Shall Inherit the Earth"). Nerds are thought to be obsessively good at one thing but poor at anything else. Nerds are geeks with no social skills. The two earliest appearances of nerd, the two you mention, are these: And then, just to show them, I'll sail to Katroo And bring back an It-Kutch, a Preep and a Proo, A Nerke, a Nerd and a Seersucker too (If I Ran the Zoo, by Dr Seuss, 1950). Nerds and Scurves: In Detroit, someone who once would be called a drip or a square is now, regrettably, a nerd, or in a less severe case, a scurve (Newsweek, 8 Oct 1951). The Dr Seuss origin might be considered confirmed by these, but as you say, a shift from a work for young children to a fashionable teenager term is unlikely to have happened so quickly. Several other theories have been proposed. One is that it's short for the Northern Electric Research and Development Laboratories, part of a power utility of Ontario, not so far from Detroit. But the laboratory wasn't given that name until 1959. As one early spelling was nurd, another suggestion is that it's a modified or rhyming-slang form of turd. That's very unlikely. In 1938, the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen created a new addle-pated country-bumpkin dummy to accompany his suave top-hatted Charlie McCarthy and gave it the name Mortimer Snerd. It's been argued that Dr Seuss may have subconsciously had this in mind. This source is dismissed by etymologists, but we have come across a few instances of somebody being nicknamed Snerd in the years before nerd was first recorded. There's also knurd, which is drunk backwards. The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute usually gets a mention here, since there are persistent reports that the term was in use there in the 1950s. It would be impossible – or at least deeply unwise – to support a claim for any of these words being the direct source. Our suspicion is that there's something about the combination of sounds that we conventionally spell nerd that causes it to be reinvented from time to time as a term of disparagement. Perhaps this is because it reminds us of a growl of disgust, disapproval or negation.

Michael Kremer & Edward Miguel

NEARLY 17 MILLION HEALTHY YEARS OF LIFE ARE LOST ANNUALLY TO NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Govt neglects icons

Sir, the birth centenaries of two internationally acclaimed and eminent sons of India, both Bharat Ratnas, came and went unsung – Pandit Ravi Shankar last year and Satyajit Ray on May 2 this year. Not even a tweet from the government, much less a simple official celebration. And we hear that the incumbent government is a great upholder of the country's cultural values. The blame will obviously be apportioned to the ongoing pandemic but that could not have prevented the issue of at least a commemorative postage stamp in honour of these two outstanding personages who did India proud with their immortal creations. The birth centenaries of two of our greatest musicians ever – legendary vocalist Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and Sarod maestro Padma Vibhushan Ustad Ali Akbar Khan are due next year on February 4 and April 14 respectively. Can we not expect the government to plan in advance and arrange to issue postage stamps in their honour apart from other suitable celebrations befitting their status and popularity? Or would the pandemic be cited once again as a lame excuse to cover up the government's apathy and inaction on the cultural front?

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

Civility & civil servants

Sir, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has taken the right action by instructing the removal of District Collector of Surajgarh who was found slapping a youth who was out to get medicine amid the lockdown. The CM's action will set an example and definitely is a warning to civil services officers and other subordinate officers to be aware while dealing with citizens in public. It is indeed unfortunate that a civil services officer holding the post of District Collector misbehaves with ordinary citizens. An official of such calibre should have had the patience to listen to the grievance of the young man. Physical assault should never come from officials who have been given the duty to safeguard the lives of the common man. Even the IAS Association has strongly condemned Sharma's act by remarking that "It is unacceptable and against the basic tenets of the service and civility and civil servants must have empathy and provide a healing touch to society at all times, more so in these difficult times." Let us also not forget that civil servants and other officers on duty are doing their level best during this lockdown period to see that citizens simply don't ignore rules and regulations. The public definitely expects civility from civil servants.

M Pradyu, KANNUR (KERALA)

Take action: Shivraj to Sonia on Kamal's virus remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, May 24: A war of words broke out between Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state Congress president Kamal Nath Monday following registration of an FIR against the latter for allegedly creating panic over the COVID-19 pandemic through his remarks.

Chouhan asked Congress president Sonia Gandhi to take action against Nath for his "Indian variant" and other remarks related to the pandemic.

On the other hand, Nath said an FIR cannot suppress his voice and asserted he will keep fighting for people and raise issues of public interest.

Sunday, the Crime Branch of the Bhopal Police had filed an FIR against Nath following a complaint by BJP leaders who alleged the former chief minister has been creating panic over the coronavirus pandemic through his remarks.

"Sonia Gandhi should take action against Kamal Nath ji and if she agrees with his views, then let the country know so that the public can be aware about the Congress stand," Chouhan said in a tweet Monday.

In another tweet, Chouhan said the government is trying to control the COVID-19 infection with co-



Sonia Gandhi should take action against Kamal Nath ji and if she agrees with his views, then let the country know so that the public can be aware about the Congress stand
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | CM



When people are in trouble, the medical system is in tatters, people are dying, Shivraj government wants me to keep quiet
KAMAL NATH | STATE CONGRESS PRESIDENT

operation of people and the affected families, while the Congress is playing with public sentiments.

The CM further said, "I want to ask Madam Sonia Gandhi, whether she agrees with Nath's statement of setting (public sentiments) afire?...Does Madam Sonia

Gandhi agree with Kamal Nath's statement of 'Indian Corona'? If Kamal Nath is saying this on his own, then why are you (Sonia Gandhi) watching it as Dhritrashtra (a key figure in the Mahabharata who was blind)?" Chouhan was apparently re-

ferring to a video circulated by the BJP in which Nath is purportedly heard saying to a person "this is the time to set (sentiments) on fire" during a discussion on problems being faced by farmers. The Congress, however, claimed the video was doctored.

On the other hand, a defiant Nath, in a statement issued to the media Monday, said, "The Shivraj government wants me to keep quiet, not to raise public's voice, not to fight for their rights but I will not sit quiet. I will keep fighting for public interest till the last breath of my life, an FIR cannot suppress me."

The Leader of Opposition alleged the BJP government in the state has left people at the mercy of God at the time of the coronavirus crisis.

Nath said the BJP government is hiding data on COVID-19 deaths and alleged people were dying in absence of hospital beds, shortage of medical oxygen and essential medicines, including Remdesivir; a claim repeatedly rejected by the state administration.

"Thousands of people have died in the state due to carelessness and negligence of the state government," the Congress leader said, adding despite being alerted, the BJP administration did not arrange for medical oxygen and adequate hospital beds.

"When people are in trouble,

the medical system is in tatters, people are dying, the Shivraj government wants me to keep quiet," he said.

The MP Congress president said the state government was trying to divert people's attention from real issues by filing FIR against him. He demanded that people who have died of COVID-19 be given an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh instead of Rs 1 lakh announced earlier.

Sunday, Nath was charged under section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant) of the IPC and section 54 (making or circulating a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic) of the National Disaster Management Act 2005 in the FIR registered at the Crime Branch Station in Bhopal, an official said.

The BJP leaders, in their complaint, alleged that Nath had said at a press conference at Ujjain on Saturday said that, "Corona, which has spread in the world, is being known as the Indian variant of the virus."

Nath's statement is creating confusion and defaming the country internationally, the complaint said.

The former Union minister has disobeyed the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines to stem COVID-19 and his act amounts to sedition under the IPC, the complainants said.

Guj communal clash: FIR against over 2,000 people



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gir Somnath, May 24: Police have registered an FIR against nearly 2,000 unidentified people on charges of attempt to murder and rioting after members of two communities clashed with each other here in Gujarat, leaving six policemen and around a dozen other people injured, an official said Monday.

The FIR also names 47 other persons for similar offences in connection with the incident that took place Sunday, he said. The clash broke out at Nava Bandar village in Una taluka of Gir Somnath after an altercation over collision of two fishing boats at a jetty in the village, he said.

Around 1,500 to 2,000 people belonging to two communities allegedly hit each other with sticks, swords, iron and plastic pipes, and also hurled stones and empty glass bottles, the official said.

When police intervened to control the mob, the rioters attacked them, injuring six personnel, including Assistant Superintendent of Police Om Prakash Jat, two sub-inspectors and three constables, an official from Nava Bandar Marine police station said. The police had to lob several teargas shells to control the mob, he said. An FIR was registered against 47 named and 1,500 to 2,000 unidentified people from both the communities late Sunday night under IPC Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 332, 333 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt to public servant), 337, 338 (hurting with negligent act endangering human life), 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 and 148 (rioting), he said.

Efforts were on to arrest them, the official said. Following the clash, a large police team comprising personnel from three nearby police stations at Una, Gir Gadhada and Kodinar, and from local crime branch.

Mucormycosis: Guj govt lists mitigation measures in HC

BLACK FUNGUS INFECTIONS HAVE SEEN A SHARP RISE IN THE STATE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 24: The Gujarat government Monday said it was carrying out regular consultation with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) regarding the treatment of Mucormycosis, or black fungus disease, cases of which have seen a sharp rise in the state.

In an affidavit submitted in the Gujarat High Court, the state government said the treatment protocol for the disease has been made under the guidance of expert doctors and medical institutions, and separate wards have been created in district and civic hospitals as well as those attached to medical colleges.

The government submission in HC in a suo motu PIL on the COVID-

19 pandemic, which will come up for hearing Wednesday, said guidelines for its treatment have been given to medical facilities May 15, while "regular consultation is being done with ICMR and AIIMS, New Delhi regarding treatment of Mucormycosis".

