

**OPINION 6**  
OF SRI LANKA AND  
THE ANDAMANS

**WORLD 8**  
'SUSPICIOUS' BLACKOUT STRIKES  
IRAN'S NATANZ NUCLEAR SITE

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# 5 new vaccines by year end: Govt

## Record over 1.57 lakh cases in a day as Covid 2nd wave grips India



A policeman tries to ensure people wear face masks as a precaution against the coronavirus at a Sunday market in Jammu on Sunday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India celebrated the beginning of three-day Tika utsav (vaccination festival) on Sunday amid reports of a massive shortage of vaccine in several States and indication that by the end of the third quarter of this year India will receive Covid-19 vaccines from five additional manufacturers.

Meanwhile, India recorded a new all-time high daily Covid-19 count at 1,57,028 cases with Maharashtra contributing maximum at 63,294. "India currently has 2 Covid-19 vaccines being manufactured locally: Covishield

and Covaxin, and we can expect five more vaccines by Q3 2021. These vaccines are Sputnik V vaccine (in collaboration with Dr Reddy's), Johnson & Johnson vaccine (in collaboration with Biological E), Novavax vaccine (in collaboration with Serum India), Zydus Cadila's vaccine, and Bharat Biotech's Intranasal Vaccine.

Safety and efficacy are the Union Government's primary concerns while granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to any Covid-19 vaccine in the country," news agency ANI reported, citing top Government sources.

Covid-19 IN INDIA
TOTAL CASES: <b>1,35,12,493</b> (+1,57,028)
DEATHS: <b>1,70,066</b> (+761)
RECOVERED: <b>1,21,47,081</b> (+68,748)
ACTIVE: <b>11,89,856</b>
MAHARASHTRA: <b>34,07,245</b>
KERALA: <b>11,67,191</b>
KARNATAKA: <b>10,65,290</b>
TAMIL NADU: <b>9,33,434</b>
DELHI: <b>7,25,197</b> (+10,774)

## UP schools shut, social gathering restricted to 50 in closed space

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh Government on Sunday ordered the closure of all schools till April 30 and directed the imposition of a night curfew in the districts, which report 100 new infections in a day or have 500 active cases.

The Government ordered that not more than 100 people be allowed to assemble at an open space, and 50 in closed spaces.

Detailed report on P5

The report said out of the almost 20 vaccines in various clinical and pre-clinical stages, Sputnik V vaccine would receive approval first, within the next ten days.

For the manufacturing of vaccine doses, the Russian Direct Investment Fund has partnered with a number of Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hetero Biopharma, Gland Pharma, Stelis Biopharma, and Vichrow Biotech. Sputnik V will provide a big boost in the war against Covid-19, with a production capacity of 850 million doses in the country.

"Sputnik is expected to be available latest by June if all goes well Johnson and Johnson (Bio E) will be available by August, Cadilla Zydus will also be available by August, Novavax (Serum) by September, and Nasal Vaccine (Bharat) by October," the source said, on when the vaccines would be available for use.

The country is facing a huge shortage of vaccines and several vaccination centres have closed down in Maharashtra due to this. Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Punjab have complained of a shortage of vaccines.

## India bans virus drug Remdesivir's export

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anticipating increase in the demand for Remdesivir injection in the coming days in the wake of a spike in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday took a string of measures from prohibition of the export of the anti-viral drug as well as that of Remdesivir Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) with an aim to ensure sufficient availability in the domestic market.

The Centre's decision to ban the export of Remdesivir comes in the wake of reports of its shortage and hoarding resulting in inflated prices of the drug in black market. There have been reports of Remdesivir shortage in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The Government has

asked authorities to cap the price of Remdesivir between ₹1,100 and ₹1,400 per vial and urged about a dozen pharmaceutical companies, including Mylan, Hetero Healthcare, Jubilant Life Sciences, Cipla, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Zydus Cadila and Sun Pharmaceuticals — to scale up to their maximum capacity of 31.6 lakh vials per month and lower its MRP (maximum retail price).

The Government has also advised all domestic manufacturers of Remdesivir to display details of their stockists/distributors on their website. In order to facilitate access to the drug while the Department of Pharmaceuticals has been in contact with domestic manufacturers to ramp up the production.

## Negative report must for travelling to Himachal from seven worst-hit States

**Shimla:** The Himachal Pradesh Government on Sunday made it mandatory for people coming from seven States which

have witnessed a spike in coronavirus cases to show a Covid-19 negative test report on entering the State.

## Opp seeks cancellation of CBSE, ICSE Board exams

## X, XII exams scheduled from May 4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Weeks ahead of the CBSE and ICSE Board examinations, political parties have expressed serious concern over the Centre's go-ahead to conduct the examinations amid the corona pandemic.

While the Congress has sought cancellation of the Board exams, saying it will be impossible to ensure safety of students at crowded exam centres, Shiv Sena appealed to the Centre to take a uniform decision on the board exams of Classes 10 and 12 across the country in the wake of different States and Boards having different opinions on the issues.

While former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the decision to conduct the CBSE exams from May 4 should be reconsidered in view of the rising number of Covid-19 cases across the country, party gen-



eral secretary Priyanka Gandhi wrote to Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank seeking cancellation of the Board exams. She also pointed out that it is our responsibility as political leaders to protect and guide the young.

According to the revised date sheet for CBSE Board exams 2021, the Class 10 exams would be held between May 4 and June 7 and those for Class 12 would be held between May 4 and June 15. CBSE officials have said exam centres across the country have been increased by 40-50 per cent to ensure social distancing among examinees. ICSE Board examinations as well as several States have also scheduled the Board examinations during the next two months.

"In the light of the devastating corona second wave, conducting CBSE exams must be reconsidered.

## 'Haider not referred by VIMSAR to SCB'

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Following Haider's escape from the SCB Hospital in Cuttack, it was reported that the VIMSAR doctors at Burla had referred him to the SCB.

But the VIMSAR authorities have strongly refuted the matter. "Haider was not referred by us to Cuttack. His name is not there in the indoor or outdoor register of our hospital," said VIMSAR Superintendent Dr Lal Mohan Nayak on Sunday. Haider came for treatment to Burla on December 12, 2020 and went back to jail on the same day. "He required plastic surgery for a bullet injury and the doctors here only told him that this facility is available at Cuttack only. But none of us referred him to Cuttack," Dr Nayak claimed.

Now, Sambalpur jail staffs, on strict condition of anonymity, revealed Haider's lifestyle in the jail. "He was provided all facilities by senior officials for fear only," they said.

Though it is claimed that only six police personnel were guarding the gangster at the SCB Hospital, other policemen of Cuttack and the hospital outpost were also reportedly engaged for his security, sources said.

## CBI grills Deshmukh's 2 aides over ₹100 cr extortion order to Vaze

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Sunday questioned two personal assistants of former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in connection with allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Following the High Court directive for a CBI probe into the issue, Deshmukh had to resign from his post within hours of the order.

The agency had asked Deshmukh's personal assistants Sanjeev Palande and Kundan to appear before the CBI team in Mumbai for questioning in connection with the Preliminary Enquiry registered by it following an order of the Bombay High Court.

Sources said the duo appeared around 10.30 am at its office in Mumbai and were questioned for several hours.

In a letter addressed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Singh had alleged that Palande was pre-



sent when Deshmukh allegedly asked suspended Mumbai Police Assistant Inspector Sachin Vaze to extort over ₹100 crore a month from bars and restaurants of Mumbai numbering about 1,700, the sources said.

Vaze is facing an NIA probe in the case relating to the parking of an explosive-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai.

In his statement before the CBI team, Vaze is said to have told the investigators that Kundan was present during one such conversation with the former Maharashtra Home Minister.

## State reports 1,379 more Covid cases

MAX 317 CASES IN SUNDARGARH

TOTAL SURGES TO 34,9,56,459 MORE RECOVER

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State continued to register 1,000-plus Covid-19 positive cases for the third consecutive day with 1,379 new ones being reported from 30 districts and the State pool on Sunday. With this, the total tally rose to 34,9,56,1 in the State.

Out of the new cases, 808 were from quarantine and 571 were local contact cases. Sundargarh district reported the day's maximum 317 cases followed by Khordha with 158, Sambalpur 86, Nuapada 90, Nabarangpur 71, Bargarh 68, Cuttack 56, Balangir 54, Mayurbhanj 49, Puri 43 and Jharsuguda 42.

Besides, 35 cases were reported from State pool. Currently, the active cases in State stood at 7,979 and the cumulative samples tested were 93,70,359, including 31,651 on Saturday. The positivity rate stood at 3.73 per cent. However, 459 patients recovered on day, increasing total recoveries to 34,0062.

# Stay indoors to obviate Delhi lockdown: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the national Capital recording whopping 10,774 fresh cases of Covid-19 on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed the situation very worrisome and urged people not to step out of homes unless it is urgent.

The Chief Minister said the ongoing peak has surpassed the intensity of November 2020. He asked people to use face masks and sanitisers and maintain social distancing.

Kejriwal said, "Corona is rising rapidly in the entire country. In Delhi too, it has increased significantly in the past 10-15 days.

It is the fourth wave in Delhi and it is very dangerous. It is spreading very fast so much so that it is beyond the understanding of many people."

The Centre should remove the age bar for vaccination as 65 per cent of Covid patients are below 45-years. "If 65 per cent patients are less than 45 years of age, we can break its cycle with vaccination of these group. I request the Central Government to lift restriction on age and vaccinate people on mass level," he said.

Kejriwal added the Government does not want to impose lockdown in Delhi but

## Kejriwal terms situation serious



such a situation may arise if there is a rush to the hospitals and beds are unavailable for serious patients. "We need your cooperation. If your cooperation is received and situation of hospitals is under control, there will be no need to impose lockdown in Delhi. But, if beds in hospitals fall short, then lockdown may have to be imposed," he said.

"Lockdown should be imposed by any Government only when its hospital system has collapsed.

I am not in favour of lockdown. I believe lockdown is not a solution to deal with Covid-19. It should be imposed if hospital system collapses," he said.

He, however, asked people to remain in home isolation if infected with the virus instead of rushing to hospitals, saying the most important thing is that hospital beds are kept vacant for serious patients.

# 148 new Covid cases found in Bhubaneswar

## Surveillance stepped up at rly station

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State capital city Bhubaneswar on Sunday registered 148 new Covid-19 positive cases, with which its total tally rose to 33,512. Out of the new cases 11 were local contacts and 32 were quarantine cases linked to earlier positive cases.

Out of the local contacts, 15 cases were from Khandagiri, 10 from Pokhaript, six each from IRC Village, Niladri Vihar and Old Town, five each from Baramunda and Kalpana Chhak and four each from Mancheswar and Rasulgarh.

Currently, the active cases in the city stood at 977. Till now, 32,264 patients have

recovered and 250 have succumbed to the disease. Meanwhile, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has stepped up surveillance at the railway station with the help of the railway authorities.

The passengers arriving from other States would now be required to produce Covid negative report (RT-PCR test report) or final vaccination certificate at the BMC kiosk set up at the station.

In case any passenger does not have either of the reports, they would have to complete a registration process so that necessary tracking and follow-up action would be taken by the health authorities.

Besides, the entry and exit routes of the railway station have been changed. As per the BMC authorities, the passengers coming to the station would now enter from the Master Canteen bus-stand side and exit would be from the Reliance Fresh side.

## 6 policemen on Haider escort duty suspended

DOP REVIEWS OPERATIONS TO NAB GANGSTER

TEAMS FORMED; NEIGHBOURING STATES ALERTED

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Hasina Bibi, spouse of gangster Sk Haider, on Sunday suspected something fishy about the escaping of Haider from the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack on Saturday. "My husband is reeling under kidney related ailment; his hands and legs were not fit. Besides, he has heart problem too. With such sickness, how could my husband flee from the hospital with police security," questioned Bibi.

"I do not know whether my husband escaped from the SCB or some warring gang members kidnapped him or police took away my husband with an ulterior motive. I and my family are in dark. We have faith on police department and we request the



top brass to produce my husband before us," added Bibi. In 2015, the Court of Additional District Judge-2 in Bhubaneswar had convicted Haider and awarded him and two others, life imprisonment in connection with the kidnap and murder of mine owner Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra.

Hyder had taken ransom of Rs 1.72 crore from the family members of the kidnapped businessman, a Keonjhar based mines and crusher owner, who was kidnapped on May 27, 2007 from Bhubaneswar along with his driver and was later killed. *Continued on page 2*

## Haider's wife suspects fishy in gangster's escape

Wants police to present him before her alive

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

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## Twins with 2 heads, 3 hands born in K'pada

To be referred to Cuttack Sishu Bhawan

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

Conjoined twins have been born in Kendrapada with two heads, three hands and two legs. The twins are girl children and were born at a private nursing home in Kendrapada town. After their condition deteriorated, they were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH).

DHH Paediatric Consultant Debasish Sahu said the conjoined twins are rare congenital anomaly and are joined at chest and abdomen. Their condition is stable at present. After ultrasound of twins, details of the abnormality would be known. "We are referring the conjoined twins to Sishu Bhawan in Cuttack. Like Jaga-Kalia conjoined twins, the present case is one of the vari-



eties of the congenital anomaly," Dr Sahu said. Notably, in 2015, Jaga and Kalia of Kandhamal district were fused at the head since their birth. After the State Government intervened and announced to fund for a separation surgery of twins, a team of doctors of AIIMS, New Delhi conducted the country's first Craniopagus surgery.

The team of doctors performed surgery for 45 hours in phases from August to October in 2017 to separate Jaga and Kalia. Kalia died at SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack during his treatment in November last year.

## Vaccine shortage hits 900 centres in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the 'Tika Utsav', a four-day-long mega vaccination drive against Covid-19 began in the country on Sunday, as many as 900 centres ran out of vaccine doses in Odisha.

The ongoing Covid-19 vaccination in the State would be hampered and might be stopped if fresh stocks of vaccines are not supplied by Monday, said Health Department Director Bijay Panigrahi.

"The massive vaccination drive has almost come to a halt in the State due to the shortage of vaccines. The vaccination process is currently being carried out in 579 centres in various districts which have vaccine stocks. Most of the districts have no vaccine stocks. If



fresh stocks of vaccines are not supplied by tomorrow, the process will be hampered in almost all the districts," said Panigrahi.

Prioritization is being given to the districts which have reported the most positive cases.

Currently, the State has stocks of 2,33,000 doses of Covishield vaccines and 77,960 doses of Covaxin. The vaccination drive would continue in the districts which have vaccine stock, said Panigrahi.



# State’s revenue rises by 18% in 2020-21 FY

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Despite a setback due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha Government has been able to generate more resources during Financial Year 2020-21 in comparison to a normal Fiscal of 2019-20.

Latest report on collection of State’s revenue reveals that the Odisha Government has achieved more than 18 per cent growth in March 2021 as compared to March 2020.

Collection of both Tax and Non Tax Revenue during 2020-21 clocked Rs 55,511.63, which is all time high though the Fiscal was dented by Covid-19 pandemic. While Own Tax Revenue was Rs 34,421.09 crore, Non Tax Revenue was Rs 21,090.54 crore during 2020-21. Of the Own Tax Revenue,

the Commercial Tax collection was Rs 21,090.38 crore, which include VAT, Entry Tax, SGST and IGST share. Excise Collection was less as compared to 2019-20.

While Tax collected from Excise was Rs 3962.37 crore during 2020-21, it was Rs 4,495.42 crore during 2019-20. Stamp and registration collection also registered better growth during last Fiscal.

While Odisha collected Rs 2,887.89 crore during 2020-21, it registered more than 100 per cent growth as against 2019-20.

The Department of Revenue and Disaster Management geared up for revenue collection, which resulted in achieving 101.26 per cent growth, officials say. However taxes on vehicles were also less during 2020-21 in

which Odisha collected Rs 1,776.90 crore, while it was Rs 1,836.32 crore during 2019-20.

Taxes and duties on electricity clocked big rise, which was more than Rs 1,000 crore than 2019-20. Overdrive by the Department of Energy has resulted in big rise as Odisha collected Rs 3,938.13 crore during 2020-21, while it was Rs 2,819.67 crore during 2019-20. The collection from power sector has boosted the Own Tax Revenue in a big way, officials admit.

