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INDIA IS VERY
MUCH A DEMOCRACY

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RETURN HOME

BHUBANESWAR, TUESDAY MAY 18, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹4



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Caseload 4-week low, India turns the corner

Nation sees lowest Covid count in 25

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's Covid-19 caseload saw a major dip on Monday hitting a four-week low as Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh recorded major decline in number of cases and overall situation looked promising for the first time in months.

On Monday, India recorded 2,42,903 cases and 3,707 deaths which is the lowest single-day count since April 19 when the country recorded 2.57 lakh cases in 24 hours.

Of course, the Monday number also reflects the impact of lower testing at the weekend, but the fact that positive rate is beginning to count down gives an undeniable impression that India may have peaked out and now there will be a painful process of plateauing.

Even on Sunday, the daily cases dropped below the 3-lakh mark — 2,81,386 to be precise — for the first time in nearly a month. This was the lowest count in 25 days. On May 12, India recorded 4,205 fresh Covid deaths, while on May 7, the country had

recorded its highest ever cases of 4,14,188. In a substantial drop in both Covid-19 fatalities and infections in Maharashtra on Monday, the cases dropped to 26,616, while the daily deaths came down to 516 on Monday, in what came as a big relief to the State authorities.

A day after Maharashtra logged a staggering 974 and 34,389 new cases, the situation in the State improved as the infections dropped by 7,773 cases, while daily deaths came down by a substantial 458.



Health workers attend Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at Shehnai Banquet Hall isolation centre, in New Delhi, on Monday PTI

Lockdown, measures pay dividends in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The timely lockdown and proactive public health measures taken by the Delhi Government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have helped the city in bringing down the total number of Covid-19 cases to 4,524 in a day on Monday.

The positivity rate is also going down steadily during past few days. At 8.42 per cent, the positivity rate is the lowest

since April 9 when it stood at 7.8 per cent. According to the health bulletin released by the Government on Monday, Delhi reported 4,524 new Covid-19 cases, lowest since April 5, and 340 fatalities on Monday.

The national Capital conducted 53,756 tests, including 41,849 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests on Sunday.

A total of 10,918 people recovered from the infection during the period, the health bulletin said.

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,52,07,982 (+2,42,903)
DEATHS:	2,78,121 (+3,707)
RECOVERED:	2,15,58,262 (+3,90,516)
ACTIVE:	33,61,320
MAHA:	54,05,068 (+26,616)
K'TAKA:	22,42,065 (+38,603)
KERALA:	21,69,370 (+21,402)
UP:	16,28,990 (+9,345)
DELHI:	13,98,391 (+4,524)

Desi game-changing drug launched

Oral drug 2-DG developed by DRDO to hit shelves from June

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seen as a game-changer in the battle against deadly coronavirus, the first indigenously developed oral drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose drug (2DG drug), which is said to help in faster recovery of virus-infected patients while reducing dependence on supplemental oxygen, was launched here on Monday.

The drug is likely to be made available in all medical settings in the country from June.

The first batch of the drug, developed by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), was released by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan at an event at the DRDO headquarters here.

The first batch will be used in a limited manner in Central Government medical settings like AIIMS, Armed Forces Hospitals, DRDO hospitals and any other places where the need arises. The deliberations are on to decide on the price, in case it is to be sold in the open market, even as States like Haryana have shown interest to purchase

the medicine. In his brief remarks during its launch, the Union Defence Minister said the drug developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of DRDO, has brought a new ray of hope for the treat-

ment of Covid-19 patients. "This is a great example of the scientific prowess of our country," he said.

DRDO chairman Dr G Sathesh Reddy said the drug will work on all variants doing round in the country.

Many oral drugs to blunt virus attack likely by year-end

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After grappling with the coronavirus for more than a year, a number of oral drugs are being tested across world to treat Covid-19 patients. Many of these formulations are currently in mid stage clinical trials, and, if successful, could be ready by end of the year.

The list includes Molnupiravir, Baricitinib, colchicine, Bamlanivimab (LY-CoV555), Chloroquine phosphate, Bemcentinib, Fingolimod, metformin, Nafamostat, Famotidine and Umifenovir combination, zuclopenthixol, Kevzara (sarilumab), and nebulol.

Pfizer is working on one oral drug to treat Covid-19 at the first sign of illness. It is expected by the end of the year. The drug is part of a class of medicines called protease inhibitors and works by inhibiting an enzyme that the virus needs to replicate in human cells.

Scientists from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the US and the University of Plymouth in the UK found that MK-4482, also called Molnupiravir, was effective when provided up to 12 hours before or 12 hours after infection with SARS-CoV-2, that causes Covid-19. This could be a potential oral drug to treat Covid-19. This is being developed by German company Merck with Ridgeback Biotherapeutics.



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Health Minister Harsh Vardhan releases the first batch of anti-Covid drug 2DG, developed by DRDO, in New Delhi, on Monday PTI

The story behind 2-DG development

DRDO scientists began working on it in April last year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The DRDO got into the act to develop 2-DG drug way back in April last year when the pandemic hit India. The oral drug is result of more than a year of trial and testing.

Project Director Dr Sudhir Chandana told mediapersons during laboratory tests that his scientists found the drug was effective in blocking spread of Covid-19 inside the body cells.

"Spurred by these critical findings, we asked the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for permission to conduct clinical trials," Chandana said.

The DRDO got the go-ahead for the trials in May. The phase two trials were concluded in October last year and final trials in November.

Dr Anand Narayan Bhatt, another scientist associated with this path-breaking project said the rigorous trials took nearly a year before the DCGI approved emergency

use of the drug last week.

The INMAS-DRDO scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad.

Giving details about the trials, Bhatt said a substantial number of patients were part of the phase three trials. The tests showed many patients were able to "come out of oxygen (support)", he added.

On availability of the drug, officials said the hospitals across the country will start getting it by June. At pre-



sent, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi and Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) have access to it.

Veterans and serving personnel undergoing treatment for corona at the military hospital in Delhi and for that matter all over the country will be administered the drug as per the doctor's advice, officials said.

RSS outfit starts campaign for patent-free rights for vax, drugs

DEEPAK K UPTETI ■ NEW DELHI

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), an RSS outfit, on Monday asked the Government to use the public health safeguards in the Patents Act to grant licence to more pharmaceutical companies for the production of Covid vaccines and medicines. The country may require 200 crore vaccine doses in the next six months.

The SJM has started a "Digital Signature Campaign" for Universal Access of Vaccine and Medicines. According to sources, though the Centre is working towards giving licence to more companies, the "pharma lobby" may be the pushing against this move.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, National Co-Convener of the SJM Aswini Mahajan, said, "We are trying to identify Indian firms with competence We have the competence, we sell medicines to 200 countries."

Mahajan said in 1990 during the TRIPS negotiations, India presented its side that in the eventuality of a pandemic, the Government has competence to cancel patents. He said in 2009, Indian company NATCO had manufactured cancer drugs bringing its price down by thousand times.

Tauktae threatens Covid spread

Crowded relief centres pose grave danger

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extremely severe cyclone Tauktae has diverted the attention and resources of Covid-19-affected districts across Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Diu and Tamil Nadu, which are already facing shortage of medical supplies from oxygen cylinders to vaccines.

As several lakh people have been shifted to relief shelters, there is a greater risk of virus transmission in crowded evacuation shelters. The situation is likely to worsen if any long-term disruption is caused by the cyclone.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Tauktae is close to the Gujarat coast. "The land-fall process has started and will continue during next two hours," the IMD said.

These States are on high alert with transport services suspended and emergency and relief teams on the lookout for possible rescue operations. Tauktae has killed at least 14 people and left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal States of Kerala,



An uprooted tree collapsed on a house due to Cyclone Tauktae at Nerul on Monday PTI

Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra.

Virus lockdown measures, meanwhile, could slow relief work after the storm, and damage from the storm such as uprooted electricity poles, disruption in power supplies may

further delay the fight against the Covid-19 in affected States.

In Gujarat, vaccination was suspended for two days and authorities worked to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people to temporary relief shelters. According to authorities,

the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has moved at least 600 patients from Covid centres to Government hospitals. While 243 patients were shifted from BKC facility, 176 were removed from Mulund and 184 from Dahisar centre.

TMC workers go berserk after Narada arrests, bail calms nerves

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Pandemic-stricken Bengal had a sigh of relief after the day-long high-voltage political drama that started with the arrest of four senior politicians — two Ministers, an MLA and a former Minister — by the CBI ended with all four getting bail from a designated CBI court late on Monday evening.

Senior Ministers Subroto Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, MLA Madan Mitra and former TMC leader and Minister Sovan Chatterjee were granted bail on personal bonds of ₹50,000 each in the much-hyped Narada payoff case.

Soon after the TMC leadership promptly said, "Yet another egg on BJP's face after the humiliating defeat in the Assembly elections."

State reports 10,757 new Covid cases

HIGHEST 973 IN CUTTACK

22 MORE DIE; TOTAL TOLL NOW 2,335

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State on Monday reported 10,757 new Covid-19 cases in the 30 districts and the State pool, with which the total positives' tally increased to 6,22,981. Besides, as many as 22 persons succumbed to the virus in State on day, thereby surging the total death toll to 2,335.

The casualties included two patients from Angul district, three each from Khordha (Bhubaneswar), Boudh, Koraput, Nuapada, Rayagada and Sundargarh and one each from Gajapati and Puri. Of

new positive cases, 6,024 were reported from various quarantine centres while remaining 4,733 were detected during contact tracing. Cuttack district reported the day's maximum 973 cases followed by Khordha with 909, Sundargarh 832, Angul 606, Balangir 505, Nuapada 502, Sambalpur 494, Mayurbhanj 454, Bhadrak 443, Bargarh 404, Jharsuguda 388, Nabarangpur 384, Puri 350, Jajpur 281, Subarnapur 245, Nayagarh 227, Kendrapada 148, Rayagada 136, Boudh 133, Deogarh 102 and Kandhamal 87. Besides, 200 cases were reported from State pool. Currently, State has 1,06,061 active cases and cumulative samples tested were 1,09,4,119.

864 new +ve in BBSR

But 936 more recover

BHUBANESWAR: State capital city Bhubaneswar on Monday registered 864 new positive cases, with which its total positives' tally rose to 62,498. Out of the new cases, 730 were local contacts and 134 were quarantine cases. The local cases included 35 from Old Town, 31 from Khandagiri, 27 from Nayapali, 23 from Chandrasekharpur and 14 from Mancheswar.

Currently, the active cases in the city stood at 12,021. However, 936 persons recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 50,160. Till now, 296 persons have succumbed to the disease in the city. **PNS**

CM announces at all-party meeting

ASHAS TO MAKE DOORSTEP COVID SURVEY

SARAPANCHS ASKED TO USE COLLECTOR POWER

WIDOWS TO GET MADHU PENSION

ORPHANED CHILDREN TO BE PROVIDED FREE EUD

TASKFORCE TO OVERSEE OXYGEN SUPPLY

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while addressing an all-party meeting here through videoconferencing, announced that for three months from May 24 ASHA Workers would make a door-

to-door survey of the symptoms of Covid-19 and other problematic diseases. For this, the ASHA Workers would get incentives. Patnaik also made the following announcements:

Each Gaon Kalyan Samiti (Village Welfare Committee) would be involved in the Covid control programme, for which they would be rewarded.