May 21, the state government notified Mucormycosis as a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act, and also formulated a policy May 19 for equitable distribution of (Liposomal Amphotericin B) medicine used in its treatment, it said.

The government's affidavit said patients undergoing Mucormycosis treatment in private hospitals can obtain the injection from seven government hospitals at the specified rates, for which these private facilities will be required to send

a request to the concerned government hospital along with details of the patient.

The medicine will be supplied "on the basis of available quota on a pro rata basis," it said.

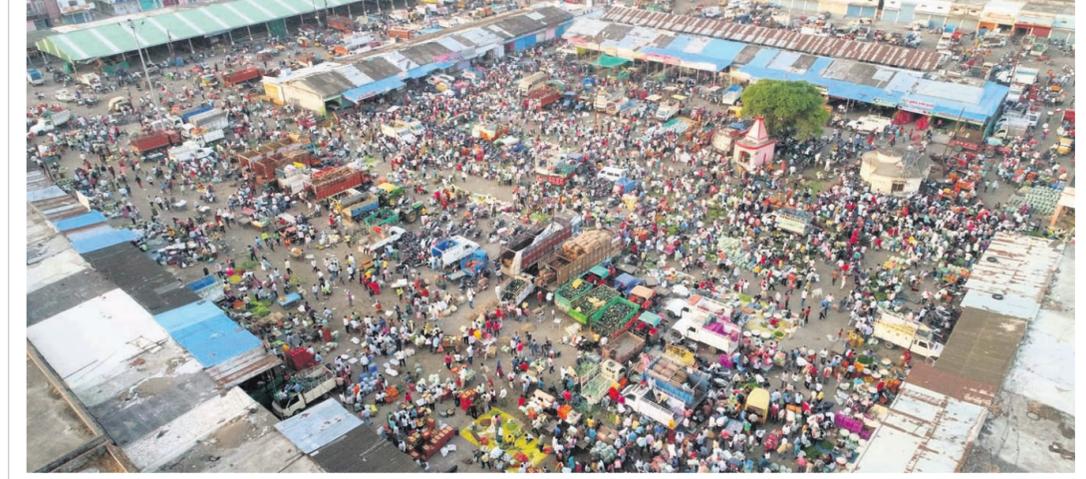
In its affidavit, the government said, as against 13,558 approved posts, 2,326 are vacant in PHCs, while in CHCs, out of 1,928 approved posts, 3,352 posts are vacant. In 1,477 PHCs, 345 CHCs, and 163 UHCs in the state, 1,452, 336, and 149 RT-PCR collection centres are available, respectively, it said.

It further said 56,201 beds in the state's rural areas comprise 5,353 ICU beds, out of which 2,026 beds are with ventilators and 3,327 without ventilator; as well as 22,677 oxygen beds and 28,171 isolation beds without oxygen.

In terms of COVID-19 tests, the government submitted that between May 1 and May 22, a total 28,40,846 samples were tested, with 12,54,420, or around 44 per cent, tested through RT-PCR. There are 107 RT-PCR testing laboratories across the state, of which 96 laboratories have 209 RT-PCR machines, which have a capacity of 77,560 tests per day, it said.

Giving a break-up of the 96 labs, it said 48 government RT-PCR labs have 95 RT-PCR machines, with a capacity of 32,860 tests per day, while 48 private RT-PCR laboratories have 114 RT-PCR machines, with a capacity of 44,700 tests per day, it said.

WHITHER SOCIAL DISTANCING



A crowded vegetable market after relaxation from 4am to 8am during COVID-induced lockdown in Jabalpur, Monday.

PTI PHOTO

Coaching centre raided; 555 students found, owner held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 24: A coaching centre owner in Jasdhan town of Gujarat's Rajkot district was arrested for allegedly flouting COVID-19 norms after police found more than 550 students on his premises during a raid, police said Monday.

The raid on the centre, located some 215 kilometres from here, took place Sunday and its owner, 39-year-old Jaysukh Sankhalva, was arrested Monday, said Rajkot Superintendent of Police Balram Meena.

"He was arrested under IPC and Epidemic Diseases Act provisions for disobeying police notification on COVID-19 norms as well as for negligent act which may spread infection. The children have been handed over to their parents," he said. According to police, Sankhalva runs a coaching centre-cum-hostel to provide training to students appearing for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya and Balachadi Sainik School entrance exams.

"Based on a tip-off, we raided the premises and found 555 students between the age of 9-10 tak-



ing tuition. These children were not wearing masks nor was social

distancing being maintained. The centre was functioning despite the state government's ban on classroom teaching due to the COVID-19 outbreak," Jasdhan police station sub inspector JH Sisodiya said.

Before his arrest, Sankhalva told reporters the students were staying in his hostel since May 15 with parental consent.

"Most of them are supposed to appear for Navodaya Vidyalaya entrance test, which got postponed. The parents of these children asked me to keep them in the hostel rather than send them home," he claimed.

'Tiger state' all set to welcome African cheetahs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, May 24: Cheetah, the world's fastest land animal which was declared extinct in India in 1952, is expected to be re-introduced into the country in November this year at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, state Forest Minister Vijay Shah has said.

The country's last spotted cheetah died in Chhattisgarh in 1947 and it was declared extinct in the country in 1952.

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) some years back prepared a cheetah re-introduction project.

The Supreme Court had earlier given its approval to introduce African cheetahs to a suitable habitat in India on an experimental basis.

"We have started the process of creating an enclosure for around 10 cheetahs, including five females, to be brought from South Africa to Kuno in Sheopur district and it is going to be completed by August," Shah told PTI.

Officials from India will be sent to South Africa for sensitisation and training in June and July this year and according to the plan, the trans-



portation of the cheetahs will take place in October and November, he said.

Kuno, located in the Chambal region, is spread over an area of over 750 sq km and has a conducive environment for the cheetah, he said.

The protected area, comprising a considerable population of four-horned antelopes, chinkara, nilgai, wild boar, spotted deer and

sambar, has a good prey base for the cheetahs, he said.

"According to the approved timeline sent to us by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change this week, the tentative budget outlay of the Project Cheetah is Rs 1,400 lakh for this fiscal," the minister said.

The National Tiger Conservation

Authority (NTCA) is going to release the money for the project to Madhya Pradesh and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) at Dehradun next month, Shah said.

An expert from South Africa visited the Kuno National Park April 26 this year along with scientists from the WII and inspected the facilities and habitat created there for the introduction of African cheetahs. They approved it and now the final process of bringing the cheetah is underway, a forest official said.

Earlier, experts from the WII had visited four places in Madhya Pradesh to look for the best habitat for the introduction of African cheetah in the country last year, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests JS Chauhan, told PTI.

The WII team had visited the Kuno National Park in MP's Sheopur district, the Nauradehi sanctuary in Sagar district, the Gandhi Sagar sanctuary on the northern boundary of Mandasaur and Neemuch districts and the Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district, Chauhan said.

"Madhya Pradesh had in the past been home to cheetahs. The state has a long conservation history...We have the habitat. We also have a successful animal translocation track record," Chauhan said, referring to the tiger re-introduction programme in the Panna Tiger Reserve in 2009.

Cheetah is considered vulnerable under the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list of threatened species, with a declining population of less than 7,000 found primarily in African savannas.

The Supreme Court last year set up a three-member committee to guide the NTCA on the cheetah re-introduction project. The panel has asked the WII to carry out a technical evaluation of all possible sites for the re-introduction of cheetah in the country.

1ST COVID CENTRE FOR CHILDREN SET UP IN MP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 24: The Madhya Pradesh government has set up the first Covid centre for children at Garhakota in Sagar district.

The 10-bed children ward was inaugurated by the Public Works Department Minister Gopal Bhargava.

The Minister and his son Abhishek Bhargava have been actively involved in helping and serving the Covid patients and also launched an awareness campaign on the measures people

need to follow to prevent the transmission of infection among children.

The Minister said, "Children spread happiness in a family, their smile is our future. Children's playfulness must always resonate in a family. We must remain aware and cautious from now on before the third wave of the pandemic."

He said the first Covid centre for children in the state is almost ready in Garhakota. Arrangements are already being made for better treatment of the Covid-infected children here.



of the day quote

West Bengal is a large state with a density of population more than Odisha or Andhra Pradesh. I am not against their getting money but why will West Bengal be deprived of its due? We have more districts and according to the meteorological department 20 of our districts will be affected by the storm

MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CHIEF MINISTER

The BJP-ruled central government lied to the people of our country by saying that states can float global tenders for vaccine procurement

SAURABH BHARDWAJ | AAP SPOKESPERSON

Nine lakh vials of Amphotericin-B are being imported by the central government for the treatment of Black Fungus. Of this, 50,000 vials have been received and around three lakh vials will be available in the next seven days

HARSH VARDHAN | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Sunken tugboat Varaprada located

Mumbai: The Indian Navy's specialised ship INS Makar has located the wreckage of the Tugboat Varaprada in the Arabian Sea where it had sunk last week during the Cyclone Tauktae fury, an official said here Monday. Divers are now going underwater to find out if any more persons are trapped in the tugboat during the devastating natural calamity. The development came two days after the ill-fated Barge Papaa-305 wreck was found in the vicinity of the Bombay High Fields, around 175 off Mumbai in high seas, where it had sunk late last Monday.