On Non Tax Revenue front, the Mining and Metallurgical Sector performed much well though the sector was badly hit by Covid-19 pandemic. Collection from non ferrous mining and metallurgical industries went up to Rs 13,591.58 crore during

# Despite pandemic

2020-21. The sector registered a growth of 23.34 per cent as compared to 2019-20, when the collection was Rs 11,020.02 crore. Interestingly, the State set the target of the sector at Rs 12,500 crore during 2020-21, however, the collection crossed the target and came as a big help to the State, admit officials.

Non Tax Revenue collection from interest, dividend, and education clocked much better growth as compared to 2020-21.

However, the Central Share Tax and Grants from the Center came down as compared to 2019-20. The Share Tax from the Centre received a jolt with a negative growth of 9.56 per cent, while Grants from Centre experienced similar fate with a negative growth of 5.79 per cent.

# Two gunrunners held in Cuttack

## Six guns, 32 rounds ammo seized

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Even as the flow of illegal arms continues unabated to the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, the Commissionerate police on Sunday arrested two gunrunners in Cuttack, who were allegedly members of an illegal firearms racket.

Four pistols, two revolvers and 32 rounds of ammunitions were seized from the two accused. The Chauliaganj police also seized an Indica car and four mobile phones from their possession. The two accused were identified as Ajit Ray alias Dipuna of Biridi in

Jagatsinghpur district and Ajay Moharana alias Papu from Ganjam. While 11 cases are pending against Dipu, 10 criminal cases are registered against Papu at various police stations in Cuttack and Jajpur district.

As per reports, the illegal arms were procured from Munger in Bihar and were meant to be supplied to local criminal gangs. Police arrested the duo after getting credible intelligence input regarding their movement.

Earlier on April 9, the Special Task Force of Crime Branch arrested two arms peddlers following a raid near Sikharghat bridge under the Niali police station in Cuttack district and recovered eight pistols, including two sophisticated 9 mm and 20 live ammunition from their possession.

# Class-IX exam decision after April

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amid doubts over the possibility of conduct of school examinations in the State due to the Covid-19 situation, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash on Sunday said a decision regarding the Class-IX examinations would be taken after April 30.

“The final decision will be taken after reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the State after April 30.

The department wants to conduct the examinations as per the syllabus covered by the teachers so far,” the Minister said. Notably, the State Government has suspended



physical classes of Class-IX students in schools till April 30 in view of the rising Covid-19 cases.

The class-IX students residing in hostels and residential schools have been allowed to go back home.

# CST Act amended; Odisha to reap benefits

Earlier State was losing Value added Tax of ₹ 500 crore per annum due to misuse of Form-C

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the Union Government taking steps to bring necessary amendment in the CST Act, 1956, Odisha is all set to reap huge benefits in terms of revenue generation.

Due to presence of a clause in the Central Act, Odisha was losing Value Added Tax (VAT) more than Rs 500 crore every year due to the misuse of Form-C by the mineral raising contractors and works contractors of the State, said a senior official. For last four long years, Odisha was facing

huge loss of VAT in this regard and the State repeatedly had requested the Union Government to bring in amendments in the Central Act.

Recently once again, the Odisha Government had requested the Union Ministry of Finance for bringing amendment of Sub Section (3) of Section 8 of Central Sales Tax (CST) Act, 1956.

Attention of Union Minister Finance Nirmala Sitharaman was drawn by Odisha Finance Minister Niranjana Pujari to bring exquisite amendment in the

CST Act. Sitharaman has taken steps to bring in the amendment in the CST Act, 1956 in the Finance Bill for which Odisha is going to reap big benefits in terms of revenue generation.

Way back in 2016, the Union Government in order to bring in force the GST Act, had made certain amendments in the CST Act, 1956 vide the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2017 dated May 5, 2017.

In the amendment definition of “Goods” was amended as petroleum crude, high speed diesel, motor spirit-

commonly known as petrol, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel and alcoholic liquor for human consumption with a view to restrict the applicability of the CST Act to these six goods.

As a result, the interpretation of the Section 8 (3) b of CST Act would be such that purchase of these six commodities can be allowed at a concessional rate on the strength of Form-C for resale or manufacture of these six commodities only and use of these six commodities in telecommunication network, mining and generation of elec-

tricity or any other power.

But to protect the State revenue-VAT, it was clarified not to use Form-C to manufacturers, contractors and mining lease holders by interpreting the implication of the amendments made to the CST Act and migration of registration granted under the OVAT Act and CST Act to GST Act.

Later on, with the issue of an order by the High Court of Orissa and similar orders of High Courts of other States, the window for issue of Form-C covered manufacturers, mining contractors and works contractors, who started pur-

chasing High Speed Diesel (HSD) by paying CST at 2 per cent. This resulted in loss of VAT revenue of HSD to the extent purchased from other States, for which Odisha was losing over Rs 500 crore per annum due to misuse of Form-C.

Now that necessary amendment has been brought and Sub Section (3) of Section 8 has been omitted, the mineral raising contractors and works contractors will not be able to take advantage of Form-C as they were unduly enriching themselves at the cost of the State.

# MBA student held for duping jewellers

## Used fake money debit messages

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Special Squad of the Twin City Commissionerate police on Sunday arrested an MBA student of Bengaluru from a five-star hotel in Bhubaneswar for allegedly duping jewellers of lakhs of rupees with ‘fake money debit messages’ on his mobile phone. The accused was iden-

tified as Vishal Lilenga. As per reports, he had introduced himself as an Income Tax officer and bought gold ornaments from various jewellery shops in the State.

For payment, he used to opt for the UPI mode but displayed a fake money debit message on his mobile phone to deceive the seller.

The accused was wanted in Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Puri districts, sources said. Following his arrest, he was handed over to the Sambalpur police. Further investigation into offences was underway.

# Guv releases book on Dongarias by scribe Patnaik

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A book written by senior journalist and researcher Jitendra Patnaik on the life, struggle, livelihoods and culture of aboriginal tribe Dongria Kondhs was released by Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal here on Thursday.

Prof Lal lauded Patnaik’s work as rare and useful. Patnaik has set an example for others by visiting the Niyamgiri Hills and articulating on the tribal life, he said.

The book titled ‘Dongran Kuan’ (meaning people of forest) contains 242 pages with six main chapters and 16 sub-sections.

The contents deal with myths on Dongria lifestyle and culture, livelihoods, struggle for survival and a chapter on the Niyamgiri Hills.

While the forward of the book has been written by for-



mer Chief Secretary Bijay Kumar Patnaik, eminent writer and translator Asit Kumar Mohanty has written the introduction. It’s the second book to the credit of Patnaik. Earlier, his

writings on Gond tribe and book ‘Dangara Ushade Jahna’ (Moon hides on shades of barren hills) are appreciated by many and available in leading bookstores and libraries.

# Utkal Varsity student tests positive PG 1st semester exam deferred

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Covid-19 has spread its wings to the Utkal University in the second wave of the pandemic as a post-graduate student in the Sociology Department has tested positive for the virus.

Following the detection of the Covid case, the university authorities deferred the upcoming first semester examination of PG programme till further orders.

“In view of a Covid-19 positive case found in the department and as per discussion with PG Council Chairman, mid-term examination for 1st semester students stands postponed until further order,” a notice issued by PG Department of Sociology, Utkal University, stated.

# Red ant chutney medicine for Covid? We’re not equipped to comment, says HC

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Disposing of a plea which claimed that ‘Kaai (red ant) chutney can prevent the Covid-19 virus infection, the Orissa High Court has said the use of red ant chutney or soup by the tribal communities for medicinal and therapeutic purposes is based on their traditional knowledge systems which the court is hardly equipped to comment upon.

Dismissing the WP (C) No. 8317 of 2021, a Bench of

Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice BP Routray made this observation. Petitioner Nayadhar Padhal, Assistant Engineer (Civil), Takatpur of Mayurbhanj who belongs to the Bathudi Tribal Adibasi community, had claimed in his plea that ‘Kaai or Kukuti chutney which is prepared using red ants, mixed with green chili, is a potent medicine that can boost the immunity system and thus, could prevent Covid 19 infection.

Earlier, the petitioner’s representations were considered both by the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India as well as the CSIR.

In its communication, the CSIR said that it currently does not have the required expertise in the domain of entomophagy and therefore, would not be able to pursue any action in the matter.

As regards the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, it noted that it could not find any reference from the classical books



of Ayurveda mentioned in the First Schedule of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 on the internal use of red ant chutney as claimed by the petitioner so as to validate it as Ayurvedic medicine.

Therefore, the use of red ant chutney for the beneficial use of the Covid19 patient is “out of the purview of Ayurveda drugs as per regulatory provisions of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945.” Red ant chutney is traditionally used as a medicine by tribal belts of Odisha, Jharkhand, Andhra and

Chhattisgarh for flu, cough, common cold, breathing difficulties, fatigue, and other ailments.

According to a research paper by International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET) “red ants have medicinal properties which can cure cough, fever and cold.”

However, the claim saying red ant chutney is a cure for coronavirus so far has no scientific evidence. Unless it is scientifically proved, no medicine can be considered as an effective treatment for any disease.

# Road connectivity to Buddhanath Temple poor

## Repeated pleas to authorities fall on deaf ears

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the Odisha Government is making efforts to boost temple tourism in the State by allocating more than Rs 500 crore to the Tourism Department to create top-class infrastructures, the utter neglect of basic infrastructure of the Buddhanath Temple at Gareidipatana village in Balipatna on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar has raised many an eyebrow. Though the State Archaeology Department has declared the Buddhanath

Temple as a protected monument and conservation of the temple has been taken up with 14th Finance Commission funds, connectivity to the shrine still remains a major problem. The 1,500-metre stretch of the road from the Balipatna bazaar to the historical Buddhanath Temple is in a pitiable condition.

Hundreds of devotees, students and locals of Gareidipatna and adjacent villages, who are dependent on this access road for commuting to schools and college, markets and other destinations daily, are facing hardship for years. In the rainy season, the situation turns still worse and negotiating this stretch is a nightmare. It is a matter of regret that locals’



repeated pleadings for the last 15 years for repair or relaying

of a motorable road to Ministers, the local MLA and other political leaders and the Khordha district Collector have fallen on deaf ears.

Local Sarpanch Soumya Ranjan Mohanty had recently raised the issue in the Balipatna Panchayat Samiti meeting. Locals also complained at the Collector’s Grievance Cell at the block office, but the net result is again zero.

This has triggered deep resentment in the area and locals are bracing up to embark on a stir for fulfillment of their longstanding demand. They question that with this kind of reticent attitude, how the face of tourism in the State can be transformed as envisioned by the Government.

# ‘Ama Pathagaara’ reaches Jagasara school

## Varsha inspires disadvantaged kids towards education

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 3rd edition of “Ama Pathagaara”, an initiative by Ollywood actor and activist Varsha Priyadarshini, was held in the Government Primary School, Jagasara Adivasi Sahi, on Sunday. As part of the initiative, Varsha donated a variety of books, ranging from edu-

cational to children’s fables, to the students of the school. Varsha through Ama Pathagaara is trying to re-ignite the library movement pioneered by Dasia Aja.

Through the initiative, she plans to collect books and magazines from enthusiastic donors across Odisha and beyond, and donate them to the disadvantaged people, particularly children, all over the State.

By doing so, she aims to encourage setting up of libraries in each district of Odisha, just as Dasia Aja had envisioned. She has already collected and distributed hun-

dreds of books through the initiative. During the event, Varsha stressed on the importance of education in a child’s life and counselled all the students present to aim to complete their formal education at any cost.

She also inquired about and empathised with the students’ predicament due to situation brought about by pandemic. The students in turn shared their dreams with the actress and also delighted her with a couple of cultural performances. All Covid19 related precautions mandated by State Government were strictly followed during the event.

# Haider’s wife suspects fishy in gangster’s escape

**From Page 1**

Prior to that in 2011, Hyder and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment for killing Sheikh Chuna alias Malik Hanan, elder brother of history sheeter Suleman Malik on May 31, 2005 near Stuart

School at CRP square of Bhubaneswar for tender paper fixing and also for giving information to police about the criminal antecedents of Hyder gang.

On May 2, 2017, Hyder was transferred to Sambalpur jail from Jharpada jail in

Bhubaneswar due to security reasons following reports of gang war with Dhalasamanta brothers.

Intellectual masses opined that Hyder escaped from SCB medical college and hospital following his nexus with jail, police and hospital staff.

# 6 policemen on Haider...

**From Page 1**

All the necessary measures are being taken and hopefully the gangster will be nabbed soon,” said Crime Branch ADG Yashwant Jethwa. Meanwhile, Twin City Commissionerate police have launched a massive operation to trace the whereabouts of the gangster. Police

Commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi, who held a closed-door meeting with senior officials including Cuttack DCP Prateek Singh, said a core team has been constituted to trace Haider.

“We have constituted a core team comprising senior officials who were part of inves-

tigation of old cases related to Haider and Tito,” said Priyadarshi.

He further said a recent photograph of Haider has been circulated among the SPs of border districts including Baleswar and Mayurbhanj apart from the senior officials of neighbouring Kendrapada

and Jagatsinghpur districts. A staff nurse on duty at the ward of the SCB Medical College Hospital where Haider was admitted said, “I had last seen him (Haider) when I went to the ward to administer medicine and there were four to five people and a policeman nearby, but when I visited again at

5.30 pm, the guard was sleeping and the patient was missing.” Haider escaped from Ward-5 of the surgery ward of the SCB Hospital. Lodged in the Sambalpur Circle Jail, he had been referred by doctors to the SCB after undergoing treatment for some illness at the VIMSAR in Burla.



# Release addl coal levy of ₹560 cr: State to Centre

TATHYA ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has requested the Ministry of Coal to release the amount of additional levy realised from various companies on account of cancellation of coal blocks.

The Government of India has realised additional levy with respect to coal extracted from the prior allottees of 31 cancelled Schedule-II coal mines in various States.

The additional levy of Rs 295 per metric tonne has been imposed in terms of provisions of the Coal Mines( Special Provisions) Ordinance 2014/Act 2015.About Rs 560 crore was paid by HINDALCO on account of Talabira-I, a Schedule-II Coal Block.

Other State Governments like Chhattisgarh and West Bengal have also put forth similar claims. Till date the amount due has not been transferred to the State although the matter was taken up by the Odisha Government with the Union Government.

However, there has been no arrangement to transfer the funds worth Rs 560 crore to the State Government, admit officials. Accordingly, the Odisha Government has once again raised the issue with the Ministry of Coal and has requested to

release the amount, which is a legitimate claim of the State.Raising another issue, the State Government has urged the Centre to rename the Cess collected from coal as “Environment And Rehabilitation Cess” and earmark at least 60 per cent of the Cess for the coal bearing States.

Odisha, being a coal rich State, is facing the brunt of coal mining and its adverse impact. However, the Union Government is collecting cess and recently the Union Government has raised Clean Environment Cess on coal from Rs 200 to Rs 400 per metric ton.

The Odisha Government had requested the Centre to share at least 60 per cent to the coal bearing States as they have to bear the cost of environmental degradation and rehabilitation.This point was raised in several forums in general and in GST Council in particular.

However, the GST Council has decided that the entire amount of the cess collected would be used for GST Compensation Fund. In fact, Odisha is heavily suffering due to climatic hazards and has turned out to be a “Calamity Zone.” So looking at the plight of the State, the Union Government is needed to consider the case, pointed out a senior official.

# 3 weekly market yards to come up in JSpur

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

Three weekly market yards will be established in the Kujang and Tirtol areas, for which a sum of Rs 10 lakh has been sanctioned for each yard.

The market yards are Kanjiakan Haat in Balia Panchayat and Khosalpur Haat in Hansura Panchayat under Kujang block and Jogania Haat in Porgadei village under Tirtol block.

The farmers from Tirtol, Kujang and Paradip areas have been complaining perennially in facing hardship to fetch their produces far away for sale.