Sarpanchs can use power of district Collectors and take decisions about declaration of lockdowns and setting up of TMCs. The Government would provide Rs 10,000 to each Gaon Kalyan Samiti to manage Covid-related tasks.

The widows of the Covid deceased would be included in the Madhubabu Pension Yojana and the children who lost their parents would be provided free education. A task-



force would be formed to oversee the supply of oxygen and a master plan would be prepared for the purpose.

The Chief Minister underlined the need for a united front against the second wave of the pandemic and appealed to political parties to come forward to respond to the crisis. The all-party meeting was

chaired by State Legislative Assembly Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro. The Chief Minister said that in the fight against Covid doctors and paramedical workers have a pivotal role; that's why to strengthen the this workforce the Government has recruited 786 doctors and 5137 paramedical workers.

90% dists in Red Zone; Covid surge in villages a concern

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In what could indicate the alarming Covid-19 situation in the State, 90 per cent of the total 30 districts have active cases of over 1,000 and have been categorised as Red Zones.

As per the information available on the State Dashboard, out of the 27 Red Zone districts, Khordha has the highest 15,529 active cases followed by Sundargarh (9,999) and Cuttack (8,926). The three remaining districts Gajapati, Kandhamal and Malkangiri are under Yellow Zone with

902,894 and 813 active cases, respectively. The major concern is that the infection rate is increasing in rural areas of the State. In the month of May, 57% of the total cases recorded in the State were from rural areas as against 51% in April. Commenting on this, Public Health Director Niranjana Mishra said the rate of infection in rural areas is slightly more than that of urban areas.

The Health Department has its focus on these areas. Collectors and Chief District Medical Officers (CDMOs) are monitoring the situation regu-

larly. Training is being imparted to ASHA and Anganwadi Workers, who are the major workforce to handle the situation in these areas. They have been asked to keep a check on the Covid situation at the village level, said Mishra. Health expert Dr Niroj Mishra said the main problem faced by villagers is lack of testing facilities. Mostly, Rapid Antigen Tests are being conducted in the rural areas and the positivity rate is 42% to 50%, which indicates that the rate of infection is increasing in villages. The villagers should be educated



through NGOs and Sarpanches to tackle this situation, he added. Meanwhile, BJP Kalahandi MP Basanta Panda on Monday demanded setting

up of temporary health centres and quarantine facilities at the gram panchayat (GP) level for the migrant workers returning to the State.

Covid claims music composer Amarendra

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Veteran Odia music composer and director Amarendra Mohanty, who was infected with Covid-19, succumbed to the virus at around 8 am on Monday. He was 63.

Mohanty, a resident of Cuttack city, had been admitted to the SUM Covid Hospital after testing positive for the virus. Mohanty, who lent his voice for several Odia Bhajans, had worked as music composer in many super-hit movies like Stree, Rama



Laxman, Vasudha, Bhai Hela Bhagari, Suna Panjuri and Kandhei Akhire Luha. He shot to fame after he composed the music for 'Puchuki Gali Fashion Bali' sung by Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam in the movie 'Suna Panjuri'.

Condolences for Mohanty started pouring in from different quarters, including the Bollywood fraternity. Governor Prof Ganesh Lal and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid condolences to his bereaved family.

Patnaik said the marks Mohanty has left in hymns and film industries through his unique style of music composition would always remain memorable. Congress leader and Cuttack MLA Mohammed Moquim also mourned Mohanty's demise.

In three days

45 Dongria Kondhs, Bondas test Covid+ve

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As many as 45 members of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in the State have been infected with Covid-19 in the last three days. Official sources said 21 PVTG members had contracted the virus till May 14 whereas 24 more (10 Bondas and 14 Dongria Kondhs) were found positive for the virus on Sunday.

A total of 19 Dongria Kondh tribals of four villages, Phakeri, Buduni, Tebapada and Nirgundi, including the Parsali Sarpanch, contracted the virus till Sunday. The primitive tribals live in the Niyamgiri Hills on the border of Rayagada and Koraput districts.

Over 3,000 Dongrias live in 36 villages under Kalyansinghpur block of Rayagada district. They sell their produce in daily vegetable markets (haats) to eke out a living which is suspected to have caused the transmission of the virus. In



Malkangiri district, 12 members of the Bonda tribe have so far tested positive for Covid-19 in the second wave of the pandemic. Of the 12, eight belong to Andrahil panchayat and remaining four are of Mudulipada panchayat. Some of them have already recovered while others are under isolation. The virus had not spread in the community in the first wave of the pandemic.

The areas have been declared as containment zones and the health conditions of the patients are being monitored by Rapid Response

Teams, said an official. Many people of the tribal community depend on the nearby market at Anakadil in Andhra Pradesh. It is suspected that they got infected from there. Bonda is one of the ancient tribes and the community is divided into two groups, the Lower Bonda and the Upper Bonda.

While Lower Bondas live on the foothills of Bonda hills, the Upper ones, mostly untouched by the modern civilisation, live in the hill range in Khairapat block of Malkangiri district.

Admn forgets Kendrapada nonagenarian freedom fighter

Yet to provide him a pucca house, Covid vaccine

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Nonagenarian freedom fighter, Bimbardhar Muduli, a resident of Alabanka under Derabish block, stays neglected these days. Muduli has been staying in a ramshackle thatched house with his family members, amid abject poverty.

Except getting freedom fighter pension, the Gandhian is yet to get any other Government sponsored benefits. Alleged Pradip Das, a legal practitioner-cum-social activist. The district administration has failed to reach near him to enrol his name to get a pucca house under various housing schemes and provide him sops under other Government sponsored schemes, alleged locals. To his irony, though the State Government has been giving priority to senior citizens for providing Covid-19 vaccine, but

Muduli is yet to get the benefit. When the matter came to the notice of some intellectuals, they rushed to the house of the freedom fighter and provided Muduli with masks and sanitiz-

er. They assured him to bring the matter to the notice of the district administration for providing Covid 19 vaccine to him immediately and a pucca house to his family.



Govt fixes max ambulance hiring charges

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Transport Department on Monday fixed maximum hiring charges for Patient Transport Ambulance (PTA), Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance and Advance Life Support (ALS) ambulance operating across the State. Below are the hiring charges for various types of ambulances (for first 10 km):

Column (A) relating to PT ambulances: Rs 30 per additional km exceeding 10 km.

Column (B) relating to BLS ambulances: Rs 50 per additional km exceeding 10 km.

Column (C) relating to ALS ambulances: Rs 50 per additional km exceeding 10



km. The proposed maximum rates include oxygen, ambulance equipment, PPE kit, gloves, mask, face shield, sanitisation, driver, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), where required.

However, for administration of any medication (injectable/oral) including oxygen onboard, the additional cost is to be charged as per actual. The hiring charges shall be revised from time to time based on changes in fuel prices in the State.

Adequate facilities for Covid-hit in rural areas sought

Lok Shakti Abhiyan writes to CM Patnaik

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday, Lok Shakti Abhiyan president Prafulla Samantara demanded immediate steps to restart facilities that had been arranged for Covid-affected people in rural areas during the last year through quarantine centres along with provisions of food for poor households, treatment of suspected patients and providing protection kits to volunteers who take the risk of lifting dead bodies.

Samantara mentioned that the Government should make each gram panchayat office a unit of Covid care centre under the leadership of Sarpanch with provision of necessary budget. As many such patients being treated in home quarantine are unable to feed the family because they are the earning members of the family, the Government should provide food to these households.

He said that in most of

houses there is no separate room suitable for quarantine and most of family members are unable to keep physical distance. That's why the infection multiplies. So, the Government should make schools and community halls as Covid care centres with food and medicine facilities.

Smanatara appealed to the Chief Minister to provide protection kits and other necessary equipments for volunteers lifting dead bodies, arrangement for more testing facilities. The Government can convert universities' research laboratories as testing centres. Special arrangement should be made for admission and treatment of non-Covid patients because of non-availability of sufficient health infrastructures and both Government and private hospitals lack beds, ICUs, ventilators and face staff crunch. Some private hospitals are exploiting patients.

"I think the Government is being elated about international and national media praises for its Covid management rather than concentrating attention on the ground realities," he observed.

BBP protests Govt nod to online liquor sale

Move will boost drinking, crimes

KRISHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAPUR

Bharatiya Bikash Parishad State president Surendra Panigrahi on Monday registered strong protest against the State Government's move to sell liquor online and delivery of the same door-to-door.

Addressing media persons through video conferencing, Panigrahi alleged that with pandemic impacting sales, the traders now have reinvented new sales models with the support of the Government, which will further push liquor consumption in the State.

Those who drink liquor, their immunity power goes weak and they fall prey to corona easily. Knowing the consequences, how the Government has taken such an anti-people decision to allow the sale of liquor online, more particularly at the crucial hours of ongoing pan-

demic, he asked. In the WHO global awareness programme and as per the opinions of healthcare scientists, the chance of survival of corona infected patients with habit of consuming liquor is remote.

Such online sale and home delivery of liquors will be more dangerous and would greatly impact the villagers, women, and house wives in particular. On the other hand, this would give rise to antisocial activities, Panigrahi said.

Targeting CM Naveen Patnaik, Panigrahi further alleged that the CM was indirectly encouraging people of the State to consume liquor. "The State Government considered revenue generation is more important than the precious human lives; otherwise such a risky decision would not have been taken," he charged.

The Parishad demanded that strict orders be issued prohibiting the sale and consumption of liquor and other drugs during the pandemic and more particularly during the ongoing lockdown and shutdown.

Jajpur ASHA Worker succumbs to Covid

PNS ■ JAJPUR

An ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) Worker of Jajpur district succumbed to coronavirus on Sunday night in a private hospital in Cuttack.

The 50-year-old Mamata Rout, ASHA Worker at Nilapada village Community Health Centre (CHC) of Bari, had been admitted to the Covid Hospital in Cuttack on May 11 after she began experiencing breathing difficulties and developed cough and fever. She was put on a ventilator after her oxygen level started dipping.



However, she died. She is survived by her husband and a son and a daughter. Mamata was working for more than two

decades as an ASHA Worker. She was believed to have contracted the virus from some persons while doing door-to-door health surveys in the villages. The District ASHA Workers' Association has demanded adequate compensation to the family of the deceased.

Notably, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had last year announced an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh for family members of deceased Covid warriors, including healthcare personnel, ASHA and Anganwadi Workers and police personnel.

TMC leaders' arrest denounced

BHUBANESWAR: National convenor of Netaji Subhas Birth Soil Yatra Debiprasad Prusti, a strong supporter of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, condemned the CBI arrest of TMC leaders, including 2 Cabinet Ministers on Monday. The CBI is misused by Central Government for political vendetta, Prusti alleged and stated that recent Bengal Assembly polls verdict was a clear proof of Bengal people rejecting PM Modi's appeal and reestablishing confidence in Didi. **PNS**

Art of Giving Day observed worldwide

No outdoor activity was organised to mark occasion

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

It is usually the family from where the sense of love, affection and sharing happiness to others originates. Actually, the love and affection disseminated by the mother becomes the stepping stone of encouragement for the children to give theirs later in their life. Based on this thought, the 8th Art of Giving (AOG) Day was celebrated across the world on



May 17, 2021. Founder of Art of Giving Dr Achyuta Samanta has picked 'My Mother-My Hero' as the theme of AOG for this year to spread the essence of loving others and sharing happiness among them unconditionally.