Man hacks couple to death

Bhadoli (Uttar Pradesh): In a shocking incident, a man hacked his brother and sister-in-law to death with a butcher's knife and chopped off the limbs of their one-year-old child in Bhadoli district. The accused Naushad has been absconding along with his mother. According to the police, the couple identified as Jameel, 42, and Ruby, 38 were declared brought dead at the hospital. Their child is battling for his life in hospital.

12 black fungus deaths in K'taka

Bangalore: Karnataka has reported 446 Mucormycosis or black fungus infections and 12 related fatalities so far, state's Health and Medical Education Minister K Sudhakar said Monday. The Centre is supplying 1000 vials of medicine for treatment of mucormycosis, he said, adding 446 people have been affected by this infection, while 433 have been admitted to hospitals and 11 are in home isolation.

1st session of Kerala Assembly begins

Thiruvananthapuram: The first session of the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly began here on Monday with the swearing in of newly elected MLAs, of whom 53 are fresh entrants, under strict COVID-19 protocols. As many as 136 legislators of the 140-member-strong House took the oath of office during the over three-hour-long session which began at 9 AM. Three legislators-K Babu (Nenmara), M Vincent (Kovalam) and V Abdurahiman (Tanur), who is also the Sports minister, could not make it on Monday due to health reasons.



Mucormycosis can infect the lungs, eyes and the gastrointestinal tract, and can even spread to the brain
RANDEEP GULERIA | THE DIRECTOR OF AIIMS

LOCKDOWN CURBS EXTENDED

Lockdown was extended in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh Monday till May end while Uttarakhnad too decided to continue with the Covid-induced curfew, as several states said that the restrictions have led to an improvement in the pandemic situation



China develops UAV to deploy at LAC

The UAV has been developed in Shaanxi and completed its first flying and control task at Gar Gunsu in Tibet Autonomous Region

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: China has developed an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with plateau operations capabilities and plans to deploy it at Line of Actual Control with India in Kailash mountain range, sources said.

The flight was undertaken by the Hailan Aviation team. "The UAV took off from an elevation of 4,700 metre - Baga Township - and completed its task of patrolling, control and search operation in the Kailash mountain region," said the source.

The Kailash mountain range originates from the southern bank of Pangong Tso and runs northwest to southeast for over 60 km. It had

been contested by India and China after the border dispute started in May last year. The Kailash Ridge is characterised by rugged, broken terrain with heights varying between 4,000-5,500m. The ridge's key features include Gurung Hill, Spanggur Gap, Muggar Hill, Mukhpari, Helmet Top, Rezang La and Rechin La.

It dominates Chushul Bowl - an important communications centre. Indian Army thwarted Chinese People's Liberation Army attempt and took control over most of the hills in the Kailash range.

Indian troops pre-empted this PLA activity on the Southern Bank of Pangong Tso Lake, undertook measures to strengthen their positions and thwarted Chinese in-



tentions to unilaterally change facts on ground, Indian Army had stated. This exposed Chinese deployment of its forces in Moldo.

In February this year, India and China started disengagement at the southern and northern bank of the Pangong Lake at Line of Actual

Control. The disengagement happened after several rounds of military and diplomatic talks. As per agreement, Indian troops vacated the mountain hills in Southern bank of Pangong Lake.

China moved back to Finger 8 and Indian troops pulled back to the Dhan Singh Thapa post between Finger 2 and 3. The north bank of the lake is divided into 8 Fingers. The mountain spur jutting into the lake are referred to as Finger in military parlance. Last year, after the border dispute at the northern bank of Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh, China made an attempt to take over Kailash mountain range on the night of August 29 and August 30, 2020. India claims Line of Actual Control at Finger 8

and had been holding on to the area till Finger 4 but in a clear alteration of status quo the Chinese have been camping at Finger 4 and have set up fortifications between Finger 5 and 8.

Since then Indian and Chinese military have met twice to resolve border disputes at other friction areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and 900 square km Depsang plains.

Amid this, China has again started enhancing troops, artillery and armour deployment in three sectors of Line of Actual Control - western (Ladakh), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).

The Indian forces are keeping a close watch on Chinese activities at LAC.

CBI DIRECTOR POST

CISF DG, SSB DG and MHA Special Secy short-listed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 24: Director General CISF Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, SSB DG Kumar Rajesh Chandra and Special Secretary Home Ministry VSK Kaumudi were short-listed for the post of CBI director during a meeting of a high-powered committee, comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and two others, Monday, sources said.

Jaiswal, a 1985-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, is a former Maharashtra director general of police. He is at present the director general of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Chandra, a 1985-batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre, is at present posted as the director general of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), while Kaumudi, a 1986-batch IPS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre, is posted as the special secretary for internal security in the Home Ministry. The name of Uttar Pradesh DGP HC Awasthy, a 1985-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, was also under consideration. The meeting of the high-powered committee, comprising Prime Minister Modi, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, started around 6:30 pm at the 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, official residence of the Prime Minister, the sources said. During the 90-minute meeting, Chowdhury objected to the process of selection of officers for the coveted post of CBI director. The post of CBI director is vacant since the then incumbent Rishi Kumar Shukla retired on February 4 after a two-year stint. The charge for the post was handed to Additional Director Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre IPS officer, till a formal appointment is made.

PFIZER, MODERNA DECLINE TO SELL SHOTS TO DELHI

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday said US pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and Moderna have declined to sell coronavirus vaccines to the city government as they want to directly deal with the Centre.

"We have had talks with Pfizer and Moderna. They said they won't give us vaccine and will directly talk to the Centre," Kejriwal told reporters.

"I appeal to the central government with folded hands to talk to these firms, import vaccines and distribute them among states," he added.

The Delhi Chief Minister's remarks came a day after a senior Punjab official said Moderna had refused to send vaccines directly to the state government stating that it only deals with the Centre.

Kejriwal said the second wave of COVID-19 is declining gradually and the city government has started preparations for the third wave.

"We have imported 6,000 oxygen cylinders from China. Three depots with 2,000 each are being created. These will be used in case of a third wave. MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) and Indian Embassy in Beijing help us greatly, else this was not possible," he said.

Sputnik V production starts

Domestic pharma major Panacea Biotech in collaboration with Russian sovereign wealth fund RDIF has begun the production of 'Sputnik V' COVID-19 vaccine in India, according to a joint statement issued on Monday. As announced in April, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) - which markets the vaccine internationally, and Panacea Biotech agreed to produce 100 million doses per year of Sputnik V in India. The first batch of the COVID-19 vaccine produced at Panacea Biotech's facilities at Baddi in Himachal Pradesh will be shipped to Russia's Gamaleya Center for "quality control", the joint statement said.

In an online briefing, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also said Pfizer and Moderna had refused to sell coronavirus vaccines directly to the Delhi government. Meanwhile, after Moderna, another Covid-19 vaccine manufacturer Pfizer has refused to send direct vaccination to Punjab.



BEATING THE RAIN



A worker carries LPG cylinders on a tricycle during rains ahead of the landfall of Cyclone Yaas in Kolkata. PTI PHOTO

'Identify fungus by name, not colour'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: With the 'black fungus' identified in Covid patients, followed by a 'white' variant and now 'yellow', AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria Monday advised that mucormycosis should be identified by its name, rather than by its colour.

He said that it is better not to use the term 'black fungus' while talking of mucormycosis, as it leads to a lot of avoidable confusion.

"Black fungus is another family; this term got associated with mucormycosis due to the presence of black dots among the culture of white fungal colonies. In general, there are various types of fungal infections such as candida, aspergillosis, cryptococcus, histoplasmosis and coccidioidomycosis. Mucormycosis, candida and aspergillosis are the ones observed more in those with low immunity," he told the media here.

"Fungal infection observed in Covid-19 patients is mostly mucormycosis. While the number of



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

cases are increasing, it is not contagious or infectious like Covid," he said. Guleria also clarified that there is "no definite link between oxygen therapy and catching the infection as 90 to 95 per cent of mucormycosis patients are either diabetics and/or taking steroids".

"This infection is seen very rarely in those who are neither diabetic nor taking steroids," he said. He said that some of the common symptoms of mucormycosis are one-sided facial swelling, headaches, nasal or sinus congestion, black lesions on

nasal bridge or upper inside of mouth that quickly become more severe, and fever.

The AIIMS director said antifungal treatment goes on for many weeks, so it is proving to be challenging for hospitals, since Covid-positive patients and Covid-negative patients who catch mucormycosis need to be housed in separate hospital wards. Surgery also needs to be done judiciously since aggressive surgery for mucormycosis can have adverse outcomes for Covid patients.

3rd wave may not hit kids hard

The central government Monday said there is no indication that children will be severely or more affected in the third wave of Covid-19. Responding to a question on the possible impact of a third wave on children, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria at a press conference said there is so far no evidence that there will be severe infection in children or there will be more cases in them in the upcoming wave of Covid-19. He, however, said children have suffered collateral damage during the pandemic due to gender gap in education, stress and mental issues, smartphone dependence/addiction, and interrupted educational opportunities.

'Leprosy must not be forgotten amid pandemic'

LEPROSY IS NOT YET A DISEASE OF THE PAST, HOWEVER. EACH YEAR, AROUND 200,000 NEW CASES ARE REPORTED AND THERE ARE STILL ENDEMIC AREAS AND SCATTERED HOT SPOTS OF LEPROSY IN MANY COUNTRIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 24: Thirty years ago this month, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted a resolution to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem.

Today, as the 74th WHA gets under way, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination Yohei Sasakawa is urging countries not to overlook leprosy amid the global coronavirus pandemic and aim for zero leprosy.