Usually, farmers had been sending vegetables to local Rahama Haat and Kujang Haat for selling. They had been demanding the setting up of local Haat several times and appraised about their concerns to the local administration and MLAs.

During elections campaigning, BJD candidate Sambit Routray had promised to fulfil the demand for local Haats. Meanwhile Tirtol MLA Routray thanked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his pro farmers policy for the three market yards in Tirtol and Kujanga blocks.

District Collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra told how the market yards would come to the benefits of the farmers as well as locals and assured that more yards would be opened in near future. “In view of the massive production and distress sale of vegetables leading to sufferings of farmers, we demand for establishment of at least two cold storages in Tirtol and Kujang block headquarters,” said farmer Sarata Chandra Patnaik from Kujang.

# Covid guidelines flouted during elections

NHRC seeks ATRs from CEC, Home Secy

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought Action-Taken Reports (ATRs) from the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Union Home Secretary over violation of Covid-19 guidelines in several States where elections are being held.

The commission sought the report within five weeks, taking cognisance of a report filed by human rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy.

Tripathy pointed out that unregulated election rallies, mass protests and get-togethers defeat the slogan of “Do

# 5T Secy reviews S’garh ‘High School Transformation’

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

5T Secretary VK Pandian on Saturday reviewed the progress of ‘High School Transformation’ programme in Sundargarh district over videoconferencing from the Lok Seva Bhawan and interacted with the stakeholders of all 17 blocks.

All Government High Schools of Sundargarh district would be transformed under the Government’s 5T initiative. The review included 40 schools to be covered under first phase of the programme.A ‘Vision Document’ prepared by the district administration con-

taining the roadmap, role of stakeholders and new initiatives to achieve the vision was released in the review meeting. Sundargarh Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan solicited whole-hearted support from all concerned to make the programme successful.

While elaborating on the programme, Pandian said CM Naveen Patnaik has envisioned for transforming the Government schools in the State. This would enhance the learning environment, standard of teaching and usher in holistic development of the schools through collaboration of parents, alumni and local



community. “By achieving this mandate, we can ensure a better future for our students,” said the 5T Secretary. Collector Kalyan informed the media that under the initiative, all

Sets target to achieve 1st phase by Oct 2

# 16 fever clinics opened in Gajapati

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

In view of spike in Covid-19 cases, Gajapati administration has opened 16 fever clinics in district. “The district administration has taken steps for containing Covid-19 through massive testing, tracking and surveillance.

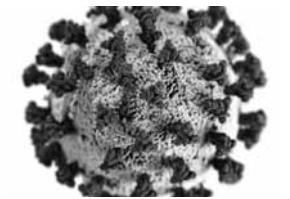
To bring initiative in action, 16 fever clinics have been opened,” Collector said. This apart, 4Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) have been formed in Paralakhemundi. “People are urged to visit fever clinics in case of need and cooperate with RRTs,” Collector added.

# Covid spreads to jails 9 inmates of 2 prisons in Gajapati infected

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

The deadly coronavirus which is raging in the State has now spread to jails, posing a health risk to the lives of the inmates and the prison staffs.

On Sunday, as many as nine inmates of two jails in Gajapati district tested positive for the virus, the district administration said.While three prisoners of



Paralakhemundi Sub Jail were found infected , six inmates of the R Udayagiri Sub Jail were found also found have contracted the virus. All the

infecteds have been reportedly kept in isolation cells in respective jails. The State Government has already issued an SOP to prevent spread of Covid-19 in jails.

As per the SOP, if anybody (both inmates and employees) are found positive for Covid-19, should be sent to the ‘dedicated Covid Care Centre or hospital by the concerned remanding agencies.

# Army recruitment rally 2 kingpins held for forging age-proof documents

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Police here have arrested two kingpins in an age-proof certificate forging case found in an Indian Army recruitment rally held at the Bhanja Vihar Airstrip.

The arrested persons were Raghabendra Academy, Gandhingar, Brahmapur chief S Shankar Rao and one M Labanya Kumar.

They were held basing on the information of seven candidates for allegedly forging documents relating to their matriculation certificates to prove their age.

The fraud was detected by the Army Recruitment Officer of Gopalpur, who during scrutiny of documents found that the youths possessed two separate Class-X certificates

issued by two different boards of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Police during probe found that the accused had earlier applied for jobs with the Indian Army by showing certificates issued by the Board of Secondary Education, Cuttack.

But they could not qualify as the date of birth on the certificate proved they had exceeded the age limit for the recruitment examination.

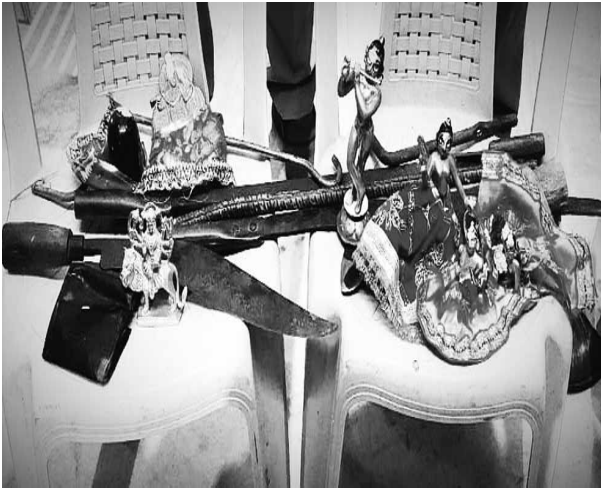
They then took admission in the National Institute of Open Schooling and got another certificate for Class-X with a different date of birth which qualified them for the examination.

Since the details of candidates are stored in Army database, it was easy to verify the documents during scrutiny and detect frauds if any.

# In Kendrapada Four burglars nabbed; bronze idols, ammo seized

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Town police have nabbed four members of a burglars’ gang at Ekanakhandi bridge on the Gandakhia-Santasahi road and seized bronze idols, sharp weapons



and a car from them. While night patrolling was intensified on Saturday across the district with bike and vehicular checking at all the entry points to nab mobster Hyder, who sneaked from the SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack recent-

ly, the constables deployed at Ekanakhandi post nabbed the four burglars.

Constables Sumant Kumar Jena and Chandrabhanu Rout were conducting bike and vehicular checking with the help of a bike patrolling team when they came across an alto car coming from Kansar direction at around 2.30 am. They stopped the car and started checking the vehicle.

Six persons were on board the car. While checking the dickey, they stumbled upon bronze idols of different goddesses. A Salagram was hidden in the dickey, besides half a dozen of sharp edged weapons and an iron rod.

Police seized them all. While the miscreants were trying flee the spot, the police managed to overpower four whereas two others escaped. SP Madkar Sandeep Sampat praised the constables for their courageous act

# Sexual abuse, child sale slur against Lutheran Samiti

## Probe begins in Kendrapada

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Yet another serious allegation on rape and child sale case came against Patalipanka based –Lutheran Mahila Samiti following the brother of a physically disabled victim woman knocked the doors of the district Collector ,SP of Kendrapada and Child Welfare Committee by lodging an FIR at the Marshaghai police station. According to the complainant, his brother-in-law

was arrested in a murder case in 2014. As a result, he had left his mentally sick sister, who was six months’ pregnant, to stay at Patalipanka based –Lutheran Mahila Samiti, after the intervention of staff of the Samiti. In December 2014, his sister had given birth to a baby boy.

A staff later informed to the complainant that the new born child would stay with his mother at the Samiti ,but the staff did not show the child, while at the same time, she directed him not to come to see the child any more as per the guidelines of the said NGO. Since his sister was staying at the NGO establishment,

she had never gone to meet his brother or to her father’s house. But to his utter surprise , his sister on April 27 2016 and April 17 2020 gave birth to two sons at the SCB Medical College and Hospital and also at the District Headquarters Hospital, Kendrapada, alleged the complainant in the FIR.

When he inquired the matter, he came to know that only one son out of three was with his sister whereas whereabouts of the other two children of her sister were not informed.

The staff of Lutherana Mahila Samiti allegedly sold his two nephews as he came to know from local sources, the complainant said in his FIR.He

alleged that his sister was raped several times and forced to deliver child by the staff of the Samiti.

Acting on the allegations, SP Madkar Sandeep Sharma, directed the IIC of Marshaghai police station to registered a case.

ASP B Gagarin Mohanty, SDPO Rajib Lochan Panda, Inspector Sasmita Behera, IIC of Marshaghai police station Kalandi Behera, besides the Additional Tehsildar and the CDPO of Mahakalapada on Friday conducted a spot inquiry in the case. Meanwhile, the statement of the complainant was also recorded under Section 161 of CrPC.

# JSPL Foundation chief Shallu visits Barbil

Interacts with tribal Wushu players

PNS ■ CHAMPUA

During her visit to Barbil in Konjhar district, JSPL Foundation (the social arm of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) chairperson Shallu Jindal interacted with Wushu players belonging to the tribal groups.

“Whether you win or not but always strive to give your best in every challenge and let the rest go its way. Because you are worth your best effort,” she said. She visited the Martial Art Sports Complex developed by



the JSPL Foundation and spoke to international Wushu medalist Bablu Munda and national medalist Manju Munda.

At the Sports Complex, players and Wushu aspirants demonstrated their talents.

Later in the day, she visited the Jindal School and stressed on enhancing infrastructural support for quality education. She also interacted with the ladies’ club members and lauded their efforts in public services.

# Advanced ambulance launched at Khariar

PNS ■ NUAPADA

An Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance service was launched at the Khariar Sub-Divisional Hospital in Nuapada district on Sunday. It was inaugurated by Khariar MLA Adhiraj Mohan Panigrahi in the presence of MO Dr Dinabandhu Mahananda and Dr Aditya Joshi.

“I had allotted Rs 40 lakh from my MLA LAD share a year ago, but ambulance could not be obtained due to Covid situation at that time. I am thankful to administration for completing all formalities for procurement of the vehicle,” said Panigrahi. “The ALS aims

at facilitating high-end ambulance transportation from a patient’s doorstep to hospital. The ambulance will have ALS system equipped with equipments like cardiac life support, cardiac monitors as well as glucose-testing device and a paramedic on board along with an emergency medical technician,” informed doctors.



# Ganjam dance institute founder gets nat’l trophy

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Rastriya Sikshya Seekhar Sammilani-2021 was held on March 20 at Jeypore in Rajasthan. This was organised by Hypage Media and Icon Foundation in which State Transport Minister Pratap Singh Khachari Abas and national chairperson of the foundation Gourav Goutam along with hundreds of eminent educationists, academicians, art lovers and intellectuals joined.

The workshop discussed on the theme “the changing structure and method of imparting education during Covid-19 pandemic and its implications on future”. As per a survey conducted by the



Icon Foundation in the country last year, the Kalanjali Art Institution, Brahmapur was considered as the best dance and music training institute in the country, sources said.

Accordingly, the founder and manager of the art institute “Kalanjali” Rameswari Nanda of Brahmapur was given the

trophy along with “National Educational Brilliance Award” for her contribution in the field of art and culture and education in the region, sources said.

The denizens of Brahmapur congratulated Nanda who acclaimed recognition at the national level.



# India should cherish peace process on LAC, says China

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI BEIJING

With both sides unable to firm up a plan to withdraw from the flash-points during the latest round of talks, China on Sunday said India should cherish the current positive trend of de-escalation and peace on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

This statement came two days after the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks on Friday at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point at the LAC in Ladakh failed to show any tangible movement forward. Both the sides, however, agreed to continue holding regular dialogue at the military and diplomatic levels to restore peace.

In the talks lasting more than 12 hours, China dilly dallied on pulling back troops from the friction points at Patrolling Points 15, 17 and 17A at the Hot Springs and Gogra, sources said.

The Indian delegation led by Leh-based 14 Corps chief Lt General P G K Menon reiterated the country's stand that disengagement from Hot Springs and Gogra will go a long way in bringing down tension at the LAC. The proposed pull back will ensure peace and stability in the region besides ensuring tranquility, the Indian team insisted.

China, however, did not give any commitment on a plan to disengage and continues to maintain large number of troops at the face-off sites. This led to concern in the Indian security establishment, sources said. The Chinese team was led by Major General Liu Lin.

Faced with the stalling tactics by China in Depsang valley where it advanced into Indian territory in 2013 and continued to remain there, the two Corps Commanders will meet again shortly to continue the momentum of dialogue,



they said.

In this backdrop, the Chinese military said on Sunday India should cherish the "current positive trend" of de-escalation and cooling down of tensions in the border area. A day after the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks, the Indian army is a statement said on Saturday both sides held a detailed deliberation on the disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points of Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh.

Both the sides agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and resolve the outstanding issues in an "expedient manner".

There was no visible forward movement at the latest round of military talks between the two countries as the Chinese delegation came to the talks with a "premeditated mindset" and did not show any flexibility in moving forward on the disengagement process at the remaining friction points.

In its press release on the latest round of talks between two militaries

held on April 9, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said India should cherish the de-escalation and cooling in the border area, in an apparent reference to the disengagement of troops from the most contentious area of the Pangong Lake in February.

**Both the sides agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents**

their leaders, continue their communication and dialogue and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, it said.

"They also agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and jointly maintain peace in the border areas," the statement said.

Army Chief General M M Naravane had said last month the threat to India has only "abated" following the disengagement in the Pangong lake area, but it has not gone away altogether. He said China still maintained considerable number of troops in the "rear areas." It means the Chinese troops though pulled back from the eyeball to eyeball confrontation but continued to have heavy armour and troops close by thereby posing threat to Indian interests.

Naravane also observed peace will be restored once these additional troops return to their barracks from the forward areas.

Not willing to take any chances, the Army in the last few months substantially bolstered its troop strength besides weaponry. Moreover, the troops remained deployed on the LAC throughout the harsh winter months when the temperature dipped to minus 30 degrees.

The standoff between the two armies started on May 5 last year when the troops from both the sides exchanged blows at the Pangong Tso. Soon, the face-offs commenced at some other places on the LAC.

The border saw massive troop build up by India and China after a bloody brawl on June 15 in the Galwan valley. Twenty Indian soldiers including the Commanding Officer were killed. At least 40 Chinese were also killed by China was yet to officially announce the number of casualties.

Traders' body asks Modi not to impose night curfew, lockdown



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to impose night curfew or lockdown amid rising Covid-19 in the country and instead adopt staggered working time for different sectors. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the traders' association said it would be more appropriate if alternate measures may be adopted at district levels all over the country.

"Instead of night curfew or lockdown which have not proved a worthy step so far to combat escalation of COVID-19, it would be more appropriate if alternate easy measures may be adopted at district levels and staggered working time for different sectors," said CAIT.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that a closer analysis of the COVID-19 statistics over the last one week have made it ample clear that night curfew and lockdown in different states have not brought the desired results of bringing down the cases. It suggested that working hours of different verticals of trade and commerce should be revised.

"We suggest that government offices, private offices and other all kinds of offices may work from 8 am to 2 pm whereas the markets and shops may be allowed to work from 11 am to 5 pm," said CAIT.

# Best mango? Jury is out on social media

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Social media on Sunday debated which variety of mango-Alphonso, Dushehri, Langda, Maldah or Totapari is the best. The hashtag #Alphonso has gone viral on Twitter and it was trending at 13 numbers with many tweeting which variety of the king of fruit is the best in the country.

It all started when a Twitter user claimed that 'Alphonso mangoes are the best', while responding to this tweet, a twitter user wrote no mango can aspire to come even within sniffing distance of the Langda/Maldah, no competition, Langda is King. One twitter user wrote "Alphonso is the most overrated stuff" ever and that only "brand conscious babalog" have a taste for it. Several people tweeted for Alphonso mangoes. Twitterati from Bihar, Eastern UP and West Bengal tweeted Maldah is the best.

A twitter user Joey@DrJoyeeta claimed that Alphonso mangoes are the best! Specially packed by my dear brother for calling me a loser. PS: Let's start the mango war. Repeating in capitals: ALPHONSO MANGOES ARE THE BEST!