No outdoor activity was organised to mark the occasion. The fans and followers of AOG across the globe celebrated the Art of Giving Day enthusiastically by conveying gratitude to their mothers. Due to the enduring second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, requests had been made to one and all to pay gratitude to their mothers on this theme staying at home this year.

'Provide fiscal aid to deceased scribes' kin'

20 died in Odisha alone: ASMNI

BRAHMAPUR: Association of Small and Medium News Papers of India (ASMNI) State president Rabi Rath has made an appeal to both the State Government and the Center to provide fiscal assistance to the bereaved families of working journalists who succumbed to the Covid-19 during the ongoing pandemic. Quoting a recent survey report of the Institution

of the Perception Studies, New Delhi and other organisations, Rath said that, as many as 173 working journalists have lost their lives due to Covid-19 in the current year in India.

The death toll of working journalist in Odisha alone stands at 20. Rath urged to provide job, accommodation, in addition to ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh immediately to kin of the deceased. This would be a great tribute and recognition to the journalistic fraternity, Rath pointed out. **PNS**

Judicial probe in Dinabandhu suicide sought

Let accused, including SU VC, go on leave: Civil society

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

A virtual meeting of the civil society members was held here on Sunday to elicit opinions about the course of action to be taken to seek justice for deceased employee of S a m b a l p u r

University, Dinabandhu Mishra, who set himself ablaze on April 20. At the beginning, the convenor of the meeting, former MP and president of All India University Employees' Confederation (AIUEC) Bhabani Shankar Hota outlined the agenda for discussion where former VC of Berhampur University and a former teacher of SU Prof Aditya Prasad Padhi presided.

The participants of the virtual meeting, all renowned and reputed in their own fields, urged the Governor of Odisha cum Chancellor of universities to direct the three accused

persons including Vice-Chancellor Sanjiv Mittal to proceed on leave till the end of an inquiry into the shocking incident. "This will ensure a smooth inquiry, besides delivering justice and ensuring truth, righteousness and goodness to prevail," the civil society members remarked.

The participants urged upon the Chancellor to constitute an inquiry committee to be headed by either a retired judge of High Court or by an officer in Chief Secretary rank. The participants unanimously appealed to Chief Minister to order an investigation into self

immolation incident. In spite of dying statement of Dinabandhu Mishra in presence of a Magistrate, doctors, nurses and others, the police are yet to do anything to nab the culprits who are still continuing in their posts and influencing the witnesses in their favour, they speakers said.

Needless to mention that there is not only great discontentment among the employees but also among various sections of the society here over suicide of Mishra who was not only a creative writer but also a great crusader against corruption in university system.

Covid cases keep surging in Keonjhar

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

The number of Covid cases is on the rise in Keonjhar district. There are now 1,561 active cases under treatment.

The Health Department reported 208 new cases on Monday out of 1,395 tested samples.

The spread of the pandemic in rural areas has created concern for the district administration. According to official statistics, out of a total 13,748 Covid cases detected in

the district, 12,141 patients have recovered and 46 deaths have occurred till date. As per sources, although the virus is spreading fast in rural areas, villagers have mostly preferred to stay home and take medicines and avoid any testing in hospitals.

An oxygen plant has been set up in the Ranki Covid Hospital campus and a dedicated ambulance with life support facilities has been made available from District Mineral Fund for use of patients.

Cured of Covid, woman dies in car mishap

Daughter also killed while taking mom home

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Family members of 45-year-old Bijli Bhoi of Tikilipada in the Hemgiri area of Sundargarh district had been



related to know about her recovery from Covid-19. Little did

they know that a car accident would kill the woman and her

daughter a day later. According to reports, the woman was admitted to a private hospital in Sambalpur after she tested positive for the virus. On May 15, the hospital authorities informed her family members about her recovery and told them to take her home.

The woman's son Vikash (23) and daughter Ravina (20) reached Sambalpur the next day in a car. While all of them were returning in the vehicle, tragedy struck as the car, which was being driven by Vikash, rammed into a stationary truck from rear at around 2.10 pm near Sasan Bypass.

Police rescued the victims from the damaged car and rushed them to the VIMSAR in Burla, where the woman and her daughter were declared brought dead. Her son was undergoing treatment at the hospital. The tragic incident has shattered the family while a pall of gloom descended on the village.

Doorstep jab drive launched in R'kela

PNS ■ ROURKELA

A doorstep-Covid-19 vaccination drive for elderly persons was launched by the Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) on Monday. The service is being provided only to the elderly persons who are bedridden and differently-abled persons

in the city. Such citizens need to dial 06612510036 between 10 am and 4 pm for registration, informed the Rourkela ADM.

The requirement shall be verified by doctors while the service would be provided as per schedule and division of area, official added. Sanjeevani Rath vehicles are

being used for doorstep Covid-19 vaccination. Notably, Berhampur Municipal Corporation has also launched a 'Vaccination at Doorstep' initiative to administer Covid vaccines to elderly persons who are above 70 years of age and those who are not able to walk or are bedridden.

Strict police patrolling demanded in Jeypore

As many shoppers violate lockdown rules

PNS ■ JEYPORE

Koraput's active Covid cases continue to remain above 1,500 due to a steady surge in fresh infections, despite a healthy recovery rate.

The single day Covid tally in the district rose by 289 in last 24 hours, while the total death climbed to 22 with no death over the same period. Jeypore reported maximum of 62 positive

cases, while 222 patients recovered in the district in last 24 hours taking the total recovered to 9,550. While Corona graph is increasing in urban areas, a few shopkeepers, gym owners and cafe owners are playing hide and seek with the police patrolling team.

As police vehicle pass by their area with siren, the shopkeepers pull their shutters and stay inside shops. But once vehicle leaves place, they immediately open and continue their transactions. So, common people have demanded that police enforce strict patrolling in and around Jeypore.

Freedom fighter Dhal dies at 102

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Veteran freedom fighter Ananta Charan Dhal died at the age of 102 in his residence at village Arangabad under Bari block in Jaipur district on Sunday night.

He was suffering from old age-related ailments for last two years. Dhal had played a lead role in launching anti-British movement 'Quit India' in August 1942. He was imprisoned in Brahmapur jail for two years from 1942 to 1944. He

also worked with eminent freedom fighters Malati Choudhury, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Harekrishna Mahtab, Rama Devi, Saraswati Devi and others during freedom movement. Former Union Minister Srikant Jena, former State Finance Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadai, former Bari MLA Debashis Nayak and present Bari MLA Sunanda Das have condoled Dhal's death.

5 of truck lifters' gang held in Barbil

PNS ■ CHAMPUA

The Barbil police on Monday nabbed members of a hywa truck lifters gang and court forwarded five accused in this connection. One TK Bedian, driver of hywa truck No.

OD- 14C- 8244, after unloading iron ore, had parked the vehicle at Barbil and gone to a nearby hotel for dinner. At around 12.30 am, when he returned to his truck, 4-5 unknown persons swooped down on him with deadly weapons and forced

him to drive the truck towards Barbil jungle. At an isolated place, the miscreants snatched the mobile and Rs 7,000 from Bedian before fleeing with the vehicle and leaving the driver behind.

However, after Vijay Kumar Jain, a resident of the theft vehicle lodged a written complaint in the Barbil police station, the police swung into action and a team led by Barbil PS IIC Sushanta Kumar Dash raided at different places and finally caught hold of the miscreants. The arrestees were

identified as Mina (35) alias Mahendra Mahakud, Raju Das (21), Rahul Mahanta (19),

Akash Karua (19) and Rohit Singh (21). All the accused are the natives of Barbil



Officials take 22% PC in Paikmal block

Probe sought in CC Road, school building works

PNS ■ BARGARH

Though Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has urged the officials not to receive PC from the development projects, the Paikmal block of Bargarh district has been taking 22 per cent PC on all developmental works within its jurisdiction.

In the year 2020-21, work orders worth Rs 3,50,000 were issued to Hirapur village under Kechodadar panchayat of Paikmal for making a concrete road of a school and repairing of the school's building from CFC funds in the name of GP's Executive Officer. But the work was done by two Ward Members, namely, Bishambar Patra and Madhusudan Pradhan, of Hirapur village.

After completion of work, they received Rs 2,50,000 and rest money Rs 77,000 was kept by officials for PC of BDO, AE, JE, and others, which is 22% of the allocated cost. In this connection, Patra and Pradhan have filed a written complaint with BDO. Meanwhile, the locals have demanded a vigilance probe in case and action against culprits.

CUO students hold virtual industrial tour

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A virtual industrial tour was organised by the Department of Business Management of the Central University of Orissa (CUO) on Thursday on the topic "A peep into the working of an aviation industry in India."

Prof P Durgaprasad, Visiting Professor, Department of Sociology, Prof Sharat Kumar Palita, Dean, School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources and Dr Ram Shankar, Controller of



Examinations delivered their valuable remarks about the industrial tour. The programme was conducted by

Ashish Roy, Academic consultant, CUO. Vice-Chancellor

Prof I Ramabrahmam conveyed his best wishes for a successful programme. The opening remark was given by Prof P Durgaprasad where he emphasised on the importance of strategic management to determine the vision and goal of an organisation.

Prof Sharat Kumar Palita encouraged all by saying that strategic management is important in all the spheres of life and Dr Ram Shankar put his words forward by reflecting on how work and the place of work are important for all and an industrial

tour plays an important role in the curriculum. Ashish Kumar Roy motivated the budding managers to take challenges as an opportunity during the adverse conditions through his presentation and videos.

The presentation gave an insight about the history of aviation industry, importance of business strategy, importance of decision making and role of statistics and analytics for future job market. It was followed by an interesting discussion session.

Amid Covid scare

B'pur MLA Panda cremates unattended bodies

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Brahmapur MLA Bikram Kumar Panda is being praised by people from cross sections of the society for his noble work of cremating unattended bodies of Covid victims.

On Sunday, Panda along with his group of volunteers cremated the body of an unmarried woman which her family members and relatives had deserted suspecting Covid infection. The woman Sandhyarani Patnaik was



undergoing treatment at the MKCG Medical College Hospital for her burn injuries caused during lighting diyas in a temple. She succumbed to burn injuries on Sunday morning, but nobody from her family

came to take the body in fear of Covid infection. Being informed by volunteers, Panda arranged postmortem and cremated the body as per the protocol.

"I am doing all this as a responsible citizen and at the inspiration of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik being part of 'Odisha Mo Parivar'," said Panda. A few days back, Panda had cremated bodies of two men as they were not accepted by their family members in fear of Covid infection.