The resolution adopted at the 44th World Health Assembly in 1991 called for the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the global level by the year 2000. "Elimination" was defined as reaching a prevalence rate of the disease of less than 1 case per 10,000 population. This was achieved globally by the end of 2000 and almost all countries have since replicated that success at the national level.

Some 3-4 million people are thought to be living with visible impairments or deformities due to leprosy, while stigma and discrimination towards those with the disease persist.

In April, the fight against leprosy entered a new phase with the launch by the WHO of "Towards Zero Leprosy: Global Leprosy (Hansen's disease) Strategy for 2021-2030". The targets include zero leprosy patients in 120 countries and a 70 percent decrease in new cases detected globally by 2030.

Yohei Sasakawa, who has visited over 100 countries since first being appointed Goodwill Ambassador in 2001, welcomes the new strategy and believes it will accelerate momentum towards a leprosy-free world. But he cautioned: "These are ambitious targets, so commitments from national governments will be required if they are to be achieved. I realize



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

these are challenging times, but we mustn't allow leprosy to be overlooked amid Covid-19."

Noting that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been particularly hard on already-marginalized communities such as

persons affected by leprosy, Sasakawa said this underscored the need to tackle the social and economic consequences of leprosy. For that reason, he hailed the focus on combating stigma and ensuring respect for human rights in the

new global leprosy strategy.

"Tackling discrimination is as important as curing the disease if we are to truly achieve a leprosy-free world. Key to this will be the full implementation of the UN principles and guidelines," he said, referring to principles and guidelines accompanying the landmark 2010 UN General Assembly Resolution on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.

Goodwill Ambassador Sasakawa, who has been involved in efforts against leprosy for nearly half a century with The Nippon Foundation, the Japanese non-profit grant-making organization he serves as chairman, said the 30th anniversary of the WHA resolution on eliminating leprosy is an appropriate moment to recall the spirit that brought countries together in a sense of common purpose against leprosy.

More troubles for Sushil Kumar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 24: More trouble is brewing for two time olympic medallist Sushil Kumar, who was arrested by Delhi Police Special Cell Sunday morning from the national capital, as his job with the Indian Railways also hangs in balance.

Kumar, employed with the Indian Railways, is posted as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Chhatrasal Stadium, where the brawl allegedly took place May 4. Northern Railway spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said: "We will take action as per extant rules once letter is received from Delhi government." Kumar was arrested Sunday morning along with his aide Ajay Kumar, who have been on the run for over 18 days in several states after the death of wrestler Sagar Dhankar after the brawl May 4 at Chhatrasal stadium here.

According to Delhi Police officials, Kumar had travelled to Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana during the 18 days long cat and mouse chase game.

of the day quote

Our focus during the new work programme will be to convert the villages surrounding these COEs into 'Villages of Excellence' through massive outreach programmes

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

More than 145 teachers from the Kalyana Karnataka region, who had taken part in poll duty and took classes under the VidyaGama programme of the govt, have died due to Covid-19. The statistics regarding the death of teachers in other regions of the state are still not available

H D KUMARASWAMY | JD(S) LEADER

India has made global headlines due to the extensive spread of coronavirus in rural areas which lack basic amenities, but governments are making announcements regarding proper preparedness and providing relief to the people from the pandemic in the same way promises are made during election

MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

J&K declares black fungus as epidemic

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government declared black fungus as an epidemic Monday under the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897. The decision followed a directive from the union government in which it had asked the UT administration to make black fungus a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act. On Friday, a 40-year old patient with confirmed black fungus infection died in a government medical college hospital in Jammu.

'Sun Halo' in B'lore

Bangalore: India's tech hub witnessed an optical phenomenon - Sun Halo or a rainbow-coloured ring around the sun across Bengaluru on Monday, which brightened up the day with several people on social media sharing pictures and funny captions with it. Bangalore residents were left awed by the rainbow-coloured halo surrounding the sun as the striking circular rainbow ring was reportedly visible from most parts of the capital of Karnataka. Such a halo could also occur around the moon at night, which is formed due to the same phenomenon.

Man ends life

Jhansi (UP): A man allegedly killed his two sons here before committing suicide, the police said Monday. The incident occurred in the Mauranipur area of the district and the victims have been identified as Rais Yadav and his sons, Harsh, 12, and Ansh, 8. Circle Officer Anuj Kumar Singh said their bodies were found in a well near a temple and a shaving blade with blood stains on it and a brick were found from the spot.

Tighter curbs

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu police have tightened checks at interstate borders to enforce a strict lockdown from Monday. The interstate borders with the Union Territory of Pondicherry have been sealed and only government servants and those with medical emergencies would be allowed entry. Superintendent of Police, Cuddalore district, M Sree Abhinav, said that nobody would be allowed to come out of their jurisdictional police station limits except for medical emergency purposes.



Keeping in view the current pandemic situation, the Opposition parties should motivate the farmers for vaccination
ANIL VU | HARYANA HOME MINISTER

BLUE ALERT IN BIHAR

The metrological department in Bihar has issued a blue alert in connection with the very severe cyclonic storm Yaas taking formation in the Bay of Bengal and expected to make landfall in neighbouring Odisha-West Bengal over the next 24 hours



Privacy 'highest priority': WhatsApp

As per the ministry, the changes to WhatsApp privacy policy and the manner of introducing the changes undermines the sacrosanct values of informational privacy, data security and user choice and harms the rights and interests of Indian citizens



AEGCNIES

New Delhi, May 24: WhatsApp Monday said it has sent a reply to the notice by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) after the ministry directed the Facebook-owned platform to withdraw its controversial user privacy policy.

In its fresh notice to the company, the MeitY told WhatsApp to respond to its concerns by May 25.

A WhatsApp spokesperson said in a statement that the company has responded to the Government of India's letter and assured them that the privacy of users 'remains our highest priority'.

"As a reminder, the recent update does not change the privacy of people's personal messages. Its purpose is to provide additional information about how people can interact with businesses if they choose to do so," the spokesperson said. Noting that many Indian users depend on WhatsApp for communicating on a daily basis, the ministry had said in the notice that it is irresponsible for WhatsApp

to leverage its position in the Indian market to impose unfair terms and conditions. As per the ministry, the changes to WhatsApp privacy policy and the manner of introducing the changes undermines the sacrosanct values of informational privacy, data security and user choice and harms the rights and interests of Indian citizens.

The WhatsApp spokesperson said that the company "will not limit the functionality of how WhatsApp works in the coming weeks." Instead, we will continue to remind users from time to time

Delhi Police sends notice to Twitter-India

The Delhi Police's Special Cell Monday sent a notice to Twitter India in connection with the probe into a complaint about the alleged 'Covid toolkit', asking it to share information based on which it had classified a related tweet by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra as "manipulated media", officials said. Two police teams also descended on the microblogging site's offices in Lado Sarai in Delhi and in Gurgaon this evening. "The Delhi police team went to the Twitter office to serve a notice to Twitter as a part of routine process. This was necessitated as we wanted to ascertain who is the right person to serve a notice, as replies by Twitter India MD have been very ambiguous," Delhi Police PRO Chinmay Biswal said. The BJP has accused the Congress of creating a 'toolkit' that seeks to tarnish the image of the country and Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the handling of the Covid pandemic.

Farmers urged to call off mass protest amid nCoV risk

AEGCNIES

New Delhi, May 24: Indian government leaders appealed to farmers to call off a mass protest this week for fear it could prove a viral "super-spreader" event as the country's overall death toll from Covid-19 crossed 300,000 Monday.

Over a third have died over the past three weeks during a devastating second wave fuelled by a new virus variant detected in India, mass political and religious gatherings, and lowering of the guard by the public, health officials and experts say.

Now farmers have stirred fresh alarm by saying they will hold mass protests across the country on Wednesday to mark six months of their campaign against deregulation of agriculture markets. Farmers are camped out on Delhi's outskirts despite a great risk of

infection to themselves, the joint committee of farmers organisations said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to repeal laws to liberalise the farm sector.

"We have no desire to expose the protesting farmers or anyone else to avoidable health hazards," the letter said.

Twelve opposition parties including Congress issued a statement saying they stood by the farmers, who are an influential voting bloc in India's vast countryside.

The fear is that a mass rally on the edges of the capital Delhi could become a "super-spreader" incident like the Great Pitcher festival on the banks of the river Ganges last month when thousands took a holy dip, or the crowded political rallies that were held in states holding local elections.

DGCA grounds flight's crew

MID-AIR WEDDING PARTY



AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation Monday de-rostered the crew of a SpiceJet chartered flight that was used for a wedding party.

The post-wedding joy ride by a marriage party onboard a SpiceJet aircraft, which took off from the Madurai International Airport Sunday, has put the private airline in a spot with videos of the celebrations going viral on social media.

According to SpiceJet, a travel agent in Madurai had chartered one of its Boeing 737 Sunday for a group of passengers for a post-wedding joy ride.

The videos and images that have gone viral on social media clearly show violation of Covid-19 safety norms, with a large number of people standing extremely close to each other. According to a senior DGCA official, the move has

been taken pending investigation into the matter.

"The client was clearly briefed on Covid guidelines to be followed and denied permission for any activity to be performed on board. "The agent and the guest passengers were briefed in detail, both in writing as well as verbally, on social distancing and safety norms to be followed as per Covid guidelines, both at the airport and onboard the aircraft throughout the journey," a SpiceJet spokesperson said.