Responding to the tweet, Sankarshan Thakur tweeted: "No mango can aspire to come even within sniffing distance of the #Langda / #Maldah No competition. #Langda is King. Yashwant deshमुख responded to Thakur saying 'Alphonso



is the most overrated stuff you will ever come across. The brand-conscious Alphonso Babalog has no idea what real mango is. Try Dashahari, Chausa, Safeda and ultimate Langda/Malda".

Another twitter user tweeted "Dashehri, Malgova and Sappattai for me. A little known variety called Panjavarnam from my home town is also very good, but sadly not available freely outside of that region. And yes, Alphonso is hella overrated". Another twitter user wrote 'One twitter user tweeted "Alphonso is overrated; Kesari is underrated".

Dubbed the 'King of fruits' in India, mangoes have an almost cult fanbase in India. With its puply, juicy flesh wrapped around a delightfully hardcore, the fruit comes in many shapes, sizes, flavours and varieties across the states of India. A large variety of mangoes are grown across India. Maharashtra is famous for Alphonso mangoes, Uttar

Pradesh is known for Dusheri. West Bengal is popular for growing Himsagar mangoes while Andhra Pradesh is known for the lighter coloured Safeda mangoes. Other popular varieties of mangoes in India include Chausa, Lengra, Kesari, Totapuri, Neelam and much more. Another netizen wrote: "Agree, Langra is just awesome..... although I have developed a taste for Banganapalli in recent years. Alphonso has a bad hit rate, but the odd one can be brilliant".

According to the agriculture ministry, mango production is estimated to increase 4.24 per cent to 21.12 million tonnes in the crop year 2020-21 ending June. The output of mango, the 'king of fruits', stood at 20.26 million tonne during the 2019-20 crop year (July-June). The arrival of mangoes from southern and western India has started, while the season in the northern states like Uttar Pradesh will begin from mid-June onwards.

# Active Covid cases in India breach 11-L mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The active Covid-19 cases in India crossed the 11 lakh-mark for the first time after a record high of 1.52 lakh new infections on Saturday. The active caseload till now was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020.

Amid an unprecedented burden on health infrastructure in 15 States and Delhi, which are witnessing an upward trajectory, authorities have started reserving more COVID hospitals and taking steps to address any shortage of medical supplies, besides enhancing curbs on the movement of people.

The Centre announced a ban on export of Remdesivir, used in coronavirus treatment and its Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, and asked all domestic manufacturers to display on their website details of their stockists and distributors. India's COVID-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,33,58,805, and the death toll increased to 1,69,275 with 839 daily new fatalities, the highest since October 18, 2020, the data updated by Health Ministry on Sunday morning showed.

While the cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 10 crore after 85 days, the 'Tika Utsav' or a special 'vaccination festival' was started till April 14.

"Anyone eligible for the vaccine should get the jab, and for this the society and administration have to make full efforts," Prime Minister Modi



said pitching for "zero vaccine waste" and urging the people to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"This festival is, in a way, the beginning of another major war against corona. We have to lay special emphasis on personal hygiene as well as social hygiene," he said.

Five states — Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala -- cumulatively account for 70.82 per cent of India's active COVID-19 cases, while Maharashtra alone accounts for 48.57 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said.

Besides these states, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal are displaying an upward graph in daily new cases.

Most of these states have reimposed restrictions, including the closure of schools, night curfew, weekend and local shutdowns, while ruling out a total lockdown, but as the latest wave of patients

continues to flood hospitals, there are some signs of a rethink.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal have said that a lockdown will be the only option if the infections don't abate and the health system shows signs of collapsing. Kejriwal on Sunday said the COVID-19 situation in the national capital is "very serious".

The city recorded 10,774 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday, the highest single-day spike so far, with 48 more fatalities. "The fourth wave is more dangerous than the previous wave," he told a press conference, and urged the people not to step out unless there is urgent work.

Speaking at an all-party meeting held virtually to discuss the COVID-19 situation in the State on Saturday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had indicated the imposition of a strict lockdown in the State given the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases.

# Focus on micro containment zones to curb Covid march: Modi to K'taka CM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday suggested to Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on focusing on "micro containment zones" to contain the spread of Covid-19 infection in the State.

Karnataka has seen a surge in COVID19 cases since the beginning of this month and is reporting nearly 7,000 fresh cases per day for the last couple of days.

The Chief Minister who spoke to the Prime Minister said that the latter also appreciated the state government's efforts to counter the second wave of Coronavirus pandemic.

"Spoke to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji and apprised him about the measures being taken in the state to mitigate second wave of pandemic. PM appreciated the Government's efforts and suggested to focus on micro containment zones to contain the spread of infection," Yediyurappa tweeted.

After the video conference with Modi, Yediyurappa on Thursday had announced a corona curfew between 10 PM to 5 AM in seven district centres of the state along with Manipal, from April 10 to 20, targeted to controlling the fast spread of COVID-19.

Until Saturday the total number of active cases in the

state stood at 61,653.

The Chief Minister also appealed to the people, those eligible, to get vaccinated.

"Vaccine is the biggest weapon available to us in this battle against Covid-19. I urge all eligible citizens to get vaccinated and also encourage people around you to get vaccinated. Let us continue to stay protected by wearing masks and following social distance," he said in another tweet.

As suggested by the Prime Minister at Thursday's video-conferencing with various Chief Ministers, the State Government is organising vaccination drives from April 11-Jyotiba Phule's birthday till April 14- Ambedkar's birthday.

# Modi pays tribute to social reformer Jyotirao Phule

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to noted social reformer Jyotirao Phule on his birth anniversary, and said his commitment to reforming the society will continue to inspire future generations.

In a tweet, Modi also hailed him as a great thinker, philosopher and writer and noted that he was committed to women's education and empowerment throughout his life.

Born in an extremely

backward caste in 1827 in Maharashtra, Phule fought against social discrimination and strove to promote education among the most deprived communities.

He and his wife, Savitribai Phule, are considered pioneers for their efforts to promote education among women.

Modi had recently suggested a "vaccination festival" from April 11 to April 14, birth anniversary of Dalit icon Bhim Rao Ambedkar, to push inoculation against the coronavirus among the people eligible for the shots.

# CBI to probe cheating, misappropriation of funds case against ex-MP KD Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has taken over a case of cheating and misappropriation of funds against former Rajya Sabha MP KD Singh from Uttar Pradesh Police following a reference from the State Government and further notification from the Centre for probe into the case by the Central agency.

The case was originally registered at Kotwali Kanpur Nagar police station in Kanpur as Crime No. 234/2019 on a complaint from one Pawan Mishra alleging cheating and misappropriation of funds invested by the complainant and other investors in Alchemist Infra Realty Ltd and Alchemist Township Ltd promoted by the former MP.

The investors were promised plots/villas/apart-



ments against their investments. However, they were neither given the promised plots, flats, or villas. They were not even refunded the funds despite the plots or flats not being allotted to them.

Besides Singh, six directors of the two firms have also been

# Air purifiers in lifts, poorly ventilated spaces helpful in Covid spread: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air purifiers in lifts (elevators) and other poorly ventilated confined spaces could actually increase the spread of airborne virus droplets, according to researchers who have called upon the health authorities to look for such places which might be turning out to be super spreader for Coronavirus which is spreading like a raging fire.

When people infected with the Cov-SARS-2 virus, responsible for the current Covid-19 pandemic, sneeze, talk or simply breathe, they expel thousands of contaminated saliva droplets.

These droplets are now recognized as being the main way in which the virus spreads to other individuals and people are being advised to wear masks to curb contamination. Regularly airing indoor spaces to reduce the concentration of viral particles is also important.

Since the quality of air in a small space can quickly deteriorate even when there is just one person in that space (mainly because of the increased CO2 levels produced as we breathe



out), lift manufacturers routinely include ventilator systems. These can, however, increase the rate at which air – possibly laden with bacteria and viruses – circulates.

While adding an air purifier to the lift in addition to the ventilator should help in theory, the way in which the purifier affects air circulation, and thus transmission of airborne viruses is unclear, said the researchers.

Air purifiers work by sucking in stale air and exhausting cleansed air, but this adds to the overall circulation of air – an aspect that previous studies, or indeed air purifier manufacturers themselves, have not considered.

To investigate this issue, Dimitris Drikakis and Talib Dbouk of the University of Nicosia analysed air circulation

and found that the air purifier actually increases the spread of saliva droplets in the cabin.

"This is because the air intake integrated inside the purifier equipment induces flow circulation that can add to the transport of these droplets," explains Drikakis.

They also found that the risk of airborne virus transmission is lowest for low ventilation rates. This is due to reduced flow mixing inside the lift, says Dbouk.

"The broader implications of the present findings are that health and safety authorities must revise guidelines accordingly by considering the flow circulation and droplet dispersion effects arising from air purifiers and sanitisers in confined spaces," say Drikakis and Dbouk.



# Enhance peacekeeping budget: Army chief to UN

PTI ■ DHAKA

Indian Army chief Gen MM Naravane on Sunday urged the United Nations to enhance the budget for its peacekeeping missions and emphasised the need to provide appropriate logistics and improved technological support for the blue helmet missions in view of the emerging challenges.

Gen Naravane, who is here on a five-day official tour, delivered a keynote address on “Changing Nature of Global Conflicts: Role of UN Peacekeepers” during the “Army Chiefs Conclave” hosted by his Bangladeshi counterpart General Aziz Ahmed, the Indian Army’s Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADG PI) tweeted.

Gen Naravane laid emphasis on enhanced budget for UN peacekeeping activities, Bangladesh defence ministry’s Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) directorate quoted him as saying at the conclave. Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen was the chief guest at the event.

The Indian Army chief also called for providing appropriate logistics and improved technological support for the UN blue helmet missions, pointing out their emerging challenges. He said the

UN peacekeeping missions should run on a participatory basis.

The Bangladesh Army hosted the conclave coinciding with the celebrations of the birth centenary of the country’s ‘Father of the Nation’ Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of its 1971 independence.

Force commander of UN multidimensional integrated stabilisation mission in Mali Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporree, force commander of UN multidimensional integrated stabilisation mission in the Central African region Lieutenant General Sidki Daniel Traore and Bhutan army’s deputy chief of operation Brigadier General Darji Rinchen, among others attended the conclave.

Senior diplomats, security strategists and police officers also attended the seminar.

During the event, the Indian Army chief interacted with the senior officers of the participating nations and military observers from the other nations.

Momen told the conclave that the nature of peacekeeping operations in recent periods transformed both in terms of scale and scope for what “peacekeeping missions today are more than truce supervising operation”.

The changing situation further expanded the missions’ responsibility

taking into account “other dimensions of peace, such as establishing rule of law, protection of human rights, protection of women and children, support to political process, managing elections, reintegration and socio-economic development,” he said.

The conclave was held as part of a multilateral UN-mandated counter-terrorism exercise, Shantir Ogroshena (Frontrunners of Peace) that commenced on April 4. An Indian Army contingent of 30 personnel are participating along with the Royal Bhutan Army, Sri Lankan Army and Bangladesh Army in the exercise that will conclude on Monday.

Military observers from the US, UK, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Singapore are also attending the exercise. The aim of the exercise is to strengthen the procedures and enhance interoperability amongst neighbourhood countries to ensure robust peacekeeping operations in the region. The armies of all the participating nations shared their valuable experiences and refined their drills and procedures in peacekeeping operations.

The visit of Gen Naravane, who is here at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Gen Aziz Ahmed, comes less than two weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to the neighbouring country.

## EXPLOSIVE-LADEN SUV-HIRAN MURDER CASES

## NIA arrests Vaze’s associate Kazi, suspects he destroyed evidence

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the fourth arrest in the twin explosive laden SUV planting and alleged Mansukh Hiran murder cases, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday took Assistant Police Inspector (API) Riyazuddin Kazi, a close associate and colleague of incarcerated police officer Sachin Vaze, into custody.

Shortly after he was arrested on Sunday, Kazi was produced before a special NIA court, which remanded him to the custody of the agency till April 16.

Kazi’s arrest came after several rounds of questioning by the NIA over the past three weeks.

Kazi was directly working under Vaze, an API heading the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Crime Branch-CID of Mumbai Police.

The NIA is looking into Kazi’s role in the planning of a Gelatin sticks’ laden Scorpio and a threatening letter inside the vehicle, in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani’s 27-storey residence ‘Antilia’ on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25 and the subsequent alleged murder of Thane businessman Mansukh Huran. Hiran’s body was recovered from the marshy Reti-Bunder creek Mumbra in the neighbouring Thane district on March 5.

The NIA suspects that acting allegedly at the behest of Vaze, Kazi might have destroyed evidence in the case and procured fake vehicle number plates number plates Vaze was the first accused to have been arrested by the NIA which registered an FIR in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case on March 8.

Vaze had earlier this week created a sensation by making a written submission before the social NIA Court accusing Deshmukh and another Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab of asking him to Indulge in extortion for them.

Vaze, who was arrested on March 13 in connection with the gelatine sticks laden Scorpion recovery

case, was earlier booked under sections 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing counterfeit seal) and 506 -2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

Vaze was subsequently booked under sections 16 (Punishment for Terror act) and 18 (Punishment for conspiracy etc) of the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

On its part, Maharashtra’s Anti Terrorism – which initially investigated the circumstances leading to the alleged murder of Hiran -- had on March 21 arrested convicted Mumbai Police constable Vinayak B. Shinde (51) and a cricket bookie Naresh R. Gaur (31) in connection with Hiran’s alleged murder. The arrest of Shinde and Gaur came a day after the Union Home Ministry asking the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to take over the investigations into the murder of Hiran.

Shinde and Gaur are said to be accomplices of Vaze. Shinde is a dismissed policeman, who has been convicted in the case involving the fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakhan Bhaiya. Bhaiya was killed in a fake encounter on November 11, 2006. In 2013, a Mumbai sessions court had awarded life sentences to 21 people, including Shinde and 12 other Mumbai Police personnel, convicted in the case.

Shinde has been on parole. The investigations by the ATIs have revealed that Shinde was in regular touch with Vaze and helped the latter in his activities.

During the investigations that followed, the NIA seized from Shinde and Gaur two mobile, one iPhone, 7 SIM cards, a blank cover of SIM card, a note with 14 mobile numbers mentioned including 5 in the name of arrested-suspected cop and prime accused Sachin Vaze with ‘Ok’ written (for activation) beside them.

## World’s richest Malayali, wife escape unhurt as their chopper crash-lands

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

M A Yusuff Ali, the richest Malayali in the world, (net worth \$4.8 billion) and his wife had a miraculous escape from an air crash on Sunday morning at Kochi. The helicopter ferrying them to a hospital owned by Yusuff Ali made a force landing in the marshy area along the Kochi-Thiruvananthapuram National Highway.

There were five persons in the chopper including the Alis and all were brought out of the sleeky flying machine once the rotors came to a standstill.

The pilot and Ali suffered some minor injuries and were rushed to the Lakeshore Hospital for first-aid. All are safe and hearty, according to sources in the hospital. According to eye witnesses who watched the low flying chopper force landing in the

marshy stretch, there was heavy wind and rains when the incident happened.

An enquiry has been ordered into the incident.

Yusuff Ali who owns the Lulu Group business empire is a close friend of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and other top CPI(M) leaders in the country. The business tycoon enjoys cordial ties with leaders of all political parties, though the Marxists in the State visit the oil kingdoms in West Asia as the guests of Ali who have built up a vast business empire across the Arab nations in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Yusuff Ali, who owns a fleet of executive jets and helicopters, had been awarded Abu Dhabi Prize, the country’s highest civilian honours, on Friday by crown prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Sayed Al Nahyan.

## Navreh celebration in J&K from today

**Jammu:** Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, Bohri, Jammu in association with more than one hundred and twenty five Kashmiri Hindu organisations globally has formulated a three-day programme from 12 th to 14 th April, 2021 with the intention to celebrate Tyaag, Sankalp and Shaurya Divas in the memory of the Shriya Bhat. The Indian history records the great contribution in saving Hindu culture by a Kashmiri Pandit Shriya Bhat, as early as the 15 th century.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

admitted in the hospital in Nagpur after he tested positive for Covid-19.