Fire damages PPT MCHP unit

PARADIP: A massive fire broke out at Mechanical Coal Handling Plant (MCHP) in premises of the Paradip Port Trust (PPT) prohibited area on Saturday evening. After being informed, the CISF fire brigade team of PPT immediately reached spot and brought inferno under control after more than an hour.

It was suspected that an electric short circuit might have caused fire from welding work inside. An investigation has been started into incident.

According to sources, some machines and boom conveyer belt were damaged in incident. **PNS**

Jspur records highest single-day surge 330 Covid cases, 2 deaths reported on Sunday

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The Jagatsinghpur district on Sunday recorded 330 fresh positive cases of Covid-19, the highest single day surge since the outbreak of the pandemic. The total tally of the district has increased to 13,290 while two deaths were reported in the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) isolation centre, according to data shared by the DIPRO, Jagatsinghpur. The

highest of 77 positive cases were reported from Paradip port town on Sunday followed by Kujanga (59), Jagatsinghpur block (54), Balikuda (18), Biridi (10), Erasama (5), Nagaon (32), Tirtol (34), Raghunathpur (27) and Jagatsinghpur Municipality (14).

The increasing rate of Coronavirus cases in last two days has left doctors and medical experts baffled, with some suspecting that the virus has been spreading mainly in rural areas. As the virus has mutated and assumed so many different strains, it can cause havoc sooner than later if Covid 19 protocols are not strictly implemented in rural

regions, they stated. They also opined for inoculation of the young and old on an urgent basis, sources informed. Meanwhile, of the two deaths reported in the DHH isolation centres, one is a 63 years old man from Nagaon area and the other is a 50 years old from Haladia village here.

The Jagatsinghpur municipality cremated the bodies in the designated Covid 19 crematorium ground in College Chhak here on Saturday. Meanwhile, 130 patients recovered on the day, increasing the total recoveries to 11,384. The total number of active cases in the district was 1,865, while so far 41 people have succumbed.

Covid crisis

WHO's 'Together For India' drive to stand by nation



ABASH PARIDA

No one is safe until everyone is safe. This concern is from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the entire world, particularly India. The second wave of Covid-19 in India is catastrophic. Medical infrastructure is heavily burdened.

Healthcare facilities have been exhausted. Entire system in India is watching the Covid-related deaths like bystander. This helpless situation is conspicuous and it is because of our lack of Covid-19 mitigation

measures. In order to handle this terrible situation in India, the WHO has launched a campaign named as "Together For India" on May 11.

The aim of the campaign is to raise funds and use these funds to support India in its fight against Covid 19. These funds will be generated from donations and charity. Further, the WHO calls the current pandemic situation as a "perilous situation" on the global level.

The campaign has an action plan for India. It consists of a network of 2,600 technical officers working across 23 States in India. The World Health Organisation officials will closely work with the Central Government, State Governments, frontline partners and healthcare workers.

The agenda is to ensure some of the key issues of Covid 19 such as active case detection, real time monitoring, supply of healthcare measures and equitable access to testing kits, vaccine

and medical oxygen. Overall the noble intention of WHO is to create a solidarity response fund for India. The WHO is very serious about the Covid 19 variant found in India. It is to understand here that there is no variant named as Indian variant by WHO.

For WHO Covid variant found in India is a "Variant of Global Concern". It is because of its nature to spread easily and having a higher resistance to vaccine enable immunity. It is reported that in last 30 days Covid positive cases have grown from 4.2% to 18.4% in India. India has been struggling with this terrifying second wave of the Coronavirus.

Covid appropriate behaviour and suitable social behaviour during this pandemic are other concerns of WHO. Further this organisation seriously emphasizes that along with vaccination and upgraded healthcare facilities, India needs a reformed social behaviour. Covid appropriate behaviour

includes a three ply mask, regular hand washing, maintain social distancing and avoid large gatherings. It is true that India has adopted masking as a social vaccine. But it was also observed that social behaviour in the forms of religious congregations and election rallies in India had no safety protocols at the time of early Covid 19 second wave.

In the month of January, there was no restriction on large gatherings. Norms were relaxed and violated as well. It is also reported that Indian cities had more mobility. We ignored the warnings of health experts. The result is out for us now.

People are dying without oxygen, no beds in hospitals and no space in burial grounds. According to many sociologists, social behaviour is important for India now and it must be followed by social action. It means our action and behaviour should be beneficial to society at a large. Another

deviation in social behaviour is related to rural sanitation in India during Covid 19. It has attracted think tanks to unfold the myth of rural sanitation.

Rural sanitation is breaking and getting worse in this pandemic. Of course there is a substantial increase in the frequency of hand washing and cleaning toilets in urban areas.

In contrast, there is a four times increase in open defecation in India. People prefer garbage dumps and river banks to dispose of their faeces. These dumps contain a large number of used masks, PPE kits and wastes. Adding to this, community toilets in rural India are not being used because of fear of Covid infection.

It leads to construction of illegal toilets. These toilets are sources of disease. In a recent incident, more than 50 bodies were found floating down the Ganga river. It is suspected that these are the bodies of Covid-19 patients. So the vicious cycle of infection is on spree in

rural India targeting rural sanitation in India. Access to Covid vaccine, vaccination policy and vaccine distribution are the challenges faced by India now as remarked by WHO.

According to the latest report, 3.73 crore people are fully vaccinated and 13.6 crore people have received at least one dose of vaccine in India compared to 32.8 crore people fully vaccinated and 135 crore people receiving one dose of vaccine worldwide. In many countries half of the adult population are vaccinated. In India only 2.7% population is fully vaccinated.

It is also predicted that if India follows the current rate of Covid 19 vaccination it may take another 42 months to vaccinate its 70% of adult population. The major reason for this is the limited supply of vaccines. Vaccine manufacturers are in pressure to fill the vaccine targets set by the Central and State Governments. Many vaccination centres are closed

or running partially. People are in queue to get vaccine and in places like Nayagarh, Aadhar cards are in queue for the same. The State Government like Odisha has moved forward to handle this challenge by floating a global tender for Covid vaccines.

The challenge is to vaccinate a large part of population. Of course India is the fastest country to inculcate nearly 18 crore of population. But the target is very far.

Less supply of vaccine and improper distribution of Covid 19 vaccination will put the adult vaccination programme in jeopardy or may become chaotic. Deaths due to lack of Liquid Medical Oxygen in various States in India have raised the eyebrows of many international countries including WHO.

Our judiciary system remarked it as genocide. Now India is recovering from this trauma of shortage of oxygen. The issues of oxygen produc-

tion plants are being resolved with the help of national and international support. For the smooth transportation of oxygen tankers Oxygen express has been introduced. Oxygen enrichment unit has been established. The Disaster Management Act 2005 has been invoked by the Government of India for free movement of oxygen carrying vehicles.

Within these challenges, Odisha comes up as saviour to many States by providing medical oxygen. The international medical journal Lancet in its editorial "India's Covid-19 Emergency" praised Odisha. It further said that Odisha was better prepared during the second wave of Covid-19 and could produce enough medical oxygen to export to other States.

(Dr Parida is Assistant Professor, Sophitorium Group of Institutions, Khordha. Ph: 8456879522)

INBRIEF

RED CROSS MEMBERS MOURN FORMER EMPLOYEE'S DEATH

BHUBANESWAR:

Life members of the Indian Red Cross Society, Odisha State Branch mourned the untimely death of former employees of the branch Biranchi Kumar Patnaik. He was an affectionate and sincere employee, who had good understandings on Red Cross activities. Senior life members Dr Dwarika Nath Mohanty, Dilip Dashsharma, Prassana Rath and Ghanashyam Mallik expressed condolences over his demise and consoled his family members.



GIFT DISTRIBUTES FOOD TO HOMES IN BBSR

Bhubaneswar: The Glory of International Foundation Trust (GIFT) distributed food packets to the homeless near the Lingaraj Temple near the railway station and in various other places on Sunday. The programme was led by GIFT chairperson lawyer Sangeta Patnaik.



G'PATI: GROOM PENALISED ₹15 K FOR FLOUTING COVID NORM

Paralakhemundi: A fine of Rs 15,000 was slapped on a bridegroom, B Kuramukulu, at Tatipeti under the Gurundi police limits in Gajapati district as the marriage ceremony was being held in violation of the Covid guidelines on Sunday. A team led by BDO-cum-Law & Order Magistrate Kishore Chandra Das and Gurundi PS OIC Mamata Panda had conducted a raid on the wedding venue.

SABUJA BAHINI HOLDS BLOOD DONATION CAMP FOR COVID-HIT

Brahmapur: A blood donation camp was organised by social organisation Sabuja Bahini in association with the Brahmapur Blood Bank here on Sunday. The programme titled 'Asantu Gadhika Rakta Sampark' is an initiative to arrange bloods for Covid patients. A total of 11 units of blood were collected in the camp. The programme was coordinated by organisation president Sibaram Panigrahi.



KEONJHAR DIVISIONAL TRAFFIC INSPECTOR DIES OF COVID

Keonjhar: Pradeep Kumar Mohanty, who was working as Divisional Traffic Inspector at the Keonjhar railway station, died of Covid on Wednesday. He lived with his wife and two daughters. Mohanty was initially treated at his Keonjhar home after being diagnosed as Covid positive. He was then admitted to the SUM Ultimate hospital in Bhubaneswar as his condition became critical. His death has grieved his elderly parents, wife, two daughters, elder brother, relatives, friends and colleagues.



SUNABEDA MUNICIPAL COORDINATOR A GOOD SAMARITAN

Sunabeda: During these difficult times, a person who stands with people all along is Sunabeda municipal community coordinator Chittaranjan Sahu. He voluntarily took the task of providing food in slum areas, distributing pensions for elderly, undertaking waste management, delivery of medicines and helping homeless and beggars here.



ANDHRA YOUTH DROWNS IN MAHENDRATANAYA

Paralakhemundi: The Gurundi police here on Monday found a dead body of a youth from the Mahendratana river. Police registered a case and sent the body for postmortem to the DHH. The deceased was identified as B Balakrishna (18) belonging to Andhra Pradesh. He had come to Machumara village to attend a marriage function and drowned while bathing.

Bihar to track Covid +ve in homes with AI

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

With the situation likely to be precarious in Bihar due to the rural penetration of the Covid pandemic, the State has developed a first of its kind initiative in the country to track Covid positive cases under treatment at home.

The system called "Home Isolation Tracking (HIT) Covid" based on artificial intelligence will help the authorities track the every minute details of the corona patients and also would geo-fence the home or place where the positive cases are lodged.

The app-based system launched as a pilot project in five districts of Bihar will enable the administration to keep a track of the Covid positive cases and help in trend analysis in the districts which can enable that how much population was impacted and how much is home isolated.

"The App was designed and developed in a very rapid manner in a short span of time of five days by pulling up more resources by Bihar IT Department and Bihat Electronics Limited (Beltron) in coordination with the Health Department. The App is synced with the Data of Health department, so that the latest records are updated into the HIT COVID app. It also helped to reduce the time of data transferring between one process to another process," said Santosh Kumar Mall, Secretary, IT Department, Bihar. He is also the CMD of Beltron and Secretary Tourism.