According to the spokesperson, the group was repeatedly advised to follow the protocols laid down by DGCA, including restrictions on photography and videography. "Despite repeated requests and reminders, the passengers did not follow guidelines and the airline is taking appropriate action as per rules," the spokesperson said.

PARTIAL LUNAR ECLIPSE TO BE VISIBLE MAY 26



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 24: The first total lunar eclipse of the year will take place May 26 and according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), only a few places in the country will be able to witness the partial lunar eclipse.

The partial lunar eclipse will be visible for a short span from the north-eastern region (except Sikkim), some parts of West Bengal, some coastal parts of Odisha and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the IMD said.

This will be the first total Lunar Eclipse since January 21, 2019 and it will be a supermoon.

The eclipse will be visible in the region covering South America, North America, Asia, Australia, Antarctica, the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

According to NASA, a series of celestial events have been happening since May 17 which will culminate in the total lunar eclipse.

The partial phase of the eclipse will begin at 15h 15m IST (Indian standard time). The total phase will begin at 16h 39m IST. The total phase will end at 16h 58m IST. The partial phase will end at 18h 23m IST.

The next lunar eclipse will be visible from India November 19, 2021. It will be a partial lunar eclipse.

Lunar eclipse occurs on a full Moon day when the Earth comes in between the Sun and the Moon and when all the three objects are aligned.

A total lunar eclipse occurs when the Moon comes under the umbral shadow of the Earth and the partial lunar eclipse occurs when only a part of the Moon comes under the umbral shadow of the Earth.

COVID-19 BENEFIT SCHEMES

Benefits must reach migrant workers: SC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: The Supreme Court Monday said its main concern is that benefits which are meant for migrant workers must reach them and stressed the process of their registration is woefully slow. The top court said the Centre and state governments must expedite registration of migrant workers and also those working in the unorganised sectors.

A bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah told the Centre's counsel: "Our main concern is that benefits meant for migrant workers must reach them. We have taken a cursory look at your (Centre) affidavit but there is nothing about registration of migrant workers in it." The top court also queried that how will the government give dry ration to labourers who do not have ration cards?

The top court also queried, why there is no national data on workers of unorganised sector?

The court emphasised that data and the portal are essential to en-



sure benefits reach the needy during the lockdown. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta agreed with the top court's suggestion that identification and registration of migrant workers is necessary, which would help in transfer of money directly in their accounts, besides other benefits. The top court also queried the Centre, who will monitor government schemes are reaching the beneficiaries, there should be su-

pervision these benefits are reaching the needy, and suggested appointment of nodal officers.

Justice Shah said: "On paper, we have government has spent thousands of crores, but the concern is that whether it is reaching the needy persons?" The bench said: "The government must approach them (migrant workers) to get them registered." The bench added governments could extend

benefits to migrant workers, those who lost employment amid the pandemic, only if they were registered. The bench emphasised, "It is a difficult task, but has to be achieved." The bench added that the Centre and states must expedite registration of migrant workers along with those working in the unorganised sectors.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan pointed out that migrant workers

international



I condemn in the strongest possible terms the forced landing of a Ryanair flight in Minsk, Belarus May 23, 2021. The incident will not remain without consequences
CHARLES MICHEL | EUROPEAN COUNCIL PRESIDENT

INDIAN MISSION OFFICIALS IN PAK QUARANTINED AFTER COVID CASE
High Commission of India officials in Islamabad along with their family members have been placed under quarantine after one of them tested positive for Covid-19 following their arrival in Pakistan



of the day quote

The Israeli government is fully responsible for sabotaging the efforts of ending the Israeli aggression
NABIL ABU RUDEINEH | PALESTINE PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN

Despite all the pressures from US-imposed sanctions and "economic war" and the economic consequences of Covid-19 pandemic, Tehran's industry has been able to achieve production growth
HASSAN ROUHANI | IRANIAN PRESIDENT

The way we farm and treat nature cutting down forests and destroying habitats, we are creating the perfect conditions for diseases to spill over from one animal to another - and to us
GRETA THUNBERG | CLIMATE CAMPAIGNER

SHORT TAKES

Volcanic eruption kills 15 in Congo

Kinshasa: At least 15 people were killed after the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo volcano located on the outskirts of Goma city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), according to the authorities. Government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said that 15 people were killed while fleeing following the explosion May 22. Nine people were killed in a truck rollover accident, while four others were prisoners trying to break the Munzenze central prison in Goma, the spokesman said.

Afghan forces storm Taliban hideout

Kabul: Units of the Afghan Special Forces stormed a Taliban hideout in northern Baghlan province and rescued eight security personnel from the armed group's detention centre Monday, an army statement said. The operation was launched early Monday in Omarkhil village of Baghlan-e-Markazi district, the statement said. Baghlan-e-Markazi district has been the scene of fierce fighting between government forces and the Taliban militants over the past three weeks.

3 killed in Yemen landmine blast

Sanaa: Three Yemeni women were killed by a landmine explosion in the country's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah, a government official said. The deadly explosion on Sunday was "caused by a landmine laid previously by the Houthis rebels in Hays district in southern Hodeidah", the official said. The three women were caring for their sheep near an agricultural area, the official added. The Houthi-laid landmines and IEDs continue to pose a real threat to the civilians despite the ongoing efforts by the experts of the mine-clearing projects in Yemen.

Rare protests in Oman over jobs

Dubai: Scattered protests in Oman over layoffs and poor economic conditions drew a massive police presence Monday in at least one city in the sultanate, with protesters throwing stones at one point and police firing tear gas. Videos posted to social media show several dozen Omanis in the city of Sohar trailed by a long line of riot police vehicles. Other images appear to show a line of police in riot gear near a government labour office in the city, some 200 kilometers northwest of the capital, Muscat.

SOME KGB AGENTS WERE ON JET: AIRLINE CEO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Vilnius (Lithuania), May 24: Belarus secret police are believed to have been present when a dissident journalist was detained when his plane was diverted to Minsk, the head of the Irish airline said Monday.
Roman Protasevich was held on Sunday after a Ryanair flight from Athens to Vilnius was intercepted by a Belarusian fighter jet and diverted to the capital of Minsk, state TV reported.
"It appears the intent of the authorities was to remove a journalist and his travelling compan-

ion," Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary told Ireland's Newstalk radio. "We believe there were some (Belarusian security agency) KGB agents offloaded at the airport as well."
Dublin-headquartered Ryanair is renowned for ultra low-cost, short-haul flights across the continental bloc. Favoured by budget holidaymakers, the carrier is an unlikely participant in a high-stakes diplomatic crisis.
"I think it's the first time it's happened to a European airline," O'Leary said. "It was a state-sponsored hijacking, it was state-sponsored piracy." The Irish govern-

BELARUS DISSIDENT'S ARREST



A Belarusian dog handler checks luggages off a Ryanair Boeing 737-8AS parked on Minsk Airport

ment also blamed Belarus for the diversion and called for a tough response from Brussels.
"We cannot allow this incident to pass on the basis of warnings or strong press releases," Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney told state broadcaster RTE. "I think there has to be real edge to the sanctions that are applied on the back of this."
"It was an Irish airline, a plane that was registered in Poland, full of EU nationals, travelling between two EU capitals," Coveney said. "This can only be described as aviation piracy," he added.
"I think the EU has to give a

very clear response to it otherwise we're giving all the wrong signals."
"We demand an immediate international investigation," exiled Belarus Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya told RTE. "The escalation of violence in Belarus is the result of impunity, so we have to put much more pressure on the regime."
Protasevich's friend, Franak Viacorka meanwhile told BBC radio in London there was "no possibility of coincidence... no possibility that this plane was moved to Minsk because of other reasons".

'Wuhan lab staff sought hosp care before Covid outbreak disclosed'

Three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology sought hospital care in November 2019, months before China disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday, citing a previously undisclosed US intelligence report.

REUTERS

Washington, May 24: Three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) sought hospital care in November 2019, months before China disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday, citing a previously undisclosed US intelligence report.
The newspaper said the report - which provides fresh details on the number of researchers affected, the timing of their illnesses, and their hospital visits - may add weight to calls for a broader probe of whether the Covid-19 virus could have escaped from the laboratory.
The report came on the eve of a meeting of the World Health Organization's decision-making body, which is expected to discuss the next phase of an investigation into the origins of Covid-19.
A National Security Council spokeswoman had no comment on



Security personnel keep watch outside the Wuhan Institute of Virology during the visit by the WHO team tasked with investigating the origins of Covid-19 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, February 3

the Journal's report but said the Biden administration continued to have "serious questions about the earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic, including its origins within the Peoples Republic of China."
She said the US government was working with the WHO and other member states to support an expert-driven evaluation of the pandemic's origins "that is free from interference or politicisation."
"We're not going to make pronouncements that prejudice an ongoing WHO study into the source of SARS-CoV-2, but we've been clear that sound and technically credible theories should be thoroughly evaluated by international

No decision on Haj 2021 yet: Saudi embassy in Pak

AGENCIES

Islamabad, May 24: Pakistan Minister for Religious Affairs Noorul Haq Qadri has clarified that the Saudi Arabia government had not yet taken a decision regarding the number of pilgrims being allowed to perform Haj this year.
The Saudi embassy in Pakistan Sunday said that no decision has been taken yet on hosting the Haj pilgrimage this year.
A spokesman in the Saudi embassy said, "No decision has been taken yet regarding the Haj. All that is said in this regard are proposals that are still under study."
The statement by Taher Al-Ashrafi, Special Representative of the Pakistan Prime Minister on Religious Harmony, regarding Haj is incorrect. On Saturday, he said that the Saudi government has allowed 60,000 people from across the world to perform Haj this year, including Pakistan.
Meanwhile, Pakistan Minister for Religious Affairs Noorul Haq Qadri clarified on Sunday that the Saudi Arabia government had not yet taken a decision regarding the number of pilgrims being allowed to perform Haj this year or the Covid SOP.
He said, "I have spoken to the Saudi Haj and Umrah minister. The news that is circulating is the recommendations by the Saudi Health Ministry, and no final decision has been made yet."