According to a press statement issued by the Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, “the Navreh celebrations will commence on 12 th April- the Tyaag (Sacrifice) Divas in the memory of the Shriya Bhat. The Indian history records the great contribution in saving Hindu culture by a Kashmiri Pandit Shriya Bhat, as early as the 15 th century.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

gious places.

On April 13, Navreh (first day of New Year) is being celebrated as Navreh Sankalp Divas. Globally all Kashmiri Hindus shall take a solemn pledge.

On 14th April, 2021 the Shaurya Divas will be celebrated in the honour of the great 8th century King of Kashmir, Lalitaditya Muktapada for his valour and victory over Turks.

Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra has already released an audio and video of a song on Navreh Celebrations composed by Dr. Kuldeep Raina Sudeshi, written by Sunita Raina Pandit, sung by Lovely Chandra and Vishal Pandita and video edited by Pardeep Pandita.

## Departmental probe against Param Bir

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than a fortnight after it constituted a judicial probe under retired High Court Judge Kailash U Chandiwal into allegations of corruption against former State Home Minister Anil Deshmuh, the Maharashtra Government has initiated a departmental probe against Mumbai’s former police commissioner Param Bir Singh under senior IPS officer Sanjay Pandey for alleged breach of service rules and dereliction of duty.

In a development that has come in the midst of a Preliminary Inquiry (PE) launched by the CBI into Singh’s allegations of corruption made against Deshmukh, Pandey—who has been entrusted with additional charge as the State General Police – has begun the probe against the former city police commissioner.

The Maharashtra government has ordered the probe against Singh on the basis of a report submitted by Mumbai’s new Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale to it on matters relating to suspended and incarcerated police officer Sachin Vaze.

Among other things, Pandey will look into the charge about Singh’s alleged dereliction of duty arising out of his failure to keep the state government about his personal investigations into the alleged malpractices by Deshmukh, whether his charge of corruption made against the former state Home Minister had any substance, why had not only given so much importance to Vaze but also asked him report to him directly to him and whether he assigned Vaze to investigate the explosi8ve laden SUV recovery case.

In a report submitted to the State Home department on April 3, Nagrale also stated that Vaze was posted as the in-

## UP man held for announcing reward on priest’s head

IAN5 ■ MEERUT

The Meerut police have arrested a youth for allegedly announcing a reward for killing a controversial priest of a temple in Ghaziabad’s Dasma area.

The man, Danish Ali, a resident of Meerut, had uploaded a video on a social media platform saying that anyone who beheads the controversial priest, will get a reward of Rs 51 lakh.

The priest, Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, recently made a controversial statement against the Prophet, for which the Delhi Police booked him for hurting religious sentiments.

The statements were made at a press conference at Delhi Press Club.

Danish is heard in the video purportedly saying, “I will sell my property, jewellery, everything I have and will arrange Rs 51 lakh.”

Though Danish did not name Saraswati, he referred to him as the ‘priest of the Dasma temple in Ghaziabad’.

Meerut’s Superintendent of Police (SP) Vineet Bhatnagar said, “We have arrested Danish Ali. We have also seized the mobile phone through which he had made the controversial announcement.”

## TN logs 6,618 fresh cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

With 6,618 new persons getting diagnosed with Covid-19 on Sunday, situation in Tamil Nadu has turned grave all over the State. The State saw 22 persons succumbing to the pandemic till 7 pm on Sunday.

On Saturday, 5,989 persons tested positive throughout the State while the death toll on the single day stood at 23.

Chennai has to bear the brunt as the Metropolis registered 2,124 new cases on Sunday while the number of new persons diagnosed with the pandemic on Saturday stood at 1,977. As on Sunday, Chengalpet, the neighboring district saw 631 new cases getting admitted to the hospital.

Dr C V Krishnaswamy, eminent physician, boldly stated that situation was critical and grave in both Tamil Nadu and Kerala. “The ever increasing number of Covid-19 patients in these States are matters of concern. Both the State administrations should discuss with the medical fraternity and evolve a mechanism to prevent the spread of this pandemic,” said Dr Krishnaswamy.

He also cautioned the doctors and policy makers about the impact the disease could cause in youngsters. “You forget all those who are above 60 years of age.

Their good days are over. What is of concern is the complaints from youth who were afflicted with Covid-19. Those who came out of the ordeal have started complaining about weakness, loss of memory and stamina. Many persons who had the harrowing experience of Covid-19 are likely to face a series of medical issues,” said the doctor. Dr Rajeev, ayurvedic physician, from Kerala, too echoed the concerns of Dr Krishnaswamy. “Many persons, especially youth, are complaining loss of memory and stamina after attack by the Covid virus. This is an issue which has to be studied in detail because it is becoming detrimental to the future of the country,” said Dr Rajeev.

## Maha CM meets Covid task force, asks to prepare SOPs for lockdown

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid clear indications that it might go in for a full-fledged lockdown to break the chain of the rapid infections across Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday met the members of the Covid 19 Task Force, his Cabinet colleagues and senior bureaucrats to make full-fledged preparations for the proposed lockdown.

At the meeting, the chief minister discussed with those present about the need for increasing vaccination, setting up oxygen plants, increasing Covid-19 beds, increased availability of Remdesivir injections and ensuring early vaccination of health workers across the state.

The chief minister said that he would make one more request to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to increase availability of vaccines to Maharashtra.

During the course of the meeting, the chief minister asked the Task Force members and senior bureaucrats to prepare what he called “all inclusive” Standard-Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be followed during the proposed lockdown. In the SOPs, the factors stemming from experiences the state government had

gained from handling the Covid-19 in the state during the past one year.

Among other things, the chief minister asked the state administration to explore ways to bring Oxygen cylinders in big way from the states like Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, where there is abundant availability of Oxygen.

At the meeting, the task force members stressed on the need for reducing the excessive use of Remdesivir injections by Covid-19 patients in the state. “Nine five per cent of Covid patients get well by being in home quarantine. Only serious patients should get themselves admitted to hospitals. In housing societies, the authorities can create isolation centres and make available Oxygen concentrators and covid-19 beds so that patients can be looked after at the local levels,” one of the task force members suggested at the meeting.

Earlier at the meeting, Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunde said that of the 1,200 metric tonnes of Oxygen available, 980 metric tonnes of Oxygen was being used for medical purposes. “In consultation with the Centre, we are looking at ways to bring additional oxygen to the state,” Kunte said.

## People should follow Covid protocol to keep infections under check, says Raj CM



**Jaipur:** Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has said that with the ever increasing corona infection in Rajasthan, the State government will be forced to take strict action if people will not follow the health protocol of wearing masks, keeping proper distance and keeping away from the crowd.

He said that during the second wave, the infection is spreading very fast and all the people should follow the health rules and help the government

in keeping it under control.

Gehlot was presiding over the review meeting on infection and vaccination status at the Chief Minister’s residence on Saturday night.

He said that during the spread of corona infection last year, the same spirit and support of the people of all classes and communities has given full support of the state government and all health rules and other guidelines are needed again.

## UP schools shut till Apr 30, Govt orders night curfew in districts logging 100 new cases/day

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh Government on Sunday ordered the closure of all schools till April 30 and directed the imposition of a night curfew in the districts, which report 100 new infections in a day or have 500 active cases.

According to a government statement, the government also ordered that not more than 100 people be allowed to assemble at an open space for an event while the number has been put at 50 for closed spaces.

The fresh government directives have come on a day the state reported its highest single-day spike of 15,353 cases since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Earlier, a night curfew was imposed in Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Allahabad, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Bareilly, Muzaffarnagar districts and the Lucknow civic body area.

On April 2, the UP government had extended till April 11 the closure of all schools for stu-

dents of Classes 1 to 8.

According to the statement issued on Sunday, all government and private schools will remain closed till April 30 while pre-scheduled examinations can be held.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said a night curfew be imposed from 9 pm to 6 am in the districts that report 100 fresh cases in a day or have 500 active COVID-19 cases.

Stressing the need to focus on the “test, trace and treat” approach, the government said the daily count of RT-PCR tests should be taken to one lakh.

Tracing of at least 30-35 persons who have come in contact with a COVID-19 patient should be done, the directives said.

The UP chief minister said an effective COVID-19 vaccination drive should be carried out as a four-day “Tika Utsav” began in the state on Sunday.The four-day vaccination programme, which began on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Jyotibha Phule, will continue till April 14, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar.

PTI

## UP man, sister booked for ‘forcing conversion’ 2 years after marriage

IAN5 ■ ALIGARH (UP)

Two years after marriage, a woman has accused her husband and his two sisters of “forcibly converting” her.

The woman said, she never realized that her husband was a Muslim and had never met her in-laws. She had retained her maiden name after marriage.

The Muslim man, 25, and his sisters have now been booked under the anti-conversion law.

According to reports, the woman, Puja Soni, 23, is from Chhattisgarh. She said she had married a man named Ashok Rajput in March 2019 in Delhi, where she works at a hospital.

She got to know the man,

who worked as a plumber, when they started talking over the phone.

They met and fell in love. “We got married in a temple,” she said. The couple started living in Noida.

In her complaint to police, she said, “On February 7 this year, we had a daughter. On March 22, he took me to his home at the Rait village in Aligarh. There, I found out his name was Afzal Khan. I was forced to read the namaz’ and stopped from offering my prayers.”

She further said, “On April 8, they took my daughter away from me. Then, they converted me forcefully and renamed me ‘Alna’.”

She alleged her in-laws drove her out of the house and

dropped her off at Mathura.

SHO Abhay Kumar Sharma of the Lodha police station, where the FIR was registered, said, “Ashok Rajput a.k.a Afzal Khan has been booked under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance and Section 323 of the IPC (voluntarily causing hurt) along with his sisters.”

No arrest has been made so far.

The woman’s statement will be registered in court under Section 164 of the CrPC on Monday.

So far, 32 FIRs have been registered under the state’s anti-conversion law since it came into effect in November last year.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Shot shortage

Amid a plethora of issues, from safety to availability, the second wave of pandemic has hit India hard

India seems to be back to square one where fighting the pandemic is concerned, with more than 70 vaccination centres in Mumbai having shut down after running out of the COVID doses. Other parts of the country, too, like Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, are facing a shortage of the coveted shots. And this shortage is being faced despite there being major vaccine hesitancy in the country and the inoculation drive still not open to all. How massive the shortage would become if the Government decides to vaccinate all citizens is anybody's guess. When the pandemic began over a year ago, India was faced with the harsh reality of a poor healthcare infrastructure, shortage of hospital beds, ventilators, healthcare professionals, sanitisers, drugs and the know-how regarding the handling of the contagion. However, to the Government's and India Inc's credit, our "jugaadu" spirit kicked in and we overcame all these shortages by manufacturing everything in India and even reached a point where we began exporting PPEs, sanitisers and so on. Even where the vaccine was concerned, we surprised the world by coming out with two vaccines; in fact, India began gifting or selling vaccines to countries around the world. All this was done parallel to our own ambitious countrywide vaccination drive. As the first wave of the outbreak seemed to subside, it gave the Centre's vaccine diplomacy a shot in the arm. It looked like we had it all under control, till the second wave hit.

Now, it seems that we have not learnt any lessons from the first wave and prepared ourselves better to handle the inevitable second wave, which empirical evidence suggests is always worse than the first one. So not only are we again facing a bed and oxygen shortage, we are beginning to fall short of the vaccines as well. A political slugfest has broken out over the issue with Maharashtra alleging that the Centre was "discriminating" against the non-BJP ruled States and the Government, for its part, accusing the States of having a lackadaisical attitude. A hectic debate is also on within the country whether charity should begin at home and the Government should have ensured that all of its citizens were covered first before exporting the shots. After all, even the US, the leader of the free world, has banned all exports until it vaccinates its own citizens. Be that as it may, the fact that we were not prepared to handle the inevitable second wave is a collective failure: Of the healthcare system, the policy planners, the bureaucracy, the Centre, States and the people as a whole. To make matters worse, some European regulators are talking about a possible link between the AstraZeneca vaccine (available in India under the brand name Covishield) and some rare occurrences of blood clots. Though the Indian panel on 'adverse event following immunisation' is studying the safety of Covishield, it will be some time before it gives its verdict. So, for now, it remains to be seen how our ingenuity gets us out of this jam.

### PICTALK



A 3,000-year-old lost city in Luxor, Egypt, which was unearthed recently

AP/PTI

## Deliverance

Uttarakhand has decided to free 51 shrines from the Govt's control and hand these back to the priests

In a politically sensitive development ahead of the Uttarakhand Assembly elections in February 2022, Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat-led BJP Government has overturned his predecessor Trivendra Singh Rawat's decision enabling the Government to take over the management of 51 prominent temples and shrines. Trivendra's argument had been that the new Act would help in the professional management of these shrines. The Act paved the way for setting up the Devasthanam Board, which was chaired by the Chief Minister. The Board was meant to control the management of renowned temples such as Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri; the annual pilgrimage to these temples is popularly called the Char Dham Yatra and is a money-spinner not only for the temples but also for allied businesses like the travel, hotel and tourism industries. In 2019, over three million people visited the four shrines, though 2020 was a damp squib owing to the COVID outbreak. Most worryingly for the seers, the Act had the provision to sack a priest found involved in any "wrongdoing". It had been a long-pending demand of these *teerth purohits* (pilgrimage priests) that the Government roll back its decision as, they pointed out, they have been managing for generations the affairs of these temples, which were set up by their ancestors.

Now, though it can't be truthfully claimed that everything was hunky-dory at these religious establishments when their affairs were being managed by the respective *teerth purohits*, there's also no denying the fact that the State Government's move must not have spawned from any idea of piouness or welfare for the pilgrims, who descend on the hill State from across the length and breadth of the country. It is true that the infrastructure at the halting places leading to these places of worship is in a dilapidated condition and excessive commercialisation there has massively added to the nature's burden, the result of which we all saw in the tragic Kedarnath flash floods of 2013. However, the Government didn't stir all along to ameliorate the pathetic conditions. We would suggest that rather than taking extreme positions, let the temple management remain with the *teerth purohits* but, at the same time, the Government should keep an eye on them and the way they run the temple affairs and oversee the upkeep, facilities and amenities there.

# Of Sri Lanka and the Andamans

The issues between Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sinhalas may be resolved if India concurs to transfer the former to the Andamans



PRAFULL GORADIA

Two communities not being able to coexist is a perennial problem in the Indian subcontinent. An old saying goes, "Ek myaan mein do talwarein nahi reh sakti", meaning two swords cannot fit into one scabbard. The problem began by being underscored in our own India, which was divided into Pakistan for Muslims and Hindustan for the rest. MA Jinnah argued that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations and could not coexist. The first leader to push this two-nation thesis was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh fame.

Some UP Muslims believed their new country, Pakistan, was a new Medina. Muslims in the western wing despised easterner Bengalis as inferior, short and dark. Their economy was exploited from day one. Jinnah visited Dacca early in 1948 and peremptorily told university students that Urdu alone would be Pakistan's national language. Bengali, which they are proud of, was not in the reckoning. The two wings were daggers drawn from 1948; the clash came in 1971, in less than 24 years of the new Medina's birth. In December that year, they separated; Bangladesh was born.

Thus, India was divided into three. Now we hear that the people of Sindh wish to separate. This separatist movement is called "Jio Sindh". They are unable to exist under the yoke of the dominant Punjabis. Baluchistan is another unhappy province which was partly British India and partly the princely State of Kalat. It had an Embassy in Karachi until 1948 when Pakistan forcibly took it over. The Pathans of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) with their main city, Peshawar, have always wished to unite with all Pathans in Afghanistan, though this demand is dormant now.

With Sri Lanka, it is an old problem. I visited my in-laws-to-be in Colombo in 1964 as they wanted to introduce me to their society in the city where they had lived and worked for 32 years. In the course of my four-day stay,



there arose the question of who would be the next managing director of the British Ceylon Corporation, a British firm similar to the one we had in Kanpur, the British India Corporation, until the early 1960s. My father-in-law said that one Ramaswamy, a local Tamil, was the ablest choice but was unlikely to get the promotion. The prize was likely to go to DM Pereira as he was a Sinhala. The existing Board of directors was largely British, headed by a distinguished gentleman called Singleton-Salmon. There was no partiality in the company but the emerging milieu in Colombo was such. Ramaswamy was likely to emigrate to Australia.