The most important functionality of the app is to transfer the details of all critical patients to the nearest authority. The app is design in a modular way, so that all the authorities at various level are well informed and involved. For instance, a Block Do Administration unit can see the critical patients under their area as well as the District administration units can also see all the patients across the districts. Similarly, States can also drill down to the last patient, who is critical. Currently it has been made functional in the districts of Bhagalpur, Aurangabad, Gopalganj, Nalanda and Supaul.

"In the pilot mode under operation on Monday around 1000 people tracked in these five districts, 952 cases had normal SP02 level while 23 patients reported to have SPO2 oscillating between 90 to 94. A total of 12 Patients were found

to be critical there by escalating the alert right from block level to the State Health Department," explained an official in the IT Department.

The system will enable the state machinery to track different data a requisite in monitoring of the Covid situation like daily patients whose details are recorded; district wise numbers of home isolated person; a way forward; development of other functionality where a person can be tagged with the health facility in the district thus making it convenient to know the status of the vacant facilities health and medical units within the State.

For the rollout across the state, all the districts have been provided with a user kit that comprises of user manual, walkthrough of the App and other necessary details to make it user friendly for the stakeholders.

States on full alert to blunt Tauktae's devastating attack

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called-up Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Goa and Lieutenant Governor of Daman and Diu to discuss preparation and response to the Cylone Tauktae in the respective States.

Assuring all possible Central assistance to these states and the UT, Prime Minister said the National Disaster Response Forces (NDRF) teams are also active in relief and rescue operations.

Prime Minister spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Daman & Diu's LG Praful Patel over phone to know the preparation to counter cyclone Tauktae and minimise the damage to the life and property.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister had spoken to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on the State's preparedness to deal with the severe cyclone as heavy rainfall battered Mumbai City and 550 Covid-19 patients shifted to the safer camps. Mumbai airport has also been closed for operations till 8 pm.

Thackeray told the Prime Minister that the administration in the state is fully alert.

Prime Minister assured Chief Ministers and the Lt Governor of all the help from the Central Government in

dealing with the intensifying cyclone.

"Had a detailed telephonic discussion with Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi about Cyclone Tauktae. Briefed him about the situation and measures taken by the state government," Rupani tweeted adding the Prime Minister assured all assistance.

Rupani visited the State Emergency Operation Center in Gandhinagar and held a video review meeting with district collectors saying generator back-up has been organised for all Covid19 hospitals in case of power failure.

Modi spoke to Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant over phone to enquire about damage caused in the state by cyclone Tauktae. Two persons had died on Sunday in separate incidents caused due to gusty winds triggered by cyclone Tauktae, which also damaged around 100 houses and blocked some highways due to the falling of trees, the Chief Minister had earlier said.

Similarly, the Prime Minister also had a call with Puducherry LG of Daman and Diu and enquired preparedness of the union territory to face the cyclone along the coast and its hinterland.

On Saturday Modi had reviewed the preparedness to deal with the cyclone's fallout in a high-level meeting which was attended by several ministries and agencies concerned.

SC directs MP K Raju's medical examination at Army Hospital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered that the rebel YSR MP, KR Krishnam Raju, be medically examined at Army Hospital, Secunderabad. The rebel MP was arrested by Andhra Pradesh crime branch on Friday under sedition charges. The MP said that he was tortured in custody.

However the Bench of Justices Vinet Saran and BR Gavai did not grant bail to Raju, who had filed a petition to cancel the bail of Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy in corruption cases filed by CBI.

Meanwhile, Andhra based TV Channels TV5 and ABN news also moved the Supreme Court against the FIR registered against them by the state police for sedition and other charges after it telecasted "offending speeches" made by YSR rebel MP Krishnam Raju.

Raju who is at loggerheads with Chief Minister obtained Y category security from Delhi High Court. The YSR Congress has already approached Lok Sabha Speaker to terminate his membership of parliament for several violation of party whips.

Appearing for Raju, Advocate Mukul Rohatgi pleaded for ad interim bail and a medical examination of his client by a neutral or private hospital. The Court was informed that Raju had open heart surgery last year, which is why the magistrate ordered a medical check up by a government and a private hospital.

Advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for the Andhra Pradesh government, said that the matter be kept for Friday this week, as the State had not received a copy of the appeal.

Include oxygen audit in your daily efforts, Modi urges doctors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday told doctors that strategy of starting Covid vaccination with front-line warriors paid "rich dividends" in second wave of Covid-19 and urged them to include "oxygen audit" in their daily efforts.

Prime Minister interacted with a group of doctors from across the country, via video conferencing, to discuss the Covid related situation in the country, according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

Prime Minister thanked the entire medical fraternity & the paramedical staff for the "exemplary fight" displayed by them against the "extraordinary circumstances" of the second wave of Covid.

He said the entire country is indebted to them. Prime Minister noted that he is testing, supply of medicines or set-up of new infrastructure in record time, all these are being done at a fast pace.

Several challenges of oxygen production and supply are being overcome and steps taken by the country to augment human resources, like including MBBS students in Covid treatment, and ASHAs and Anganwadi workers in rural areas, provided extra support to the health system, said the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister underlined that the "strategy of starting vaccination programme with front line warriors has paid rich dividends in the second wave."

Modi said about 90% of the health professionals in the country have already taken

the first dose. Vaccines have ensured safety of most of the doctors.

Prime Minister requested doctors to include oxygen audit in their daily efforts.

Noting that a large number of patients are undergoing treatment in 'home isolation', he requested the doctors to ensure that the home based care of every patient is SOP driven.

He said that telemedicine has played a big role for patients in home isolation, and this service needs to be expanded in rural areas as well.

Prime Minister lauded the doctors who are forming teams and providing telemedicine service in villages.

He appealed to doctors across the states to form similar teams, train final year MBBS students and MBBS interns, and work towards ensuring that all the tehsils and districts of the country have telemedicine service.

Prime Minister also discussed the challenge of Mucormycosis and said that doctors may need to put in extra effort towards taking active steps and spreading awareness about it. He further underscored the importance of psychological care, along with the importance of physical care.

The meeting was attended by Member (Health) NITI Aayog, Health Secretary, Pharmaceutical Secretary and other officers from PMO, Ministries and Departments of Central Government.

During the interaction, the Doctors thanked the Prime Minister for his guidance and leadership during the recent surge of cases.

2DG works directly on cells infected with Covid: DRDO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From the next week of June as the production span of 2DG will be increased, the Government will be able to make it available to all hospitals and other medical facilities in the country.

"This is because the production time and the cycle of this is about a month. After approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) the industry is working really hard but it will take a month to reach the normal production capacity," explained the DRDO chief G Satheesh Reddy.

Talking about how the drug will work, Reddy said, "It works directly on the cells infected with Covid and gets absorbed in them. It then stops the virus from multiplying and moving to other healthy cells. It also works on the immune system of the patient so that the person can recover speedily."

The person needs to take the drug twice a day for around five to seven days. It also depends upon the person's weight and doctor's prescription, he added. The 2-DG drug comes in powder form in the

sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water. It accumulates in the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production. Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique.

During the first wave of the pandemic In April 2020, INMAS-DRDO scientists had started conducting laboratory experiments with the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits viral growth.

Based on these results, the DCGI gave nod to Phase-II clinical trials of 2-DG in Covid-19 patients in May 2020. In Phase-II trials (including dose ranging) conducted during May-October 2020, the drug was found to be safe in Covid-19 patients and showed significant improvement in their recovery.

Phase-II was conducted in six hospitals and Phase IIb (dose ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country. Phase-II trial was conducted on 110 patients.

Armed forces join rescue operation against Tauktae

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Cyclone Tauktae gathers momentum, the Armed forces have got their act together by deploying more than 40 aircraft and helicopters, four warships and 2,000 soldiers comprising 180 teams and nine engineer task forces of the Army. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the preparedness here on Monday besides taking stock of the ongoing operations in the fight against Covid pandemic.

Giving details of the naval readiness, officials said here the navy has deployed three of its frontline warships after receiving messages to rescue over 400 people onboard two barges off the Mumbai coast in view of cyclone Tauktae.

The ships deployed to extend assistance to the two barges are INS Kolkata, INS Kochi and INS Talwar, Navy officials said.

"On receipt of a request for assistance for a barge 'P305' adrift off Heera oil fields in Bombay high area with 273 personnel onboard, INS Kochi was swiftly sailed with a despatch for search and rescue assistance," Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said. The INS



Talwar has also been deployed for the search and rescue operation, he said.

"In response to another SOS received from barge 'GAL Constructor' with 137 people onboard about 8NM from Mumbai, INS Kolkata has been sailed with despatch to render assistance," Commander Madhwal said.

He said several other ships and aircraft have also been readied for HARD (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) operations in the wake of cyclone Tauktae.

As regards the army deployment, officials said 180 teams and nine engineer task forces are on standby to face

any contingency as Cyclone Tauktae is likely to hit the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

"Sector commanders and Divisional HQ (headquarter) are in touch with District Collectors and the Revenue Commissioner who is the nodal agency for relief activities in Gujarat," the Army said in a statement.

The Army said it has identified likely areas — talukas as well as districts — where the impact could be higher and it has geared up its columns to react immediately.

"Focus is to save lives, speedy clearance of routes to ensure movement of oxygen

and standby arrangements at Covid hospitals," it mentioned.

The Army is continuously monitoring the situation for likely intensity, maximum impact areas and anticipated relief effort in coordination with civil administration, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and other agencies.

Ten integrated teams are poised to be employed for aid to the civil administration of Diu. Moreover, ten teams have already been positioned in the Junagadh area while others are ready to move on short notice of the state administration after analysis of situation as it builds up.

"GOC (General Officer Commanding) of the Army Division located at Ahmedabad attended a coordination meeting chaired by the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat and has assured all support," the Army noted.

At this meeting, it was discussed that all efforts should be made to open the roads at the earliest as Gujarat is a critical supplier of oxygen from its ports to outside state destinations.

The Army said it is providing assistance in creating power back up and making preparations for other contingencies at Covid Hospitals in the affected region including Dhanvantri Covid Hospital in Ahmedabad.

Fewer cases of vein blood clots in India after taking Covishield: Study



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A large study in Denmark and Norway may have found slightly increased rates of vein blood clots, including in the brain, among adults who had received their first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, in India there have been 'miniscule' such cases, to be precise 26 serious and severe events following inoculation of the jab being manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII) as Covishield.

However, no clotting case has been reported post Covaxin shot, said the panel on AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) which submitted its report to the Union Health Ministry on Monday. Covaxin is developed by Bharat Biotech.

The statement on the report shared with the media had no mention of it there was any fatal case due to the AEFI.

"The number of bleeding and clotting events following a Covid vaccine injection, of which 26 out of 498 serious and severe events are "miniscule" and "in line with the expected number of diagnoses while no clotting case has been reported post Covaxin shot," said the panel. Covaxin is developed by Bharat Biotech.

The panel said that Covishield AEFI reported fewer than 0.61 cases per million doses administered. "It is far below the four cases per million doses reported by the United Kingdom's health regulator, and the 10 cases per million doses reported by Germany."