Iran to extend deal on cameras at its N-sites

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vienna, May 24: Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog agreed Monday to a one-month extension to a deal on surveillance cameras at Tehran's atomic sites, buying more time for ongoing negotiations seeking to save the country's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.
The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the US and others to reach terms with Iran as it presses a tough stance with the international community over its atomic programme. The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.
Speaking at a news conference Monday in Vienna, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi told journalists that came after a discussion with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear programme.
Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's representative to the IAEA, acknowledged the deal at the same time on Twitter. Under a confidential agreement called an "Additional Protocol" with Iran, the IAEA collects and analyzes images from a series of surveillance cameras installed at Iranian nuclear sites. Those cameras helped it monitor Tehran's program to see if it is complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog agreed Monday to a one-month extension to a deal on surveillance cameras at Tehran's atomic sites
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Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of UN Inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February.
The IAEA then struck a three-month deal with Iran in February to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.
Iran since has broken all the deal's limits after then-President Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew America from the accord. Negotiations continue in Vienna to see if both the US.

Pope Francis challenges Vatican's journalists: Who reads your news?

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 24: Pope Francis challenged the Vatican's in-house journalists Monday to essentially justify their continued work, asking them how many people actually consume their news in a critique of the office that costs the Holy See more than all its embassies around the world combined.
Francis visited the Dicastery of Communications, Vatican Radio and the headquarters of the Vatican's newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, which is marking its 160th anniversary. He appeared to use the occasion to lay down the gauntlet at a fraught financial time for the Holy See.

Facing a major pension funding shortage and a projected 50 million euro (\$61 million) deficit this year, Francis has ordered salary cuts from 3 per cent to 10 per cent for Vatican employees, both lay and religious, and paused seniority bonuses for two years.
Francis has vowed not to fire anyone to offset the economic crisis created by Covid-19 and the pandemic-related shuttering of one of the Holy See's main sources of revenue, ticket sales from the Vatican Museums.
But in a warning of sorts to the Vatican communications staff, he opened his unscripted remarks Monday with a pointed question.

NOWHERE TO GO



Palestinians sit in a makeshift tent amid the rubble of their houses which were destroyed by Israeli air strikes during the Israel-Hamas fighting in Gaza

Dogs can be trained to detect 90% Covid cases: Study

USING THEIR REMARKABLE SENSE OF SMELL, DOGS HAVE ALREADY SHOWN THAT THEY CAN SNIFF OUT MALADIES SUCH AS CANCER, MALARIA AND EPILEPSY

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Paris, May 24: Dogs can be trained to detect more than 90 percent of Covid-19 infections even when patients are asymptomatic, according to research published Monday, which authors hope could help replace the need to quarantine new arrivals.
Using their remarkable sense of smell - which can pick up the equivalent of half a teaspoon of sugar in an olympic-sized swimming pool - dogs have already shown that they can sniff out maladies such as cancer, malaria and epilepsy.
Several previous studies have shown proof-of-concept that dogs can detect SARS-CoV-2. Researchers from the London School of Tropical Medicine wanted to see if dogs could detect a distinctive odour given off from chemical compounds associated with someone who is



Covid positive but doesn't show symptoms.
They gathered samples of clothing and face masks from people who had tested positive for mild or symptomatic SARS-CoV-2.
Samples of the socks of 200 Covid-19 cases were collected and

arranged in lab tests for six dogs that had been trained to indicate either a presence or absence of the chemical compound.
The dogs needed to be trained not to identify "false positives" in a bid to hack their reward system and obtain treats even if there were

no Covid-19 samples in a given test.
"This means that the dog fully understands and gets a reward for a correct negative as well as a correct positive," said Claire Guest, from the school's Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases.
Overall, the dogs were successfully able to identify between 94 and 82 percent of SARS-CoV-2 samples.
The researchers then modelled how effectively these success rates, combined with traditional PCR tests, could help detect mild or asymptomatic Covid-19 cases.
They found that using dogs to screen arrivals at terminuses such as airports could detect 91 percent of cases, resulting in a 2.24 times lower rate of transmission than with PCR tests alone.
'Important start'
Authors of the research, which has yet to be peer-reviewed, said they hoped it could eventually re-

place the need for travellers to quarantine - which necessarily disrupts every arrival even though the vast majority are not Covid positive.
"The key thing is that dogs are significantly quicker than other tests," said co-author James Logan.
"What we're suggesting is that dogs would give the first initial screening, and then those (arrivals) that were indicated as positive would then receive a complimentary PCR test."
The team said that out of a plane full of arrivals - around 300 people - less than one percent were statistically likely to be carrying SARS-CoV-2.
Under current quarantine regulations employed by some countries, all 300 would need to isolate, causing significant inconvenience.

12 dead in multiple weekend US shootings

AGENCIES

Washington, May 24: At least 12 people, including two girls, were killed and dozens injured in multiple shootings in several US states over the weekend, according to authorities and media reports.
A 16-year-old girl died just after 1 am Sunday, shortly after gunfire broke out at the Bicentennial Park Amphitheater in Columbus, the capital city of Ohio, Xinhua news agency quoted the local police as saying.
Five other teens were injured in the shooting.
The incident occurred at a private event that was promoted on social media, according to the police statement.
What sparked the shooting remains unclear, and police have not identified a suspect, the NBC Columbus-affiliate WCMH reported.
In Youngstown, the ninth largest city in Ohio, three people were shot dead and five others injured at a bar on early Sunday morning, according to a CNN report, citing local police sources.
Police responded to the reports of shooting at the Torch Club Bar & Grille in Youngstown shortly after 2 am Sunday, said the report.
Detectives said some sort of argument broke out near the bar and there was "an exchange of gunfire", local media outlet WKBN reported.
Youngstown has witnessed 11 homicides this year, with 42 people shot and wounded, said WKBN.
In Bridgeton, New Jersey, two people were killed with 12 others injured in a house party shooting just before midnight, the authorities said Sunday.
Troopers responded to the scene at 11.50 p.m. Saturday, the state police said.
More than a hundred people were at that home for a party at the time, according to an ABC News report.

business



Our purpose is to make an impact that matters and supporting the people (of Haryana) as the government delivers much-needed medical care to Covid-19 patients is one of the most important impacts we can make
PUNIT REJUEN | GLOBAL CEO, DELOITTE

M-CAP OF BSE-LISTED COS HITS \$3TN FOR FIRST TIME

The market capitalisation of companies listed on the BSE reached the \$3 trillion mark for the first time in its history. Taking to Twitter, BSE CEO Ashish Chauhan congratulated the investors, brokers, mutual fund distributors and companies



of the day quote

The number of institutions investing in us has grown significantly in FY21 alone... We have all learnt several lessons from the pandemic last year which will help us put our best foot forward and cater to our members' needs adeptly

RAJAN BAJAJ | FOUNDER AND CEO, SLICE

Long before words like hackathon became common, TCS saw the potential of programming as a sport, and that inspired TCS CodeVita. In a world where technology, innovation, and creativity are playing a pivotal role, the Guinness World Records is fuelling a passion for programming in youngsters

ANANTH KRISHNAN | CTO, TCS

We have forecast GDP growth to trail the GVA expansion in Q4, on account of the assessed impact of the back-ended release of subsidies by the government. Given the latter, we believe the trend in the GVA performance may be a more meaningful gauge of the economic recovery in Q4

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

'Biz resumption drops further as lockdowns continue'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 24: Continuing lockdowns in several states have led to a further decline in business resumption, and economic activity has now dipped to levels seen in June last year, a Japanese brokerage said Monday.

Using a proprietary index of gauging activity deployed since the national lockdown last year, Nomura said the worst hit to the activity will occur in May, followed by a sequential improvement in June. "Lockdowns look to spill into June, but a few states are announcing a slow rollback of restrictions as their virus caseloads fall, which suggests a sequential improvement in activity in June," the brokerage said.

The business resumption index slipped to 60 for the week ended May 23, down from 63 in the previous reporting week, it said, adding that these levels were last seen in June 2020.



Both mobility and non-mobility sectors have been hit, it said, pointing out that Google's work-

The business resumption index slipped to 60 for the week ended May 23, down from 63 in the previous reporting week, said the Japanese brokerage firm, adding that these levels were last seen in June 2020

place and retail and recreation mobility indices fell by 5-6 percentage points, while the Apple driving index bottomed and rose by 3.4 percentage points.

Power demand continued to contract, down by 5 per cent, while the labour participation rate moderated to 39.4 per cent from 40.5 per cent, with the unemployment rate up to

14.7 per cent from 14.4 per cent last week, near its one-year high.

For a sustained recovery, the pace of vaccination needs to pick up, which is expected to happen only after June, it said.

Meanwhile, analysts at Kotak Institutional Equities said they see "first sights of green shoots" in the economy impacted by the second round of coronavirus infections. "Most metrics show a significant decline but we could be at the trough of economic activity," the analysts said.