My father-in-law explained that the Sinhalas were an overwhelming majority, an easy-going, fun-loving Buddhist people. They were jealous of the Tamils who were serious at work, and more efficient. There had developed a wedge between the two groups as far back as then. Their differences were bound to explode sooner or later. The fact that the people of Tamil Nadu have a soft corner in their hearts for their Sri Lankan brethren is natural but



IF WE CAN OFFER A TRANSFER OF WILLING SRI LANKAN TAMILS TO THE ANDAMANS, INDIA'S ADVANTAGE WOULD BE POPULATING THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS, WHICH MAKES TAMILS' SURVIVAL SAFER, TAMIL NADU HAPPIER AND THE INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS PERMANENTLY SUSPICION-FREE

that makes the Sinhalas suspect Indian intentions from time to time. When Rajiv Gandhi was India's Prime Minister and President JR Jayewardene headed Sri Lanka, we sent the IPKF military to help the Tamils. Instead of helping them, we only killed them and left the Sinhalas alone. This indicates that our Governments have mostly not understood Sri Lankan affairs.

Colombo's rulers smile at New Delhi and pretend to be friendly although they feel that the faraway yellow giant is less dangerous than the Indian giant, only 40 km to the north. They did appreciate the IPKF's help for some time; thereafter it became a distant memory. Lanka appears to have erred in owing China all the money for upgrading the Hambantota port as well as a highway from Colombo to Galle and further south. If Sri Lanka cannot repay the loan in time, these may be taken over as Chinese property. Yet Colombo would rather deal with Beijing than New Delhi. This mentality is likely to continue indefinitely until India takes a drastic step to relieve the Sinhalas of their Tamil

suspensions. From the Indian point of view, there is the fear, however remote, that one day the Chinese may convert Sri Lanka into a yellow colony.

What should New Delhi do? Consider whether we can offer a transfer of willing Sri Lankan Tamils to the Andaman Islands. They are a community of four million people, mainly in the Jaffna area in the northeast of Sri Lanka and some scattered across the east of the island. The Andamans occupy about 9,000 sq km with only about four lakh people. Not all Sri Lankan Tamils are likely to accept the transfer. For those willing, Sri Lanka should pay a total ₹2 lakh per head towards resettlement, convenience costs and compensation. This means several billion rupees for Sri Lanka to borrow or somehow fork out, but a small cost for solving their greatest problem. India's advantage would be populating the Andaman Islands, which makes Tamils' survival safer, Tamil Nadu happier and the Indo-Sri Lankan relations permanently suspicion-free.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AMP UP VACCINE PRODUCTION

Sir — In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has rightly questioned the Centre's decision to export COVID-19 vaccines. It seems that the export was also an oversight, like many other decisions of the NDA Government. It also cannot be denied that it was an effort to garner publicity at the cost of our own citizens.

The Government, before launching the world's largest vaccination drive should have calculated the domestic demand and supply. As several States are now alleging shortage of vaccines, it is time for the Centre to completely stop their export. India played the vaccine diplomacy card thinking that it was close to developing herd immunity. New Delhi wasn't granting or exporting vaccines to only the poor nations but also to the UK, Saudi Arabia and Canada. Despite India's stupendous efforts to vaccinate at a large scale, majority of the people are outside its purview. This is situation when there exists an age criteria to get vaccinated. It's not hard to imagine the situation if this age bar is removed and everybody is allowed to get vaccinated.

The current situation might lead to an increase in the prices of vaccines or, if the pharmaceutical companies ramp up production without increasing the prices, the quality will definitely get compromised. The Centre and State Governments must give up politics and find an amicable solution to this problem which will likely aggravate in the coming days if viable answers are not explored and worked upon.

**Bhagwan Thadani** | Mumbai

### NEED TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

Sir — It should be a cause of worry for New Delhi that the US Navy recently carried out a Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without its prior consent to challenge India's "excessive" maritime claims. According to the statement issued by the Commander of the US' Seventh

## Nix the corruption in Maharashtra



It refers to the editorial 'Tightening the screws' (April 10). I fully concur with the editorial view that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) should work in tandem to unravel the Anil Deshmukh and Sachin Vaze maze. If tainted police officials and politicians can work hand-in-glove, then why not our sleuths? The revelations made by arrested police officer Vaze are disturbing. It shows

how rotten our whole system is and there is an open loot of public money. It seems that things like extortion, killings, transfer of honest officials, nepotism or using political influence to get Government contracts have become the order of the day in Maharashtra. Not only this, it can also not be denied that the links of corrupt police officials like Vaze and politicians like Deshmukh must be with Maoists or terrorists, else from where the gelatin sticks used in Antilia bomb scare case came?

Both the agencies must also focus their investigation on these lines. Corrupt politicians when in power at the State or the Centre give patronage to criminals and anti-social elements in a *quid pro quo* so that they may use them as and when required. Nothing could be more shameful for the Maharashtra Government than the recent happenings and the alleged involvement of Deshmukh in grave corruption. It must be investigated properly and the accused should not be spared.

**Abhishek Singh** | Varanasi

the Coronavirus cases as we have lowered our guard and are not following the guidelines. People must understand that it is necessary to break the chain of transmissions to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.

The vaccines are no panacea. Not following the appropriate COVID-19 behaviour is not just laxity but is a criminal act as it is a major reason for the surge. After the vaccination programme kickstarted, people felt they should not wear masks. Many people hang their masks around their neck, some keep it in their pocket and some do not use it at all. It is only after such gross negligence and laxity on the part of people that Coronavirus cases have started increasing.

**Jubel D'Cruz** | Mumbai

### NO REASON TO LOWER GUARD

Sir — We are responsible for the rise in

## SOUNDBITE

COVID is surging and it is our responsibility to push the Government to move away from PR tactics and act in the interest of the people.



**Congress interim president**

— Sonia Gandhi



Iran proposes the logical path to full Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action compliance. The

US, which caused this crisis, should return to full compliance first.

**Iranian Foreign Minister**

— Mohammad Javad Zarif

My parents organised a celebration on the eve of my birthday in advance as a surprise! I'm the luckiest person in the world to have such parents.



**Actor**

— Swara Bhasker



The Opposition gets nervous about AB de Villiers. We have depth in batting which we want to utilise. AB is probably the only one in the team who is so versatile.



**Cricketer**

— Virat Kohli

Lockdown is not an option. However, we will be putting some restrictions in place to contain the spread of the virus.

**Delhi CM**

— Arvind Kejriwal

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

This can give the impetus to meet climate commitments while making contributions to post-COVID recovery



RIYA RAHIMAN

Countries have been grappling with the impact of climate change and extreme events as they pose various risks to people, infrastructure, economies and future development. A significant proportion of the economic losses due to extreme events is attributed to the loss and damage to infrastructure systems, thereby stressing the need for integrating disaster and climate resilience for infrastructure development. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed an unprecedented impact on infrastructure sectors worldwide. Even though it has not led to direct damages to physical infrastructure, it led to interruptions in infrastructure services, with significant implications on economies. The outbreak is the latest reminder of the need to invest in resilient infrastructure. It exposed systemic risks across various sectors and underlying drivers such as poverty, poor health systems and limited social welfare schemes that perpetuated them. The risks cut across different sectors and strongly brought out the imperative to understand and address systemic and cascading dangers and fragilities.



As part of global recovery, infrastructure investments are being looked at as an indispensable part of stimulus packages aimed at restarting economic activities. Countries are expected to invest heavily in infrastructure sectors as an attempt to mitigate the impacts of the economic fallouts as well as create employment and improve competitiveness simultaneously. While the health and economic implications take centre stage when planning for COVID-19 recovery, the urgency of the climate emergency cannot be ignored. The pandemic has clearly brought out the need to focus on managing systems risks for strengthening resilience, a lesson one must heed, to make headway against climate change as well. With countries submitting their national climate action plans as part of the Paris Agreement, this is a crucial year for climate action as well. It is vital that the post-COVID recovery and climate action plans complement each other. Studies show that infrastructure construction and operations account for 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and the provision of quality infrastructure underpins the achievement of 92 per cent of targets across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SfDRR) also highlights the role of resilient infrastructure as a cornerstone for sustainable development. The four specific targets relate to loss reduction in SfDRR, focus on cutting global disaster mortality, the number of affected people, economic loss and damage to infrastructure. However, the SfDRR target on reducing damage to critical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for achieving the three other targets on loss reduction. In view of this, infrastructure investments and policies to bolster economies should be leveraged as an opportunity to deliver on global commitments such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, SDGs and the SfDRR targets. Though some progress has been made on the SDGs and the SfDRR target, the overall action to meet them has not advanced at the required pace. The pandemic has further pushed back their progress. The COVID-19 recovery can be utilised as an opportunity to progress on these global goals and build a healthy, inclusive and climate-friendly future. Investing in disaster and climate-resilient infrastructure can provide the much-needed impetus in meeting global commitments while also making contributions to post-COVID recovery. (The writer is Senior Specialist for Infrastructure Resilience, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. The views expressed are personal.)

# The big tent of the PPP decoded

Pragmatic centrism and the need to remain a bridge between Sindh’s electorate and the political fruits of federalism may help explain why the PPP made a grab for the Senate

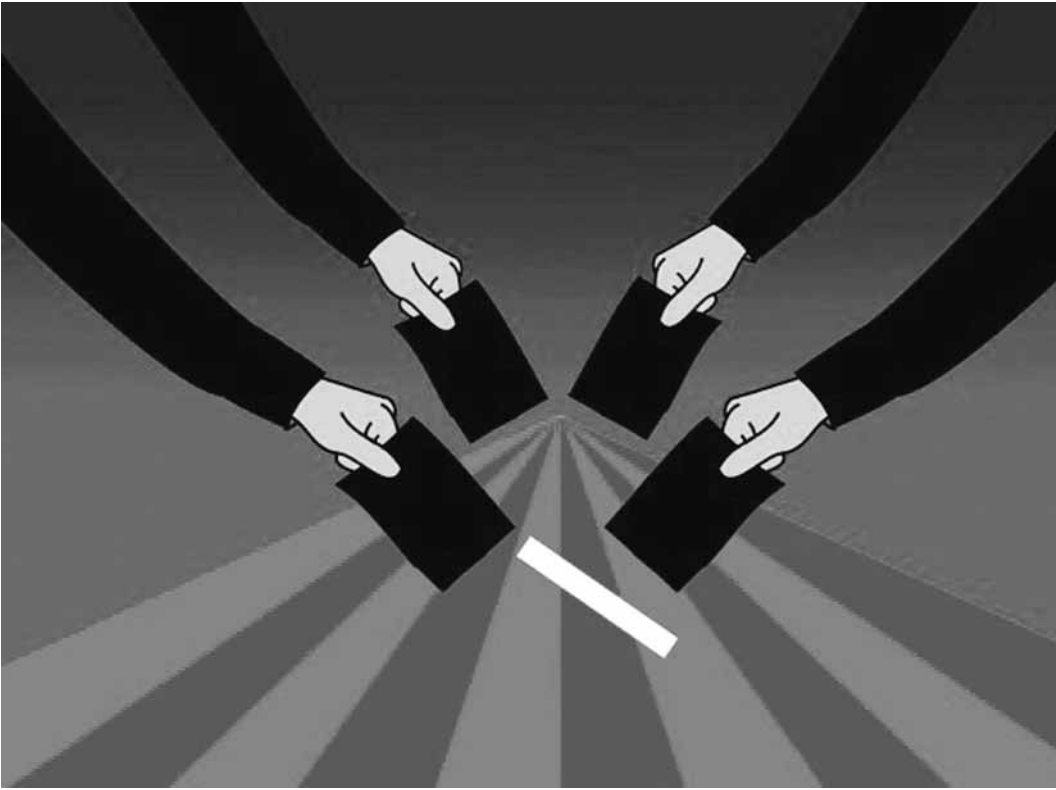


NADEEM PARACHA



IN PAKISTAN, BECAUSE OF CERTAIN OVERARCHING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS, THE MOOD WAS CLEARLY SHIFTING TO THE RIGHT. IN THE SECOND HALF OF BHUTTO'S TENURE, THE REGIME TRIED TO APPROPRIATE THIS MOOD AND, BY THE TIME THE GOVERNMENT FELL IN 1977, THE PARTY BELIEVED IT HAD UPSTAGED THE FAR-RIGHT ISLAMIST GROUPS THAT WERE OPPOSING IT

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist. The views expressed are personal. Courtesy: Dawn



A reading of the PPP’s Foundation Papers makes it clear that, right from the onset, its founders saw the PPP as a “big tent” party modelled on established Social Democratic parties of Europe. Rahim believed that the country’s bourgeoisie had begun their march towards a revolutionary phase, just as the European middle classes had done in the 19th century. Yet, at the time, a majority of Pakistanis lived in rural areas and the process of industrialisation, though rapid during the Ayub era, was still concentrated in just a few urban centres. When the party was launched, it exhibited three main groupings: On the Left were Marxist student leaders, socialist intellectuals, trade unionists and peasant leaders. On the Right were “progressive” landed elite and in the Centre were what became to be known as “Islamic socialists”, or those who appropriated Islam as a welfareist and socialist doctrine, as opposed to a theological expression of politics (*à la Jamaat-i-Islami*). During the 1970 elections, the party’s “big tent” tactics were a success, aiding it to attract the majority of middle and lower-middle class votes, and the votes of small farmers and peasants in (West) Pakistan’s two largest provinces, Punjab and Sindh. In December 1971, the party suddenly found itself in power after the acrimonious departure of East Pakistan. The party’s Left wing was more assertive during Bhutto’s first year in power. But this assertion was stalled when Bhutto began perceiving the party’s radical Left as agents of anarchy with a juvenile understanding of Marxism. According to Gunther and Diamond, in an effort to expand their electoral appeal to a wide variety of groups, the policy orientations of “big tent” parties were eclectic and shifted with the public mood. In Pakistan, because of certain overarching international economic shifts, the mood was clearly shifting to the Right. In the second half of Bhutto’s tenure, the regime tried to appropriate this mood and, by the time the Government fell in 1977, the party believed it had upstaged the far-Right Islamist groups that were opposing it. But it seems that the party did not go far enough and was toppled by an Islamist General. With its leader hanged in 1979, and its other major players either in exile or in prison, the reins of the party fell in the hands of its lower-tier leadership. Bhutto’s daughter Benazir was at the helm, but she was under arrest. This was also when the party’s leftist militant tendencies, which had been subdued by Bhutto, resurfaced. In 1986, however, fearing that the US would stall the party’s return to power for being “too Left-wing”, Benazir began to gradually push the party back towards the Centre. This push continued through the 1990s, especially with the appearance of the Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as the “big tent” party of the Right. Under Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP has dug its heels deep in pragmatist centrism. Its electoral appeal in Punjab was neutralised by the PML-N and then the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). This has blocked its path to Islamabad as a ruling party. The PPP continues to enjoy power and electoral traction in Sindh. But this traction is largely based on the fact that the Sindhi speakers perceive the PPP as a bridge between them and the economic and political fruits of federalism. For this, the PPP needs to continue having a strong presence in federal institutions. This is why it was important for Zardari to recently bag a majority in the Senate, even if he ended up upsetting his allies in the anti-Government Pakistan Democratic Movement.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE CRPF HAS SHOT FOUR PEOPLE IN COOCH BEHAR. THERE'S A CONSPIRACY UNDER THE HOME MINISTER'S ORDER AND THIS INCIDENT IS PROOF. —WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE



DIDI AND HER GOONS ARE PERTURBED, SEEING THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT FOR THE BJP. SHE HAS STOOPED TO THIS LEVEL AS SHE CAN SEE HERSELF LOSING. —PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



# Quaking over Iran’s phantom nuclear weapons

There are many countries that already had nukes when they signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They have obligations, too. How are they doing?