As of April 3, 2021, at least 75,435,381 vaccine doses had been administered of which 68,650,819 doses were of Covishield while 6,784,562 jabs of Covaxin. Of these, 65,944,106 were first doses and 9,491,275 second doses.

Thromboembolic is the formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and be carried by the blood stream to plug another vessel.

"It is important to know that thromboembolic events keep occurring in the general population... background and

SUSPECTED THROMBOEMBOLIC SYMPTOMS

Breathlessness; pain in chest; Pain in limbs/pain on pressing limbs or swelling in limbs (arm or calf); multiple, pinhead size red spots or bruising of skin in an area beyond the injection site; persistent abdominal pain with or without vomiting; seizures in the absence of previous history of migraine or chronic headache; weakness/paralysis of limbs or any particular side or part of the body (including face); persistent vomiting without any obvious reason; blurred vision or pain in eyes or having double vision and change in mental status or having confusion or depressed level of consciousness.

scientific literature suggests this risk is almost 70 per cent less in persons of South and South East Asian descent in comparison to those from European descent," the panel said. Nevertheless, the Ministry has advised people to be aware of suspected thromboembolic events. (See Box)

Since the Covid-19 vaccination drive was initiated i.e. from January 16 more than 23,000 adverse events have been reported from 684 of the 753 districts of the country. Of these, only 498 cases were reported to be serious and severe in nature, said the panel.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, senior hematologist, cautioned that vaccine-induced thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) is real. We need to be cognizant of sign and symptoms and one should take proactive steps for early diagnosis and treatment of this entity which could be life threatening.

The researchers from University of Southern Denmark, and Norwegian Institute of Public Health, had from February 2021 through to 11 March 2021 studied 280,000 people aged 18-65 who received first dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca jab to compare rates of blood clots and related conditions with those in the general populations of the two countries. However, the study published in The BMJ had stressed that the risk of such adverse events is considered low.

Raging cyclone disrupts medical treatment in Covid-hit districts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extremely severe cyclone Tauktae has diverted the attention and resources of Covid-19-affected districts across Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Diu and Tamil Nadu, which are already facing shortage of medical supplies from oxygen cylinders to vaccines. As lakhs of people have been shifted to relief shelters, there is a greater risk of virus transmission in crowded evacuation shelters. The situation is likely to worsen if any long-term disruption is caused by the cyclone.

The weather department seems to be clueless as Cyclone Tauktae intensified from a very severe to an extremely severe cyclonic storm rapidly on Monday morning.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has earlier issued a bulletin saying that a cyclonic storm would intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm

and cross the Gujarat coast on May 18 (Tuesday) early morning.

The rapid intensification happened in the early hours of Monday, said the IMD, which had earlier not predicted that Tauktae will intensify into an extremely severe cyclonic storm.

Officials said that Tauktae has been intensifying very rapidly. From a depression formed in the southeast Arabian Sea on May 14 morning, it strengthened into a VSCS by the early hours of May 16. Compared to Tauktae's 2 days, Cyclone Yayu had taken 36 hours to become a VSCS, while Cyclone Mekanu (4 days) and Cyclone Nisarga (5 days) had developed slower.

These states are on high vigil with transport services suspended and emergency and relief teams on the lookout for possible rescue operations. Tauktae has killed at least 14 people and left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and

Maharashtra.

Virus lockdown measures, meanwhile, could slow relief work after the storm, and damage from the storm such as uprooted electricity poles, disruption in power supplies may further delay the fights against the Covid-19 in affected states. In Gujarat, vaccinations were suspended for two days and authorities worked to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people to temporary relief shelters.

According to authorities, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has moved at least 600 patients from Covid centres to government hospitals. While 243 patients were shifted from BKC facility, 176 were removed from Mulund and 184 from Dahisar centre.

In Gujarat, in the Khambhalia Civil Hospital of Devbhumi-Dwarka district, where 120 Covid-19 patients are on oxygen support, authorities have installed two extra diesel generator sets to deal with power outage.

Arthritis to anti-malaria pills all part of Covid-19 oral drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From arthritis pills to anti-malaria formulations all are part of the oral drug being developed in several parts of the world as a potential cure for covid-19.

Of a range of oral drug undergoing phase 3 trial, Baricitinib studies are in progress to determine the effectiveness of a Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor called baricitinib (marketed under the brand name Olumiant for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis) as a potential silver bullet for Covid-19 patients.

Drug firm Eli Lilly on Monday said it has signed a voluntary licensing agreement with Natco Pharma to further expedite the availability of Baricitinib for Covid-19 patients in India.

Fingolimod, an approved drug (marketed under the brand name Gilenya for the treatment of relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis) is being studied as a treatment

for Covid-19 at the First Affiliated Hospital of Fujian Medical University in Fuzhou, China.

Bamlanivimab was designed to block the SARS-CoV-2 virus from entering and infecting human cells. Research on Bamlanivimab is still ongoing, including using it in combination with other treatments.

In a small study commissioned by the French government, 20 patients with Covid-19 were treated with a combination of the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine and the macrolide antibacterial drug azithromycin (Zithromax). Results showed that all patients taking the combination were virologically cured within 6 days of treatment.

Besides, Monoclonal antibodies (MABs), Bamlanivimab (LY-CoV555), Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab, Casirivimab and imdevimab (REGN-COV2), Kinase inhibitors, Kaletra

COVID-19

Cases have come down in Kerala: CM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Monday that the total lockdown has started yielding results as the number of new COVID-19 cases has come down in the last 24 hours. "Though we tested 86,505 samples on Monday, there were only 21,402 people who tested positive. Similarly, there were only 85 deaths in the State," said Vijayan in his daily Press briefing at Thiruvananthapuram.

Vijayan also disclosed that Kerala saw on Monday 99,651 persons getting cured of Covid-19 on a single day. He said that the Test Positivity Rate too has come down on Monday and attributed it to the total lock down which was well received by the Government.

He said that while the State had logged 37,144 new patients on an average during May 1 to 8, the figure came down after May 9 to 35, 919. "The results are encouraging and we are con-

fident that this achievement could be sustained," he said.

But Vijayan said that there were some instances of hike in the number of cases in certain districts. "There is a discernible reduction in the transmission of the pandemic and this is an encouraging result," he said. The Test Positivity Rate has come down to 24.74 per cent, said the chief minister.

The Chief Minister continued to express his displeasure over the "indifference" of the Centre towards the State. He said there were 80 health workers out of the 21, 402 persons who tested positive on Monday.

A nurse who tested positive was thrown out of the Huda Trust Hospital in Alappuzha district and the police have started a probe into the incident. The Chief Minister also disclosed that the total number of patients undergoing treatment in the State for Covid-19 has come down to 3.62 lakh.

TN logs 33,075 new patients, 335 deaths

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

While neighbouring Kerala has succeeded in bringing down the COVID-19 cases considerably, the number of people getting diagnosed with the infection is increasing on a daily basis.

On Monday, Tamil Nadu logged 33,075 new COVID-19 patients across the State while 335 people succumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours, according to the release by the directorate of health and preventive medicine.

There were 2.31 lakh Covid patients across the State as on Monday evening, said the release. But the State held more than 1.49 lakh RT-PCR tests on Monday while the corresponding figure for Kerala was 86,505 samples.

With 335 lives being claimed by the pandemic, the total number of fatalities in the State till date reached 18,005.

Chennai topped the table on Monday with 6,150 new patients, followed by Coimbatore (3,264) and Chengalpattu (2,154).

Tamil Nadu brings in oxygen from Amsterdam

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has said that the State has received liquid oxygen from Amsterdam.

The Chief Minister said this during a meet with journalists on Sunday. However Stalin did not give details on the quantum of liquid oxygen received by the state but mentioned that the oxygen came in Indian Air Force (IAF) flights.

However, Industries Minister Thangam Thennarasu had tweeted that the state has received four cryogenic containers of oxygen with a capacity of 20 tonnes each from Amsterdam.

The present medical requirement of medical oxygen in the state is 480 tonnes to 500 tonnes but the availability is only 440 to 470 tonnes. The union government had last week increased the volume of oxygen allotted to Tamil Nadu from 220 tonnes to 495 tonnes. This was after Stalin had sent a letter to the Prime minister requesting a minimum of 500 tonnes to the state.

IAN S

Goa 02 deaths: Cong files complaint against CM, Health Minister

IAN S ■ PANAJI

The Congress on Monday filed a police complaint against Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and Health Minister Viswajit Rane, claiming that their "sheer incompetence, mismanagement and criminal negligence" led to the "deaths of hundreds of Covid patients due to oxygen shortage".

"This complaint reflects the pain and the anguish of all Goans, who have been completely failed and let down by the present State Government on account of their sheer incompetence; criminal negligence; mismanagement and complete disregard to the lives of the peoples in handling the COVID-19 pandemic situation," the complaint filed by state Congress chief Girish Chodankar at the Agacaim police station said.

"Since the onslaught of the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic i.e somewhere since April 2021, hundreds of people have died at Goa Medical College (GMC) due to shortage



and or failure of the Government to maintain uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen," it said.

Health Minister Rane on May 11 said that 26 Covid patients admitted to the hospital had died on the day due to lack of oxygen. Days after the admission, Goa Medical College Dean, Dr Shivanand Bandekar claimed that it was not possible to link the deaths to oxygen shortage.

In all, 75 patients have died at the hospital over four days beginning May 11, due to oxygen shortage, forcing even the Bombay High Court's Panaji bench to step in and attempt to streamline the oxygen supply procedure.

Covid care centres for cops come up in UP

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government has set up Covid Care Centres at Reserve Police Lines across 66 districts of Uttar Pradesh for police personnel.

The centres will provide proper isolation and quarantine facility and immediate required medical aid to asymptomatic and mild symptomatic police personnel.

These Covid-care centres have 2,993 beds, out of which 299 are oxygen beds in the Police Lines. Covid Care Centres have also been established at about 34 PAC Battalions. Besides, a provision of 628 beds has been made for better treatment and health care of personnel of the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC). Out of these, 45 are oxygen beds.

As many as 589 policemen were undergoing medical treatment at these Covid-care centres, out of which, a total of 244 policemen have completely recovered and are discharged,

whereas, 322 policemen are being currently treated in these centres.

A 107-bedded COVID-care centre exclusively for frontline workers by Government Railway Police (GRP) and a 236-bedded COVID-care centre by the Training Directorate has been set up to provide immediate and proper medical treatment to the policemen. These fully functioning Covid-Care Centres have not only reduced the burdens on district hospitals but have also led to swifter recovery of policemen as the latter has been able to get a favourable environment and care without any delay. Isolation wards have been set up at Police Lines in Hamirpur, Siddhartha Nagar and Unnao.

Due to the absence of a police line in rural Varanasi, Covid-Care centre has been set up in the Commissionerate Police Line. According to the government spokesman, 200-bed, 120-bed and 110-bed Covid care centres set up in Gorakhpur, Aligarh and Hardoi, respectively.

Won't cancel Class 10, Class 12 exams, says Karnataka Minister

IAN S ■ BENGALURU

Putting an end to speculation about cancellation of Class 10 and Class 12 examinations conducted by State boards, Karnataka Education Minister, S. Suresh Kumar on Monday said that the State Government has not decided yet to cancel examinations of Class 10 (Secondary School Leaving Certificate - SSLC) and Class 12 (II year pre-university) examinations.