Mobility metrics, trending downwards across India, have started to improve in Mumbai and Pune. Mumbai and Pune were two of the first cities to peak in the second wave, it pointed out. Stating that most of the states have "peaked" in terms of infections, they also flagged the slow pace of vaccinations as an area of concern.

ICRA forecasts Q4 GDP growth at 2%; projects 7.3% contraction in FY21



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 24: Domestic rating agency ICRA Monday pegged a 2 per cent uptick in growth during the March FY21 quarter, and 3 per cent from the gross value-added perspective. This would mean that the NSO projection of a double-dip contraction would be averted.

The agency has projected a full-year contraction at 7.3 per cent. Its chief economist Aditi Nayar expects the annualised GDP growth at 2 per cent in the March quarter, up from 0.40 per cent in the December quarter.

The GVA growth at 3 per cent in Q4 of FY21, up from 1 per cent in Q3, suggesting that the double-dip recession implied by the National Statistics Office (NSO) for Q4 would be averted.

Remote job searches soared to 966 pc in April, says report

The burgeoning demand for remote jobs is backed by the fact that geographical boundaries are blurring while employers hire and the job seekers scout for opportunities



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 24: As a majority of Indians are working from home, searches for 'remote work' skyrocketed to 966 per cent in April 2021, on the same period last year, according to data from job site Indeed.

The data revealed that searches for remote work were higher across age groups - 60-64, 15-19 and 40-44 at 13 per cent each, while the searches in the age groups 35-39 and 20-24 were 12 per cent each.

The data also revealed that Bangalore topped the chart for remote job searches with 16 per cent followed by Delhi (11 per cent), Mumbai (8 per cent), Hyderabad (6 per cent) and Pune (7 per cent).

This burgeoning demand for remote jobs is backed by the fact that geographical boundaries are blurring while employers hire and the job seekers scout for opportunities.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has fast tracked the adoption of technology across functions in India and has set in motion the largest work from home experiment of our generation. Our data has reflected the same showing a consistent rise in searches for remote jobs," said Sashi Kumar, Managing Director, Indeed India, in a statement Monday.

The pandemic has defined the significance of skills as the top priority for hiring as opposed to location of the job seeker, the data showed. It

With an increasing need for technical integration across functions and sectors, job roles that require technical expertise have been the most in demand

is expected that employers would increase work-from-home options, embracing hybrid work as the future of work.

With the increasing need for technical integration across functions and sectors, job roles that require technical expertise to ensure seamless working have been the most in demand. The data also revealed that technical support specialist (25 per cent) emerged as one of the most searched remote jobs followed by data entry clerk (22 per cent), IT recruiter (16 per cent) and back end developer (15 per cent).

"As businesses transitioned digitally, it has become a norm for employees and companies to work from anywhere and this change enabled by technology will see more and more companies turning to hybrid work in the future. We believe that going forward, recruiters will focus on role and skills based hiring, thus blurring geographical boundaries," Kumar said.

AIBEA urges FM to merge RRBs with sponsor banks

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 24: Bank union AIBEA Monday said the government should consider merger of weak Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) with their sponsor banks as part of restructuring exercise. In a letter written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) said it is learnt that the government is considering further reforms in RRBs to make them more viable.

"We suggest that merging these RRBs with the sponsor banks would be a better proposition since this will add to the rural network of the sponsor banks and at the same time eliminate the weaknesses which the RRBs are presently suffering from," it said.

Monitoring would be much more effective since they would become part of the bank and come under the direct control of the management of the sponsor banks, AIBEA general secretary CH Vekatachalam said.

These banks were formed under the RRB Act, 1976 with an objective to provide credit and other facilities to small farmers, agricultural labourers, and artisans in rural areas.

As per the Act, the shareholding among the Centre, concerned state



We suggest that merging these RRBs with the sponsor banks would be a better proposition since this will add to the rural network of the sponsor banks and at the same time eliminate the weaknesses which the RRBs are presently suffering from

CH VEKATACHALAM | GENERAL SECRETARY, AIBEA

governments and the sponsor or promoter banks is in the ratio of 50:15:35, respectively. After the central government, the sponsored

bank is the largest shareholder with 35 per cent stake.

To begin with there were 196 RRBs, which over a period of time have been consolidated into 43.

Even though the objectives of the RRBs have been laudable, the very nature of the business being carried on by the RRBs make them fragile and vulnerable, Vekatachalam said.

In this background, he said, there have been many efforts to restructure the RRBs to make them strong and vibrant but the results have not been that encouraging because of the intrinsic reasons and they are bound to be so.

'Second wave may delay recovery in air passenger traffic'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 24: The second wave of the coronavirus pandemic is likely to delay recovery in air passenger traffic with an 80-85 per cent growth year-on-year this fiscal against the earlier estimate of 130-135 per cent, ratings agency ICRA said Monday.

The domestic passenger traffic, which witnessed a steady ramp-up after resumption of airport operations since May 25 last year and reached 64 per cent of the previous year levels in February, has again suffered a setback, the ratings agency said in a report.

Users can soon switch from prepaid to postpaid, vice-versa using an OTP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 24: Mobile phone subscribers may soon be allowed to switch from a postpaid connection to prepaid and vice versa by using an OTP-based authentication and without a need to change SIM card, according to an official DoT note.

Industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has proposed the mechanism to the Department of Telecom (DoT) and the department has asked telecom operators to carry out proof of concept (PoC) on the same.



The final decision on allowing the change in the account will depend on the outcome of PoC, according to the DoT note.

"The PoC for conversion from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa may be carried out by the telecom service providers as per the procedure.

The decision regarding implementation of the procedure shall be taken after the assessment of the outcome

of the PoC," DoT ADG Suresh Kumar said in the note issued May 21.

The COAI had requested the DoT April 9 for permission to allow mobile customers to migrate from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa without undertaking fresh KYC procedure and by using OTP-based authentication.

"OTP based authentication has become an acceptable norm in all sectors in recent past and most of the citizen-centric services are being offered with OTP authentication. Contactless services in present times are to be promoted for user convenience and also for ease of doing business," the note said.

India attracts highest-ever FDI inflow of \$81.72bn in FY21

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 24: India attracted the highest level of foreign direct investment (FDI) in financial year 2020-21, even surpassing the previous year's numbers by a healthy 10 per cent, an official statement said Monday. The country attracted total FDI inflow of \$81.72 billion in FY21, 10 per cent higher as compared to the last financial year 2019-20 at \$74.39 billion, it said.

Measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country, the Commerce Ministry statement said.

The following trends in India's FDI are an endorsement of its status as a preferred investment destination amongst global investors,

BEATING THE PANDEMIC BLUES

Measures taken by the Gol on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and EODB have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country

What is encouraging is that out of the total inflows, FDI equity inflow grew by 19% in 2020 as compared to that in 2019

Out of top 10 countries, Saudi Arabia is the top investor in terms of percentage increase during FY 2020-21

the statement added. What is encouraging is that out of the total inflows, FDI equity in-



flow grew by 19 per cent last year (\$59.64 billion) compared to the previous year (\$49.98 billion). Equity inflows or fresh foreign capital flows into the economy shows investor confidence on the state of the economy and helps the country to

build new capacities. As per the government data, Singapore remained the top investor in the country in FY21 with 29 per cent of total inflows, followed by the US (23 per cent) and Mauritius (9 per cent).

In previous few years, Mauritius has lost the numero uno destination for investment into India after the country signed a fresh investment treaty with India that puts a check on pseudo investors using the route to save on taxes.

'Computer Software & Hardware' has emerged as the top sector during FY 2020-21 with around 44 per cent share of the total FDI Equity inflow followed by Construction (Infrastructure) Activities (13 per cent) and Services Sector (8 per cent) respectively.

Under the sector 'Computer Software & Hardware', the major recipient states are Gujarat (78 per cent), Karnataka (9 per cent) and Delhi (5 per cent) in FY 2020-21.

Gujarat is the top recipient state during FY 2020-21 with 37 per cent share of the total FDI Equity inflows followed by Maharashtra (27 per

cent) and Karnataka (13 per cent). Majority of the equity inflow of Gujarat has been reported in the sectors - 'Computer Software & Hardware' (94 per cent) and 'Construction (Infrastructure) Activities' (2 per cent) during FY 2020-21.

The major sectors, namely Construction (Infrastructure) Activities, Computer Software & Hardware, Rubber Goods, Retail Trading, Drugs & Pharmaceuticals and Electrical Equipment have recorded more than 100 per cent jump in equity during FY 2020-21 as compared to the previous year.

Out of top 10 countries, Saudi Arabia is the top investor in terms of percentage increase during FY 2020-21. It invested \$2,816.08 million in comparison to US\$ 89.93 million reported in the previous financial year.

REIGNING SUPREME

AC Milan, Juventus take final two Champions League places in Serie A on a night when Inter lift Italian league trophy for the first time in 11 years



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milan, May 24: Seven-time European champion AC Milan is back in the Champions League after an eight-year break. And Juventus also narrowly qualified on the final night of Serie A.

Two penalties from Franck Kessie Sunday helped Milan to a 2-0 win at Atalanta, which had already claimed a top-four spot along with Serie A champion Inter Milan.

Juventus won 4-1 at Bologna with two goals from Alvaro Morata plus scores from Federico Chiesa and Adrien Rabot. Still, Juventus needed help and got it when Hellas Verona held Napoli to a 1-1 draw, leaving Napoli in fifth place.