GWYNNE DYER

First, the good news. The US and Iran had talks in Vienna on Tuesday, and the nuclear deal they and all the other great powers signed in 2015, is coming back. It's not exactly back yet. After then US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the treaty in 2018 and re-imposed harsh sanctions on Iran, the Iranians retaliated by slowly deviating from their own commitments under the deal one baby step at a time. So now there has to be an agreement on a timetable for unwinding those steps as well as cancelling the US sanctions. On a better run planet, the US special envoy for Iran, Rob Malloy, would just declare that all the US sanctions on Iran wrongly put in place by the discredited Trump Administration are

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy (and Work)*. The views expressed are personal.

cancelled as of today. The Iranian delegation, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a veteran of the 2015 talks, would reply that Iran will immediately return to compliance with all the terms of the treaty and invite UN inspectors to verify that all its temporary deviations from treaty obligations over the past three years have been reversed. And we would all live happily ever after. However, in the real world it is not so. The negotiators in Vienna are not even in the same hotel. All the countries that are still observing the treaty (China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia and the UK) are in one hotel, and the American mission is in another, with messages going back and forth between the two parties. Porcupines mate with less difficulty, but there

has already been some progress. “The United States knows that, in order to get back into compliance, it’s going to have to lift those sanctions that are inconsistent with the deal that was reached with Iran,” said Rob Malloy. The Iranian Government’s spokesman Ali Rabiei replied that he “saluted” Malloy’s remarks. “We find this position realistic and promising,” he added. Two working groups have been set up that include American representatives, with the task of choreographing reciprocal moves by the US and Iran to return to the treaty and a target of full compliance by both sides within two months. Just in time for Iranian moderates to claim credit for ending the US sanctions a week or so before the June election. So that’s probably sorted,

but what about all the countries that actually do have nuclear weapons? Iran originally got into trouble because it signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970 and later tried to get nuclear weapons anyway, but the countries that already had nukes when they signed the NPT have obligations, too. How are they doing? The NPT states that “nuclear-weapons States agree to...pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.” But it has been a long pursuit and 50 years later not one of them’ has actually managed to catch the damn thing. The US has got turned around somehow and is pursuing in the wrong direction. It’s in the midst of a trillion-dollar-plus “upgrade” of its nuclear forces, including a new generation of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and new submarine-launched cruise missiles. According to President Vladimir Putin, Russia has developed nuclear-powered cruise missiles and torpedos with unlimited range, a hypersonic vehicle called Avangard to deliver nuclear weapons at a low level and ultra-high speed, and a new ultra-heavy ICBM called

‘Sarmat’ that is able to carry even more and bigger warheads (10-15) over a longer range (18,000 km.) There have also been reports of a new nuclear-powered drone torpedo that is capable of delivering a 100-megaton warhead (biggest ever tested was 50 megatons) over a range of 10,000 km. Then it would explode off an enemy’s coast to create a tsunami wave 500 metres tall to inundate the coastal regions with highly radioactive water. But maybe this one is fiction. Then there’s Little Britain with its four submarines that carry nuclear-tipped missiles. Prime Minister Boris Johnson recently announced that he was increasing the number of warheads they carry from 180 to 240, but it doesn’t really make much of a difference. Traditionally the UK’s strategy is “no first use”, which

means Britain’s retaliation would be on cities, not on empty silos. So you’re just bouncing the rubble after the first few dozen warheads explode. That’s probably why Johnson broke with tradition and said that Britain might use nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks, including even cyber attacks. One way to compensate for not really being very dangerous is to sound very reckless. Then there’s France (mostly harmless, despite some 280 nuclear weapons) and China (320 but still talking about expansion). Plus India (150), Israel (90), North Korea (30-40) and Pakistan (160), all countries that “unsigned” or never signed the NPT. But at least we’re safe from Iran’s nuclear weapons, which never existed and still don’t.



# Myanmar forces kill 82 in single day

AP ■ YANGON

At least 82 people were killed in one day in a crackdown by Myanmar security forces on pro-democracy protesters, according to reports on Saturday from independent local media and an organisation that keeps track of casualties since the February coup. Friday's death toll in Bago was the biggest one-day total for a single city since March 14, when just over 100 people were killed in Yangon, the country's biggest city. Bago is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Yangon. The Associated Press is unable to independently verify the number of deaths.

The death toll of 82 was a preliminary one compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which issues daily counts of casualties and arrests from the crackdown in the aftermath of the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Their tallies are widely accepted as highly credible because cases are not added until they have been confirmed,



with the details published on their website.

In its Saturday report, the group said that it expected the number of dead in Bago to rise as more cases were verified.

The online news site Myanmar Now also reported that 82 people had been killed, citing an unnamed source involved with charity rescue work. Myanmar Now and other local media said the bodies had been collected by the military and dumped on the grounds of a Buddhist pagoda.

At least 701 protesters and

bystanders have been killed by security forces since the army's takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

The attack on Bago was the third in the past week involving the massive use of force to try to crush the persistent opposition to the ruling junta.

Attacks were launched Wednesday on hardcore opponents of military rule who had set up strongholds in the towns of Kalay and Taze in the country's north. In both places, at least 11 people — possibly

**The death toll of 82 was a preliminary one compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which issues daily counts of casualties and arrests from the crackdown in the aftermath of the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi**

including some bystanders — were reported killed.

The security forces were accused of using heavy weapons in their attacks, including rocket-propelled grenades and mortars, though such allegations could not be independently confirmed by The Associated Press. Photos posted on social media from Bago appeared to show fragments of mortar shells.

Most protests in cities and town around the country are carried out by nonviolent

demonstrators who consider themselves part of a civil disobedience movement.

But as the police and military escalated the use of lethal force, a hardcore faction of protesters armed themselves with homemade weapons such as firebombs in the name of self-defense. In Kalay, activists dubbed themselves a "civil army" and some equipped themselves with rudimentary hunting rifles that are traditional in the remote area.

A report by Myanmar Now said residents of Tamu, a town in the same region as Kalay, used hunting rifles Saturday to ambush a military convoy, and claimed to kill three soldiers.

The junta has taken other measures as well to discourage resistance. It recently published a wanted list of 140 people active in the arts and journalism charged with spreading information that undermines the stability of the country and the rule of law. The penalty for the offense is up to three years' imprisonment. Arrests of those on the list have been highly publicised in state media.

# ‘Suspicious’ blackout strikes Iran’s Natanz nuclear site



This satellite photo from Planet Labs Inc. shows Iran's Natanz nuclear facility

**Dubai:** Iran's underground Natanz nuclear facility lost power Sunday just hours after starting up new advanced centrifuges capable of enriching uranium faster, the latest incident to strike the site amid negotiations over the tattered atomic accord with world powers.

As Iranian officials investigated the outage, many Israeli media outlets offered the similar assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges. While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

If Israel caused the blackout, it further heightens the tensions between the two nations already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East.

It also complicates efforts by the US, Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it couldn't pursue a nuclear

nuclear program spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi told Iranian state television.

"We still do not know the reason for this electricity outage and have to look into it further," Kamalvandi said. "Fortunately, there was no casualty or damage and there is no particular contamination or problem."

Asked by the state TV correspondent if it was a "technical defect or sabotage," Kamalvandi declined to comment. Malek Shariati Niasar, a Tehran-based lawmaker who serves as spokesman for the Iranian parliament's energy committee, wrote on Twitter that the incident was "very suspicious," raising concerns about possible "sabotage and infiltration." He said lawmakers were pursuing details of the incident as well. **AP**

# Iran calls blackout ‘nuclear terrorism’

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran on Sunday described a blackout at its underground Natanz atomic facility an act of "nuclear terrorism," raising regional tensions.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, stopped short of directly blaming anyone for the incident. Details remained few about what happened early Sunday morning at the facility, which initially was described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding the site.

Many Israeli media outlets offered the same assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges. While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

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"To thwart the goals of this terrorist movement, the Islamic Republic of Iran will

continue to seriously improve nuclear technology on the one hand and to lift oppressive sanctions on the other hand," Salehi said, according to state TV.

He added: "While condemning this desperate move, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasises the need for a confrontation by the international bodies and the (International Atomic Energy Agency) against this nuclear terrorism."

Sunday's developments also complicate efforts by the U.S., Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it can't pursue a nuclear weapon. As news of the blackout emerged, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin landed Sunday in Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz.

Power at Natanz was cut across the facility, which is comprised of above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls, civilian nuclear programme spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi earlier told Iranian state TV.

## GLOBE TROTTER

**EX-B'DESH PM KHALEDA TESTS COVID POSITIVE**  
**Dhaka:** Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tested positive for Covid-19 on Sunday, a year after she was released from jail temporarily amidst the pandemic, according to media reports.

**RESCUERS FIND 4 DEAD FROM VESSEL IN ATLANTIC**  
**Madrid:** Spanish authorities said on Sunday that they had recovered the bodies of four migrants from a boat along with 19 survivors who had taken the treacherous route from West Africa to the Canary Islands. Spain's maritime rescue service said that its crews had responded to an alarm call by a fishing boat that had located the migrants in a flimsy craft unfit for the high seas.

**ECUADOR, PERU HEAD TO POLLS UNDER COVID NORMS**  
**Lima, Peru:** Ecuador and Peru choose new presidents Sunday under strict public health measures prompted by the coronavirus pandemic, which has recently strengthened in the neighboring South American nations. Ecuadoreans face a runoff between a conservative businessman and a protégé of former leftist President Rafael Correa, while Peruvians have 18 options to pick from in the first round.

**IRAN REPORTS HIGHEST DAILY DEATH TOLL OF 2021**  
**Tehran:** Iran on Sunday reported its highest single-day death toll from Covid-19 this year, bringing the country's total deaths in the pandemic to nearly 64,500, state TV reported. The report said 258 new deaths were recorded in 24 hours. Iran's deadliest day of the pandemic was in mid-Nov, when over 480 deaths were tallied.

**20 HURT AS CHARIOT FALLS IN NEPAL**  
**Kathmandu:** Twenty people have sustained injuries after a chariot fell and clashes erupted during a religious festival in Nepal's Bhaktapur. 'Bisket jatra', a chariot-pulling festival, started in Bhaktapur municipality, 16 km east of Kathmandu, on Saturday morning. Soon after the festival was declared open a chariot fell and clashes erupted.

# UK: Shops, pubs gear up for easing of lockdown

**London:** Non-essential retail shops, including shopping malls, pubs and restaurants and hairdressers are among the businesses gearing up to reopen their doors to customers from Monday, when England enters its next stage of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions being eased.

Indoor gyms, swimming pools, libraries, zoos and nail salons are also among the establishments now allowed to reopen, with pubs and restaurants required to strictly follow outdoor dining rules.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson had declared that he would be among the first people to order a pint of beer in a beer garden when the rules are relaxed. **AP**

# Trump: The key to Republican success is more Trumpism

AP ■ PALM BEACH

Staking his claim to the Republican Party, former President Donald Trump is casting his populist policies and attack-dog politics as the key to future GOP success.

In a closed-door speech Saturday night to donors at his Mar-a-Lago resort, Trump also reinforced his commitment to the party, according to prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

His appearance came as Republican officials are trying to play down an internal feud over Trump's role in the party, his commitment to GOP fundraising and his plans for 2024.

While Trump's advisers report he will emphasize party unity, he rarely sticks to script.

"The key to this triumphant future will be to build on the gains our amazing movement has made over the past four years," Trump told hundreds of leading Republican donors, according to the prepared remarks.

"Under our leadership, we welcomed millions upon millions of new voters into the Republican coalition. We transformed the Republican Party into a party that truly fights for all Americans."

It was the final address of the Republican National Committee's weekend donor summit in Palm Beach. Most of the RNC's invitation-only gathering was held at a luxury hotel a few miles away; attendees were bused to Trump's club for his remarks.

# Jordanian prince makes first public appearance since arrest

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Jordan's Prince Hamzah on Sunday made his first public appearance since he was placed under house arrest last week, attending a ceremony with King Abdullah II in what appeared to be an attempted show of unity on a major Jordanian holiday.

But it remained unclear whether the king and his popular half brother had put aside the differences that escalated last week into the most serious public rift in the ruling family in decades. Hamzah joined members of the Jordanian royal family marking the centenary of the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan, a British protectorate that preceded the kingdom.

The royal palace released a photo and video with Abdullah, Hamzah, Crown Prince Hussein and other dignitaries at the grave of King Talal in Amman, Jordan's capital.



This photo from the Royal Court twitter account, shows Jordan's King Abdullah II, centre, Prince Hamzah bin Al Hussein, second left, and others during a visit to the tomb of the late King Hussein, in Amman Jordan on Sunday **AP**

It was the first time that Hamzah was seen in public since he was placed under a form of house arrest on April 3 following accusations that he was involved in a "malicious plot" to destabilise the kingdom.

In statements leaked to the media, Hamzah denied the accusations and accused the country's government of corruption and incompetence.

Abdullah subsequently said authorities had thwarted an attempt at sedition involving his half brother and some 18 suspects, while saying he was angry and in shock. Abdullah also suggested there was continued control over Hamzah's movements, saying the prince was "with his family at his palace, under my care."

# Prince's death a 'huge void' for Queen: Andrew

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has described the death of her husband of 73 years, Prince Philip, as having left a "huge void in her life", their son Prince Andrew said on Sunday.

As he left a memorial service for his late father, the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away aged 99 on Friday, Prince Andrew said his passing was a "terrible loss" and the family was grateful for all the messages of support and condolence.

"It's a great loss. We've lost almost the grandfather of the nation," Prince Andrew, also the Duke of York, told reporters.

"I feel very sorry and supportive of my mother, who's feeling it more than everybody else. The Queen, as you would expect, is an incredibly stoic person and she described his passing as a miracle, and she's contemplating. She



Britain's Prince Edward, Sophie Countess of Wessex and their daughter Lady Louise Windsor, attend the Sunday service at the Royal Chapel of All Saints at Royal Lodge, Windsor, in England on Sunday **AP**

described it as having left a huge void in her life. We as a family are rallying around to support her," he said, on being asked about his mother's emotions.

About his late father, he added: "He was a remarkable man. I loved him as a father. He was always somebody you could go to and he would always listen."

# Religious leaders recall Philip's spiritual curiosity

AP ■ LONDON

Churches in Britain held services Sunday to remember Prince Philip as people of many religions reflected on a man whose gruff exterior hid a strong personal faith and deep curiosity about others' beliefs.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby led a service of remembrance at Canterbury Cathedral in southeast England for the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, who died Friday at the age of 99.

Welby, who is set to preside at Philip's funeral on Saturday at Windsor Castle, led prayers for Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, and contemplated "a very long life, remarkably led."

# OVER 2,000 YEARS ON Sanskrit remains popular in China: Chinese Professor

PTI ■ BEIJING

Sanskrit studies are flourishing in China, over 2,000 years after the ancient Indian language was brought to this country along with Buddhism, making a profound impact on Chinese monarchs and scholars over the centuries, according to a distinguished professor here.

Wang Bangwei, a well-known Chinese scholar in Sanskrit and Director of Sino-Indian Buddhist Studies, Institute of Oriental and Indian Studies at the Peking University, said Sanskrit which is the root of Indian culture continues to remain popular in China, contrary to its modest progress in modern India.

Wang said the Peking University is one of the oldest in China and this year marks

the completion of 100 years of teaching Sanskrit at the leading varsity. Wang credited 4th Century AD Indian scholar Kumarajiva for spreading Sanskrit in China.

Kumarajiva was instrumental in translating Buddhist sutras into Chinese language during his stay in China over 2,000 years ago, earning the royal title of "National Teacher of China". He was the first among numerous scholars who laid a firm foundation for civilisational links between the two countries.

Kumarajiva, hailing from a Kashmiri Brahmin family from the then Kucha Kingdom, spent about 23 years in China in the 4th century AD both as a prisoner and as a most revered scholar.

Sanskrit, its associated culture and its development was

kept alive by numerous Chinese scholars, like Fa Xian and Xuan Zang and others, who visited India, Wang said, while launching the Sanskrit learning application "Little Guru" of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, (ICCR) at the Indian Embassy here on Friday, along with Indian Ambassador, Vikram Misri.