In a statement released by the Minister's office here, Kumar has appealed students who are appearing for SSLC (Class 10) and II year PU (Class 12) must not fall prey to any rumours or mischievous statements quoting him on any social media sites.

"I appeal to students preparing for these examinations SSLC and PU II year to continue to study and prepare well for their examinations," he said and added that the state government would soon make a decision on announcing fresh dates for these examinations.

Amid the ongoing onslaught of the pandemic, on May 13, Karnataka had decided to postpone the Class 10 (Secondary School Leaving Certificate - SSLC) state board examination.

Kumar had said in a state-

ment released through his office that the fresh dates for SSLC examinations will be announced only after ongoing Covid second wave subsides.

Kumar on April 20 had asserted that the examinations for SSLC were scheduled to begin on June 21 and this time these examinations would neither be cancelled nor be postponed and it will be held in the state as scheduled from June 21 to July 5.

Karnataka had decided to postpone these examinations after parents, students and many school associations had raised red flag over holding these crucial examinations from June 21 onwards owing to a severe spike in Covid cases since the beginning of April.

Earlier, Karnataka had postponed the second year Pre-University Exam (PUC) or Class 12 final exams and promoted first-year students.

Given the circumstances, even the Karnataka Common Entrance Test (KCET) 2021, which is held for Engineering admission, was also postponed on May 12.

Karnataka schools are currently observing summer vacation, which will continue till June 14. The new academic year would begin on June 15.

However, high school

teachers had been instructed to conduct revision classes for SSLC students. Summer vacation for high school teachers is till May 31.

With the second wave of the pandemic raising its head in April, several state boards and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) announced their decision to cancel the ICSE or class 10 board examinations in April itself, but Karnataka continues to 'maintain' that it wants to hold examinations for class 10 students.

Subsequently cancelling class 10 examinations, the CBSE even announced an alternative scheme for the evaluation of Class 10 students.

The Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board (KSEEB) - state's education board that holds class 10 examinations, about 8.5 lakh students appear for the SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate or Class 10) examination annually.

While the Karnataka pre-university Examination board (KPUEB) is responsible for conducting board examination for Class 12 or II year PU examinations in multiple streams - humanities, commerce and science.

Jammu records 54 deaths on Monday, highest so far in single day, Kashmir 19

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After wreaking havoc in the urban areas now COVID-19 is spreading its tentacles across rural pockets of Jammu division. On Monday, Jammu division alone recorded 54 deaths, highest so far in one single day, while 19 patients succumbed to the virus across Kashmir division taking the tally of deaths due to covid19 to 3222. So far, Jammu region has recorded 1493 total deaths and 1729 patients have succumbed across the Kashmir division.

Overall the positivity rate reported a marginal decline across J&K. From 11.27 per cent the positivity rate reported on Monday stood at 9.65 per cent. Significantly, 4042 patients recovered fully and went home from different hospitals.

According to the media bulletin, several districts of Jammu division including Rajouri , Poonch, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi, reported deaths due to Covid 19 on Monday. Jammu district recorded a maximum number of 21 deaths followed by Rajouri where seven patients succumbed to the virus while 11 patients undergoing treat-

ment in home isolation were brought dead in the hospital. In the Kashmir division a total number of 1926 patients tested positive on Monday .

The highest number of 495 cases were reported from Srinagar district followed by Budgam where 373 patients tested positive and Anantnag reported 227 cases.

On its part the UT administration is working round the clock to meet the growing demand of oxygen and hospital beds. Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Baseer Ahmad Khan Monday received the consignment of 7 Oxygen Generation Plants from Germany, Frankfurt on behalf of Jammu and Kashmir government at Srinagar Airport. Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, PK Pole and Chief Engineer, Kashmir (Mechanical), were also present on the occasion.

The Advisor said that with the Commissioning of these 7 plants, the oxygen requirement in the hospitals of the J&K will almost be fulfilled and will cater to our daily requirements.

Among the 7 plants, 5 will have a capacity of 1000 LPM each while the two plants will have a capacity of 1500 and 600 LPM.

Son-in-law's rise in Kerala CPI(M) upsets leaders

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The political grapevine in Kerala is working overtime to zero in on the names of the 11 CPI(M) representatives to be sworn in along with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday.

Since senior party leaders like E P Jayarajan, A K Balan , Thomas Issac, and G Sudhakaran were denied party tickets to contest the 2021 assembly election, Vijayan is left with comparatively young legislators which give him the freedom to try youth as ministers. One of the names that figures in all discussions is Mohammed Riyaz, the new son-in-law of Vijayan. Riyaz, though a first-time MLA , is certain to be included in the council of ministers and allocated an important portfolio.

The truth is that the hands of Riyaz were visible in the selection of candidates fielded by the party. "It was at his instance that the condolence message posted by the chief minister over the murder of Soumya Santos by the Hamas terrorists in Israel was removed from the social media page of Vijayan," a party insider told The Pioneer.

Riyaz is known for his association with Palestinian cause and holds the Hamas in respect. In addition to Chief Minister Vijayan, leader of the opposition Ramesh Chennithala and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandi too deleted their social media posts condoling the murder of Soumya.

"This is a sign of the extremist Islamist leaders establishing their command in the CPI(M)," said Rajit Kumar, political commentator and general secretary of Samskaar Bharati. He said the CPI(M) has been taken over by the Islamists and this does not augur well for the party.

The 2021 assembly election results have strengthened Vijayan's position in the party and today he is the undisputed leader of the CPI(M) not only in Kerala but all over India. The editorial by People's Democracy decrying the tendency of a section of the media to bestow Vijayan with the entire credit for winning the 2021 election speaks a lot.

K Surendran, Kerala BJP president, has come out with the copy of an email sent by a senior journalist in a TV news channel exhorting her col-

leagues in the field to produce news reports portraying the Hindutwa party in poor light. Though TV channels do not play any significant role in deciding the winner in an election, this allegation by Surendran is a serious development," said Murali Parappuram, author and commentator.

The decimation of Congress, the principal Opposition party even as the Muslim League, its principally winning most of the seats it contested has opened a new political discourse in Kerala. The disclosure by leaders of the extremist organisations SDPI and PFI that their cadres voted in favour of the CPI(M) in the assembly election too has to be seen in this backdrop.

" P C George, a devout Catholic, who has never been defeated in any election from his home turf of Poonjar had to bite the dust this time as the Muslims got angry over the statement made by him against Love Jihad. Kerala has become the headquarters of terrorism and the coming days will see more developments in the political battlefield," said T G Mohan Das, a lawyer and commentator.

CPI(M) to have 12 Mins while CPI to get four berths in new Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A 21-member council of Ministers under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would be sworn in on Thursday at Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram. The Ministers who would be administered oath of office and secrecy by Governor Arif Mohammed Khan would have representation from the CPI(M), CPI, Kerala Congress (Mani) and other fringe outfits like INL, NCP , Kerala Congress(J) and Kerala Congress (B).

While the CPI(M) would have 12 ministers, the CPI has been allocated four Ministers, parties like JD(S), Kerala Congress (Mani), and NCP would have one minister each. A Vijayaraghavan, the convener of the LDF told the media after Monday morning's meeting held at the Capital city.

Last time the CPI(M) had 13 representatives in the council of ministers. Though no reason has been given by the party leadership to shed the post of one minister, astrological advice to avoid number 13 is being seen as the reason. The ministry that was sworn in



2016 had 13 members from the party and it had to face a series of charges ranging from gold smuggling to favouritism.

The Janata Dal (S) and NCP would have one minister each in the new government. The LDF resolved the demand from the KC(B), Indian National League, Congress (S) and Kerala Congress (J) for ministers by making the party leaders agree to share the duration of the tenure by half. Accordingly, representative of the KC(B) and INL will hold the ministership for the first two and half years, while the KC(J) and Congress (S) legislators would be sworn in after the former's tenure.

Vijayaraghavan said the portfolios of the ministers would be announced by Pinarayi Vijayan after the latter's scheduled meeting with the Governor.

Two terrorists killed in Srinagar

PNS ■ JAMMU

A joint team of security forces gunned down two terrorists in Khonmoh area on the outskirts of Srinagar on Monday without suffering any collateral damage.

According to police, both the terrorists belonged to Al Badr terrorist outfit. They have been identified as Wasim Bashir Pandit son of Bashir Ahmad Pandit resident of Kakapora and Mudasir Ahmad Khanday son of Farooq Ahmad Khanday resident of Bargam Awantipora.

According to a police spokesman, "a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Srinagar Police , Pulwama police, 50RR & CRPF on receipt of the information about the presence of terrorists in the area".

"During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given repeated opportunities to surrender, however they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which retaliated leading to an encounter".

In the ensuing encounter, two terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of the encounter.

With the elimination of these two Al Badr terrorists



now only five terrorists remain active in Srinagar.

"There were six active terrorists in Srinagar of which one was recently killed in Kokernag (Anantnag) gunfight. Now there are five local terrorists still active in Srinagar who would either be killed or apprehended," IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar told reporters on Monday at Pantha Chowk, Srinagar after the gunfight in Khonmoh.

The IGP Kashmir said that there is a "vast network of OGWs" active in Srinagar district of which many have already been arrested and booked under PSA and many are still on the police radar.

"There are C-category OGWs who are being counselled and handed over to their families," the IGP said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Ready, go?

Are we on the right path to addressing the pandemic?
Do we have the right people on our right side?

One of the most prominent scientific voices of the COVID-19 pandemic, virologist Shahid Jameel has resigned as the head of the Indian SARS-COV-2 Genomics Consortia (INSACOG), the scientific advisory group coordinating the country's genome-sequencing work. The scientific body advising the Union Government on the epidemiological and virological aspects of handling the COVID pandemic is the poorer by the surprise resignation of the virologist. He chaired the INSACOG that the Government set up this January to use genetic sequencing to track the emergence of the COVID variants. The consortium first detected the deadly Indian variant, B.1.617, in February itself and shared the findings with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Health Ministry in early March. It stated that the variant may cause a spurt in infections across the country. The consortium found out that B.1.617 had two mutations, called E484Q and L452R, that could transmit faster and escape antibodies as well. The Health Ministry made this information public on March 24. Responding to a query by the *Reuters* news agency about the lack of a more robust response from the Government to the findings, Shahid Jameel said: "I am worried that science was not taken into account to drive policy. But I know where my jurisdiction stops. As scientists we provide the evidence, policymaking is the job of the Government." He may not have been mending bridges with his well-known candour. Jameel continued to follow the Indian strain and regularly inform the Government.