Amir Rrahmani had put Napoli ahead on the hour mark but Davide Faraoni quickly equalized for Verona.

When Juventus' game finished a few moments earlier, Bianconeri players watched the final moments of the Napoli-Verona match on the touchline before they could celebrate. The final standings read Inter (91 points), Milan (79), Atalanta (78), Juventus (78) and Napoli (77).

CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Roma came back from two goals down against Spezia for a 2-2 draw to take seventh place and a spot in the new Europa Conference League for incoming coach Jose Mourinho.

Stephan El Shaarawy and Henrikh Mkhitaryan equalized for Roma after Daniele Verde and Tommaso Pobega

had put Spezia ahead.

Sassuolo, which finished eighth, beat Lazio 2-0 with goals from Giorgos Kyriakopoulos and Domenico Berardi despite finishing with 10 men after Kyriakopoulos picked up his second yellow.

Lazio was already assured of finishing sixth and will go into the Europa League with Napoli. Also, Torino and already-relegated Benevento drew 1-1.

of the season when up to 1,000 spectators were allowed into stadiums.

Ashley Young and Christian Eriksen set Inter on the way to victory with first-half goals. Lautaro Martinez converted a penalty 10 minutes after the break with Ivan Perisic and Romelu Lukaku also scoring to add to the festive atmosphere. Roberto Pereyra netted a late penalty for Udinese.

INTER CELEBRATE

Inter got their title party started by crushing Udinese 5-1 in the final round. Inter had clinched the title earlier in the month but there was an award ceremony on the field after its final match, with captain Samir Handanovic lifting the trophy to huge cheers from inside and outside the stadium.

There were 1,000 invited guests allowed into San Siro as friends and family and 4,500 fans outside in an allocated area. Hundreds of them had started gathering hours before the team arrived, carrying flags and setting off flares while chanting songs to celebrate Inter's first Serie A title in 11 years.

After the celebrations on the field, the players went to one of San Siro's iconic towers to continue the party with the fans below.

Fans have been banned 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

EVEN A POINT IS MASSIVE

LILLE CLAIM FRENCH LEAGUE TITLE EDGING PAST PSG BY JUST ONE POINT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Monaco, May 24: Lille upset the odds to win their first French championship in 10 years, edging defending champion Paris Saint-Germain by one point as an enthralling title race ended.

PSG had to better Lille's result, but Lille won 2-1 at Angers Sunday and PSG won 2-0 at Brest in one of the most exciting French seasons for many years.

Victory gave Lille a fourth French crown and stopped PSG from sealing a record-equaling 10th to join Marseille and Saint-Etienne.

Neymar missed a penalty before Kylian Mbappe netted his

Aguero bids farewell to Premier League



Aguero ended his Premier League career at No.4 in the competition's all-time scoring list, behind Alan Shearer (260), Wayne Rooney (208) and Andy Cole (187)



ASSOCIATED

Manchester, May 24: For Sergio Aguero, it's 184 goals and out as he bids farewell to the Premier League. Could there be one final scoring hurrah in the Champions League?

The 32-year-old Aguero scored twice in a fairytale last appearance in English soccer as Manchester City completed its title-winning campaign by thrashing Everton 5-0 Sunday.

City's record scorer moved onto 260 goals for the club with one game remaining — the Champions League final against Chelsea in Porto Saturday.

The Argentina striker is likely to start on the bench for the match but City manager Pep Guardiola didn't rule out Aguero scripting one last amazing chapter to cap his 10 years with the team.

Asked if Aguero could play against Chelsea, Guardiola said: "Of course. We have five substitutions. He has a

“When I came here, the first title was the most important, for the club and for me. Then Man City started to win more titles so I'm so happy because it's not easy to be at one club for 10 years. For me it's an honour

AERGIO AGUERO

special feeling, he has something special. Of course he will be ready if we need him to help us win the Champions League.”

The post-match ceremony which saw City's players and staff lift the Premier League trophy for the fifth time in 10 seasons, included a special tribute to Aguero in recognition of a City career that reached their heights at the end of his first year there. That was when he scored the stoppage-time winner against Queens Park Rangers in the final game of the season to clinch the title for City.

Aguero's final season at City has been blighted by injuries but he showed against Everton how lethal he still is, scoring twice after coming off the bench with 25 minutes remaining.

“Before the game I felt so strange,

the sensation is not good. I prefer to think about the good moments,” Aguero said. “I'm a striker, my target is to score goals, so I'm so happy because it's my last game and to score two goals is fantastic for me.”

Guardiola suggested Aguero would soon be signing a contract at Barcelona. “Maybe I'll reveal a secret. Maybe he is close to agreeing a deal for the club of my heart, Barcelona,” said Guardiola, who used to play then coach at the Spanish club. “He's going to play alongside the best player in all time, Lionel Messi. I'm pretty sure he's going to enjoy it.”

It was a first chance for City's fans to salute the champions and acknowledge their European exploits, and they certainly made their presence felt throughout the afternoon. Before the game, big numbers spilled into the streets as City's team coaches made what is normally a straightforward journey from the nearby training complex to the stadium.

Only 10,000 were permitted inside the stadium but the atmosphere they generated inspired the team. Everton formed a guard of honor to greet City players as they came onto the field and players from both sides then did likewise for Aguero.

Giro d'Italia: Bernal conquers Stage 16



AGENCIES

The Colombian cyclist has battled grim weather to not only win the stage, but also strengthen his grip on the overall leader's Maglia Rosa.

The queen stage of the Giro d'Italia — the race from Sacile to Cortina d'Ampezzo, was shortened from 212km to 155km due to cold, wet and snowy conditions. Two high-altitude climbs at the Fedai and Pordoi passes were also cut from the race.

Bernal made his move half-way up the 10-kilometre first-category climb, after EF Education-Nippo had shredded the bunch to an elite selection of GC riders. The Colombian breezed past the breakaway remnants to lead alone over the 2236-metre summit of what was now the 'Cima Coppi' — the highest point in the Giro — and he safely negotiated the 17km descent to celebrate his second stage win in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The Ineos Grenadiers rider battled against the elements to finish 27 seconds ahead of Frenchman Romain Bardet and Italy's Damiano Caruso. Bernal now has a lead of two minutes and 24 seconds over second-placed Caruso in the general classification rankings.

Mickelson the oldest Major champ



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kiawah Island (US), May 24: Phil Mickelson has delivered so many thrills and spills over 30 years of pure theater that no one ever knows what he will do next. His latest act was a real stunner: A major champion at age 50.

Mickelson captured his sixth major and by far the most surprising Sunday at the PGA Championship. He made two early birdies with that magical wedge game and let a cast of contenders fall too far behind to catch him in the shifting wind of Kiawah Island.

He closed with a 1-over 73, building a five-shot lead on the back

nine and not making any critical mistakes that kept him from his place in history.

Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio.

Pure chaos broke out along the 18th hole after Mickelson hit 9-iron safely to just outside 15 feet that all but secured a most improbable victory. Thousands of fans engulfed him down the fairway — a scene typically seen only at the British Open — until Mickelson emerged into view with a thumbs-up.

Chants of 'Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!' chased him onto the green and

into the scoring tent, his final duty of a week he won't soon forget.

Three months after 43-year-old Tom Brady won a seventh Super Bowl, Mickelson added to this year of ageless wonders. Mickelson became the first player in PGA Tour history to win tournaments 30 years apart. The first of his 45 titles was in 1991 when he was still a junior at Arizona State.

Mickelson became the 10th player to win majors in three decades, an elite list that starts with Harry Vardon and was most recently achieved by Tiger Woods.

Brooks Koepka and Louis Oosthuizen had their chances, but only briefly. Koepka was 4 over on the par 5s when the game was still on and closed with a 74. Oosthuizen hit into the water as he was trying to make a final run and shot 73. Mickelson finished at 6-under 282.

The victory came one week after Mickelson accepted a special exemption into the US Open because at No.115 in the world and winless the last two years, he no longer was exempt from qualifying.

He had not finished in the top 20 in his last 17 tournaments over nearly nine months. He worried that he was no longer able to keep his focus over 18 holes. And then he beat the strongest field of the year — 99 of the top 100 players — and made it look easy.

Hospitalised Milkha in 'stable' condition



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 24: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh, who has tested positive for COVID-19, was Monday hospitalised, with his son and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh saying that the move was a precautionary measure.

The 91-year-old Milkha had been in home isolation at his Chandigarh residence after he tested positive for the virus Wednesday. He has now been admitted to Fortis hospital in Mohali.

Hospital sources said that Milkha's condition was 'stable'.

“He has been hospitalised. He was weak and not eating since yesterday, so we had to hospitalise him. Though his parameters seemed alright, we thought it is safer to have him admitted where he would be under supervision of senior doctors,” Jeev told this agency.

“He is under good care of doctors there. He is a strong man, always positive and will recover soon,” added the golfer, who reached here Saturday from Dubai after his father tested positive.

Milkha had earlier said that a couple of house helps had been infected by the virus after which his family underwent tests. “Only I returned positive on Wednesday and I am surprised,” Milkha had told this agency after testing positive.

None of the other family members, including Milkha's wife Nirmal Kaur, a former India volleyball captain, returned a positive test.

“Wishing speedy recovery to 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh Ji who has been admitted in hospital in Mohali for #Covid19 treatment. Get well soon Sir!” Punjab chief minister Capt. Amarinder Singh tweeted.