Sanskrit teaching programme started at the Peking University a century ago but Sanskrit research and teaching in China has a history of over 2,000 years, Wang said.

When Buddhism came to China from India, Chinese Buddhist monks started translating Indian texts into Chinese.

From that moment, Sanskrit study and research started. China has a long history of Sanskrit tradition, till that time outside of India,

China has the longest and strongest scholarship in the world," he said. Over 100 Chinese scholars studied in Nalanda University until it began to decline in 11th Century, Wang said.

"Sanskrit is a major language of Indian culture. More and more people in China are interested in Indian culture and Sanskrit is a good way to learn more about Indian culture," he said.

He said Sanskrit was the most important language through which Chinese learned about Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Indian medicine, astronomy and mathematics.

"While Buddhism declined in India, it became very strong in China and has become part of Chinese culture," he told **PTI**. Once the language became strong in China, the need to go to India

to learn it declined, he said.

"China gradually became centre of Buddhism in Asia. In India, Buddhism has declined and in China it grew," he said, adding that thanks to numerous scholars who visited India over the centuries, China has some rare Sanskrit scriptures brought by them, which may not be available in India.

Y.E. Shaoyong, Associate Prof of Sanskrit in Peking University, said the Sanskrit studies in China are booming. His department now has 10 scholars specialising in the language while 200 others studied as part of the subject for their graduate programme.

The job prospects of the Sanskrit learning students are also good as most of them pursue academic career in Buddhist studies, specially its history, he said.

# US-Philippines officials discuss concerns over China's ships

AP ■ ABOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday discussed with his Philippine counterpart China's recent positioning of "militia vessels" near the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Austin spoke by phone with Philippine Secretary of National Defence Delfin Lorenzana while Austin was flying from Washington to Israel to begin an international trip.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Austin and Lorenzana discussed the situation in the South China Sea and the recent massing of Chinese vessels at Whitsun Reef, which has drawn criticism from Manila.











# EDUCATION: A POWERFUL WEAPON

While there are schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* that aim to educate girls but continuous awareness and persistent effort are needed to enable them to benefit at the ground level, says RAMA SHARMA

There are several powerful women, who have shattered the patriarchal norms and have shown the rest of the world what women can do if they have equal rights. Chhavi Rajawat is one such name that has done exactly that and more. India's first woman sarpanch with an MBA degree, Chhavi was the sarpanch of her village Soda in Malpura block, Tonk district in Rajasthan. She had left her lucrative corporate job to serve as a sarpanch. Her ardour to work for the community has not just touched lives but has led the way for several girls and women who have set their hearts on serving the community.

One such life that Chhavi has inspired is that of 25-year-old Radha Rajawat. A resident of Lalwari village in Niwai block of Tonk district in Rajasthan, Radha has not only educated herself but made a huge difference in the lives of girls in and around her village by fighting for their rights to education. Her journey, however, has been a tough one. She had to put up a fight against her parents first and then, against the entire Rajput community of her village to reach where she is today.

"Initially, we were against her idea of pursuing education after Class 8th as that would have meant sending her outside the village," shared her parents who had to eventually give up in front of their daughter's perseverance. Their support was faced by the opposition not just from their extended families but from the Rajput community as well. The pressure forced Radha's parents to withdraw their support, but Radha was adamant. She put up a brave fight against everyone, worked as a laborer, and managed to complete Class 12 with a good score of 70 per cent.

Radha's journey had started while she was still in Class 8th. Under the Sakshar Bharat Mission — a centrally sponsored nationwide literacy scheme of



the Indian Department for School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Radha was selected as a child reporter. This provided her a platform to raise issues concerning her village and panchayat through newspapers. Slowly, she started mobilising the villagers.

In 2013, she led the girls and women from the panchayat to address the issue of corruption. "Led by Radha, the group submitted a memorandum not only to the District Collector but also to the Chief Minister requesting solution the challenge of negligence and corruption at the panchayat level," informed

Poonam Rajawat, a member of Kishori Manch — an adolescent group run by a local non-profit organisation in the region.

One of the most important transformations that Radha brought to this panchayat was setting up a school till Class 12. Her persistent efforts to address the concerns of thousands of girls who had to give up education due to lack of a higher secondary school in their village led to this impact. The girls of the village, now, do not have to compromise on their dreams of completing school education.

Not just for girls, she soon started working towards the

education of the entire village. "In 2014, as a panchayat motivator, she took the initiative to educate 1,800 illiterate people of the village and encouraged them to sit for the examinations," said Panchayat Assistant, Hemraj Singh.

Shashi Kanwar, who was tutored by Radha, shared that there wasn't a single educated woman in the village. "It is a result of her hard work and efforts of the other adolescent girls associated with her that today, nearly 70 per cent of women in the village are literate." As far as the education of adolescent girls is concerned,

prior to 2013, only 30 per cent of girls in Lalwari panchayat were educated, while today, more than 80 per cent are linked with mainstream education. Not only this, 30 to 40 per cent of the girls are stepping out of the village boundary to pursue their dream of higher education.

"Overwhelmed by Radha's zeal to work for the better future of her community, she was requested by the girls, women and other responsible people of the village to contest the panchayat elections," said Maina Rana, a colleague of Radha's. She obliged their

request and contested the election but couldn't win. She, however, continued to support the winner, Devalal Gurjar, who is also her colleague, to serve the community with sincerity.

Babulal Sharma, a local teacher, said, "Radha has tried to raise social issues, problems and challenges not only at the panchayat level but also at the district and state level from time to time. It is the result of her dedication towards the society that she had the opportunity to meet the former Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari. Taking note of her confidence and her ability to lead the youth, local political groups had also offered her to join them. Radha, a true social worker, showed her will to rise above politics and work for all the sections of society.

Her life, however, is not only occupied with social responsibilities but is equally dedicated to her family. "I am a cancer patient. Radha, as responsible as she is, has taken the entire charge into her hands. Along with pursuing further education, she is working in a private firm. Currently, I am receiving free treatment with the help of Dr Prahlad Dhakad, a Senior Doctor working in Jaipuria Hospital. It is because of her that I am able to get this free treatment. I was completely against her education but now I realise my mistake and understood the importance of girls' education," said Radha's father.

Her struggle and passion for social awareness is an outstanding example of women's empowerment. While there are schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* that aim to educate girls but continuous awareness and persistent effort are needed to enable them to benefit at the ground level. For women to become self-reliant and courageous, they should have equal right and opportunities to educate themselves.

—Charkha Features



## LEARN AND UNLEARN

One should give up self-conceit and accept changes if one wants to do better in life, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

There is hardly any human being in the world who is not inclined to improve himself/herself. Of course, some aspire for improvement in their relationship with whom they have to live and work, whereas others work for improvement in their economic status. Some want to improve or enhance their personality, whereas others are more concerned about their spiritual progress. In any case, the will to make some progress is basic to all normal beings and the efforts to improve are a sign of life. And, the volition, under-lying all efforts of man to bring about improvement is mainly one's aspiration to be happier. If one ponders over this question of attainment of true happiness, one would come to the conclusion that man's happiness ultimately depends upon his behaviour or his reaction to the external stimuli and his ways of thinking which, in turn, depends upon his inner urges, his tendencies and the training he had. So, in order to have any other kind of improvement, man has to bring about improvement in his outlook, habits, mannerism and ways. For this, he has to pick up and learn certain things and unlearn others. If man's process of learning (or unlearning wrong things) stops and his effort to put into practice what he has learned already ceases or his capacity and will to make efforts are exhausted, his improvement and progress also come to a halt.

Not many are aware of the fact that the path to progress is paved with some obstacles which are mostly of man's own making. One of these is man's pride and arrogance about his own knowledge. It is easy to teach him who has no pride in his own intelligence. But he who regards himself as perfectly wise would say to others, "There is nothing that I do not know." It is difficult to offer correction to such a man, for he assumes air in such a manner that people would stutter in his presence; he loses temper no sooner than anyone would start informing him on any subject. So, if one wants to improve and, for that purpose, is inclined to accept some changes, one should give up self-conceit because it precludes the possibility of learning good things of life and unlearning wrong things.

Another major hurdle in man's path to progress is his attachment to worldly objects, his lust for sensual pleasures, his sense of deep involvement, and his attachment to his body. Little does man realise that, at this fag-end of iron age, when a man has lost his morals, the worldly things are devoid of their original essence. One who wants spiritual improvement should know that the present unrighteous world has no substance. Is the bark of a sugar cane worth anything when the juice has been squeezed out of it? So has the world lost all its sap and truth because it has become debased. This body of ours is assailed by several different diseases and is made of debased matter. So one who aspires for self-improvement should push out attachment to objects of senses or thirst for these, with only one determined effort, as, otherwise, it would mean that one has lost or is losing one's precious life over a mere trifle.

Knowing all this, one should get rid of body consciousness. The first step for this is to withdraw one's attachment from 'religions' of the body, which rob one's life of its essence, and to devote one's mind and body and possessions towards the welfare of the world. This will bring in man qualities such as service, dedication, sacrifice, meekness, fellow-feeling, tolerance, and hundred-and-one other noble traits of high character. It will quicken his efforts for self-improvement.



Whether working from home or office, toiling away for long hours without breaks and physical activity can begin to damage your body, vitality and even without tell-tale signs.

"It is important to achieve a healthy work-life balance in order to live a fulfilled life. But there are moments in life when you have to finish certain deadlines and cannot avoid spending a lot of time on your desk," says Beenu Rajpoot, noted filmmaker and a Fit India Champion.

The fitness expert has these suggestions for those busy hours that will not only nourish your body and mind, but also increase overall productivity:

Between emails, meetings and calls, try to take a stroll even for a few minutes to reset your body and brain. A little bit of movement during those long sitting hours will go a long way to ensure that your body and joints do not become too stiff by sitting.

Check your breath during intervals. Take a few long breaths engaging your abdominals to ensure that your body is getting enough oxygen. Learn some *Pranayama* techniques to recreate yourself quickly so that you can maintain a constant energy level throughout the long span of desk sitting.

Remember to do a few neck and shoulder stretches while on your desk to avoid neck pain or back pain later. It will also help in keeping your posture upright. Add useful stretches from your yoga class to these intervals.

Choose the appropriate ergonomic chair and table in order to maintain a good posture while sitting for long hours. Some of the important factors

## Working long hours can damage your vitality even without tell-tale signs

to be considered are — shape of the chair, its height, height of the table, lumbar support in the chair, among others. Ensure that your chair has some kind of lumbar support. Lumbar support will protect your lumbar spine from pressures of excessive flexion during long sitting hours. It is also important to choose a chair where you can adjust the height of the chair so that you can adjust its height vis-a-vis your table. It will be good for your mid-upper back and shoulders. Often people who ignore this advice can develop health conditions like scoliosis and rounded shoulders.

Keep drinking water during a long shift. It's quite common that people under pressure keep suppressing their thirst subconsciously that makes them dehydrated. Remember to keep sipping the water every hour or so to keep your body rich in fluids that will improve the circulation and will keep your blood pressure in check, apart from many other benefits of drinking water.

Decorate your space nicely and keep it clean, organised and minimal. Avoid too much clutter around in your space. Too much physical clutter affects



the states of your mind, too. Practice the yogic principle of *Aparigraha* or minimalism to keep your space, physical as well as mental, free.

Ensure that you are getting some sun during the day. It will not only enrich your Vitamin D levels but also give a big

boost to your immune system. It is very common among the big cities in India that people don't get enough Vitamin D as they are not exposed to the sunlight often. Lack of exposure to the sunlight leads to Vitamin D deficiency that is often linked to other health issues.

Gives your eyes some rest in between after every half an hour or so by doing a simple yoga technique of palming. Rub your palms together and just cover your eyes with your warm palms. Your eyes will feel energised immediately.

—JANS

“

Invest in your dreams. Grind now. Shine later.

—Unknown

”

### TREATING SLEEP APNEA MAY REDUCE DEMENTIA

Older adults who received positive airway pressure therapy prescribed for obstructive sleep apnea may be less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia, new research suggests.

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a condition in which the upper airway collapses repeatedly throughout the night, preventing normal breathing during sleep.

OSA is associated with a variety of other neurological and cardiovascular conditions, and many older adults are at high risk for OSA.

"We found a significant association between positive airway pressure use and lower risk of Alzheimer's and other types of dementia over three years, suggesting that positive airway pressure may be protective against dementia risk in people with OSA," said lead author Galit Levi Dunietsz, Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan.

### CHILDHOOD DIET LINKED TO LESS ANXIETY LATER

Exercise and a healthy diet in childhood leads to adults with bigger brains and lower levels of anxiety, a new study suggests.

The mouse-model study determined that early-life exercise generally reduced anxious behaviors in adults. It also led to an increase in adult muscle and brain mass.

"During the COVID-19 lockdowns, particularly in the early months, kids got very little exercise. For many without access to a park or a backyard, school was their only source of physical activity," said researcher Marcell Gadney from the University of California - Riverside. "It is important we find solutions for these kids, possibly including extra attention as they grow into adults," Cadney added.

The researchers determined that early-life exercise generally reduced anxious behaviours in adults. It also led to an increase in adult muscle and brain mass. When fed "Western" style diets high in fat and sugar, the mice not only became fatter, but also grew into adults that preferred unhealthy foods.

### OBESITY LINKED TO HEAVY PERIODS

Ladies, here is one more reason to reduce your body weight. Obesity is linked to greater menstrual blood loss, which may result from increased inflammation in the womb lining, delaying its repair, according to a study conducted both on women and mice.

The study, led by researchers from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, UK, found a weak but statistically significant association between increasing body mass index (BMI) — the deadliest type of blood cancer in adults and children.

In the mouse study, the team found that after shedding their womb lining, the mice on a high-fat diet showed delayed repair of the remaining womb lining in comparison to mice on a normal diet.

Further examination of womb tissue from the mice indicated that inflammatory factors were also higher in mice with greater body weight. The findings are detailed in the Journal of Endocrinology.

### 'JUMPING' GENES CAN PREVENT BLOOD CANCER

US scientists have found that transposons, also known as jumping genes, can protect against certain blood cancers and help develop new therapeutic targets.

Transposons are DNA sequences that can move, or jump, from one location in the genome to another when activated. These "jumping" genes are a source of genetic mutations responsible for a number of human diseases.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Genetics, can help predict how patients will respond to cancer therapies and find new therapeutic targets for acute myeloid leukemia (AML) — the deadliest type of blood cancer in adults and children.

"Our initial finding was a surprise because it's been long thought that activated transposons promote cancer development by generating genetic mutations. We found it was the opposite for blood cancers, and that decreased L1 activity was associated with worse clinical outcomes and therapy resistance in patients," said Jian Xu, Associate Professor in the CRI.

### NEW DRUG CAN STOP TUMOURS FROM GROWING

US researchers have found that an oral drug can be effective in stopping tumours from growing. The team from the University of Colorado Cancer Center found that slowing down NLRP3 can reduce inflammation and curb tumour growth and progression.

"NLRP3 is a member of a larger family that is involved in sensing danger signals," said Carlo Marchetti, from the varsity's School of Medicine.

It is a receptor that surveils the intercellular compartment of a cell, looking for danger molecules or pathogens.

"When NLRP3 recognises these signals, it leads to the activation of caspase-1, a protein involved in the processing and maturation of interleukin-1-beta into its biological active form, causing an intense inflammatory response. We found that in melanoma, this process is dysregulated, resulting in tumour growth," Marchetti said.







Picture credits: IPLT20.com

His strokes on the off-side —

However, the run-flow was affected when ever-reliable Rashid got the ball in his hands. He also

Mohammed Nabi (2/32) got rid of Rana and Eoin Morgan (2) off successive balls in the 18th

# SUMMER SLAM



Picture credits: IPLT20.com

Picture credits: @rajasthanroyals

"Inexperience can probably work for you and it could mean that opposition hasn't seen you either. Fast bowling in IPL is not an easy task and we saw that yes-

"...That really helps the skipper Sanju a lot on the field where people are thinking themselves as to what's going on (match situation), and it also builds a lot of trust within the unit," he added.