On May 13, he wrote a signed article in the *New York Times*, critical of India's response, specially about vaccination. "India should vaccinate with far more than the two million daily doses now....In India the virus was mutating around the new year to become more infectious, more transmissible and better able to evade pre-existing immunity....The timing and scale of the third wave would depend on the proportion of vaccinated people, whether newer variants emerge and whether India can avoid additional super-spreader events, like large weddings and religious festivals....." Jameel gave no reason for quitting the post, but he may just have reached the end of the long rope. Previously, Dr Gagandeep Kang, another scientist and the only Indian woman to be elected as Fellow, the Royal Society of London, resigned as the executive director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute. She is also the vice-chairperson for Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness, a global consortium facilitating promising vaccine candidates for COVID-19. Kang was also the head of the National COVID-19 task force constituted by the Indian Council of Medical Research for a similar purpose, but disbanded within a month. She is also known to speak out her mind. It is high time that the scientific task force is headed by virologists —with the bureaucrats handling the execution side.

PICTALK



People at an amusement park during the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, in Baghdad

AP

Stop the cruelty

The Hazaras, for decades at the receiving end, are still facing torture in Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a country where war and bloodshed never end, is again in the news. And for the same reason. As the US troops start withdrawing from Afghanistan, the ultra-radicals have found the right time to teach the minorities a lesson, in a bloody way, probably the only way they know. The Hazaras have always been at the receiving end in the Afghan society. They have faced discrimination but this time it was dastardly and inhumane as the attack targeted young schoolgirls. A bomb attack on Kabul's Sayed-ul-Shuhada High School killed over 60 people; most of the victims were young girls. It is still not clear which group was behind the attack. But whichever group did it, knew that it had the tacit backing of the majority of Afghanistan, or at least it assumed that. The Afghan Taliban and the Government are both condemning each other for the attack. The Taliban have all along held the Hazaras as heretics. Their Deobandi and Salafi belief system finds faults with the Hazara's religious practices and beliefs. The Hazaras are nine per cent of the Afghan population. They are considered the descendants of Changez Khan, who settled in Afghanistan.

Till the 19th century, they were being traded as slaves. Many radical groups still have the same notion about the Hazaras, a "sub-human" group that has no rightful place in that society. During the reign of Amir Abdur Rehman in the late nineteenth century, the slavery stopped but they still had to perform menial tasks. With the checks and balances provided by the US presence no longer in place, the writing on the wall is quite clear. The Hazaras are going to be targeted by the Taliban as they have always had strained relations. They supported Uzbek opponents of Gen Rashid Dostum in 1997, who massacred the Taliban trapped in Mazar-i-Sharif. Many Hazaras live across the border in Pakistan but they aren't safe either. According to a 2019 report by Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights, at least 509 Hazaras have been murdered since 2013. In the Kite Runner, Hassan was a Hazara, and we all know what he had to go through. In Afghanistan's current state, not much can be done. Pakistan is no better but, for its part, it is making efforts to promote reconciliation. By all possibilities, Hazaras may be left to fend for themselves.

India is very much a democracy

Contrary to what the critics might say, we have a nation that is strong enough to accommodate all the viewpoints



PRAFULLA GORADIA

Lately, several observers of democracy, the Freedom House of the US, V Dem based in Sweden and the Democracy Index of the UK, have commented that India may be moving towards an electoral autocracy. Such a conclusion is extremely unfair and positively damaging. Evidently, these agencies and others are unable to appreciate India having a strong Government. While the American establishment, especially the Pentagon, would like a viable ally against the expansionist China, these so-called liberals prefer to see India as a permanent Third World Society.

Do they realise that India has a dominantly Hindu ethos which is intrinsically an epitome of freedom? Anyone who believes in the phenomenon of karma is a Hindu. Whether he/she is a whole-time worshipper or an agonistic, it enjoys or suffers the fruit of his karma. No god sits on judgement over any individual or his/her community; there is no anticipation of a doomsday or an end of the world. *Anadi-ananta*, or there is no beginning of life and no end, according to Hindu scriptures.

Karma is reminiscent of physics, which says that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Every action by an individual, whether virtuous or vicious, is spontaneously recorded by the grand nature or its celestial computer as well as its reaction or *bhagya*. There is no single judge, nor only two alternatives for the individual, namely heaven or hell.

Any assertion of a single god resembles Deductive Logic which asserts a premise namely so and so is my God and He is the only God. The corollaries that emanate from the premise are flawlessly consistent. In sharp contrast, Hinduism is a specimen of Inductive Logic. Herein lies the freedom intrinsic to Hinduism. To illustrate this contrast, say, four Hindus happened to meet somewhere and discuss the subject of roses. The person from the north may say that roses are red. The southerner could assert that he has seen only white roses. The easterner may express serious



disagreement and insist that the roses in his region are only pink. The person from western India may say you are wrong; roses are always yellow. After half an hour of animated argumentation, each would say: Possibly in your parts of the country, there are other colours of roses. Someone else would propose: Let us agree to disagree, and request that we exchange samples of all four colours.

A member of an Abrahamic or western background, in such a controversial situation, may well declare that roses are always red; the rest must be other flowers or, perhaps, weeds. Just as a Jew is a Jew, the rest are gentiles. That is where conflict and war begin. Prophet Abraham, when he first saw a vision, said God told him to prove his bon-fires by sacrificing his own son Isaac. When he was about to obey God and behead Isaac, the Almighty told him to stop and sacrifice a goat instead. The western religion was thus born in violence; Prophet Moses had a much more violent experience when he freed the Israelis from the clutches

KARMA IS REMINISCENT OF PHYSICS, WHICH SAYS THAT FOR EVERY ACTION, THERE IS AN EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTION. EVERY ACTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL, WHETHER VIRTUOUS OR VICIOUS, IS SPONTANEOUSLY RECORDED BY THE GRAND NATURE OR ITS CELESTIAL COMPUTER AS WELL AS ITS REACTION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TIME TO STAND UNITED

Sir — I refer to the article 'Corona: some real and some hype' (May 17). It is true that the Opposition and the so-called section who are against Modi decried lockdown and its adverse implications on livelihood of the people when the first wave struck us. They were against vaccines and questioned its potentiality. Everybody pointed fingers at the Centre.

Now Lockdown 2.0 is being unilaterally announced by the States. Similar is the case with the other States pertaining to the vaccination drive which had some hesitancy among the people earlier because of their false propagation earlier. Won't this lockdown ruin the economy of the States or the people? The creation of such impression among the people is against the people, the States and the entire nation. It is against national interest, basically. It shows the inability of the local Government. When the entire world is fighting Coronavirus, such unwanted criticism by the Opposition does not entail well; in fact, it vitiates the entire atmosphere of recovery from the pandemic.

Secondly, the Centre was forced to keep its commitment on exporting vaccines after getting the raw material. Now the States have invited global tenders for vaccines. Still, the Centre is distributing vaccines to the States. On the other hand, in many States, the medicines, vaccines, oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir or hospital beds are being offered at a high premium. It is not the time to indulge in politics. We, together, should fight the virus tooth and nail.

Srivastava Ramachandran | Chennai

ENSURE SAFE CREMATIONS

Sir — The Central Government has directed the States to be on guard against the dumping of dead bodies in the rivers and focus on their safe disposal, besides providing support for ensuring dignified cremation. Witnessing dead bodies in the rivers would amount to among the most undesirable and alarming situations.

The dumping of dead bodies, as well as their safe disposal and protection of

Let's not be hesitant



The surge in COVID-19 cases and the deaths across India, the vaccine hesitation in the rural populace and small towns has emerged as a major obstacle. A large number of people living in villages and small towns are going to "jhola chhap" doctors to get treatment for their fever, cough and cold, and not for a COVID test.

The fear of these sections is that "those who test positive will be transferred to COVID hospitals, where no one survives". It is the fear of positive testing that is clearly preventing these villagers from taking the test and the lack of infrastructure is another major reason for the lack of tests, lack of oxygen, hospital beds

Amit Singh Kushwaha | Satna

water quality in the rivers, has to be attended to on war footing. The need of the hour is that authorities should spread awareness with the riverside communities on the use of river water and to prevent such incidents of dumping of bodies in the river. The society needs to ensure the safe and dignified cremation of the deceased.

Amit Singh Kushwaha | Satna

ARE THE PEOPLE COMPLACENT?

Sir — Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on May 15 accused the Government and the people of becoming complacent after COVID's first wave, which irritated the commoners. It was the day of the Modi Government's "eighth victory anniversary day" (May 16, 2014). But the big question: Is Bhagwat's accusation of the Government truly a warning to Prime Minister

and vaccines.

There are clear instructions from the Government that there should be no loss of wages. Is it being followed? People passing through, many people, especially those belonging to the economically weaker sections, still fear losing their livelihood. Among the other major factors contributing to the vaccine hesitation are the sample collection and the announcement of the report.

There may be a long waiting period. In fact, the "fear" chasing the villagers, and even some urban people who are pushing them to refuse vaccinations or tests, was due to the ignorance and the mass proliferation of fake news, mostly. A huge wall of suspicion, rumours, fake news and fear was hesitation or outright denial for both the vaccine and the trial. The fact of the matter is that the Government and medical fraternity put "ignorance" behind the hesitation of testing and vaccines in India, social workers and most doctors felt that a massive awareness campaign was needed to combat these obstacles.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Narendra Modi and his Government or an indirect way to play cover-up with Modi? Did Bhagwat suggest that the people became complacent because Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP chief JP Nadda and UP's Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked the people to attend their political rallies? Did these same people force the Government to set up the infrastructure for the Kumbh Mela where thousands got infected and took that infection to their native towns and villages? Now, only the public has been punished for this "leniency", losing lakhs of lives and wasting crores of rupees for the mismanagement.

The Government needs to accept that it failed to health infrastructure, beds, oxygen and vaccines

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The Centre has informed that Delhi will be supplied 3.83 lakh doses in May and no vaccines to be supplied for the age group 18-44 years.

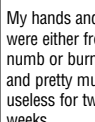


Delhi Deputy Chief Minister — Manish Sisodia



The Russian side is committing stupidity because it is a mistake to turn former friends into enemies

Czech President — Milos Zeman



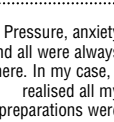
My hands and feet were either frozen, numb or burning, and pretty much useless for two weeks.



Rocker, guitarist — Eric Clapton



Pressure, anxiety and all were always there. In my case, I realised all my preparations were there in a physical sense. After all of that, the anxiety was always there



Cricketer — Sachin Tendulkar

Back to the jungle! Went to Mumbai to donate plasma but didn't have enough antibodies for donation.

DIA MOVE!



Model, actor — Milind Soman



FIRST COLUMN

INDIAN VIEWPOINT ON ISRAEL, PALESTINE

We proudly state that India is a secular State, but are we actually not communal?



MARKANDEY KATJU

For several days the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians has been going on. We in India have seen on YouTube rockets being fired by Hamas, which are often intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome, and the demolition of buildings in Gaza by the Israeli Air Force.

What do Indians think about all this?

About 80 per cent Indians are Hindus, and about 16 per cent are Muslims. Almost all Hindus, including the so called 'intellectuals' among them (academics, mediapersons, professionals like lawyers and doctors, writers, etc) support Israel in this conflict, and almost all Indian Muslims support the Palestinians. Only the so-called 'liberals' among the Hindus support the Palestinians, but these would be hardly five per cent of all Hindus. The rest believe all Muslims everywhere in the world to be trouble-makers and terrorists.



This is because despite the Indian Constitution calling India a secular country, the truth is it is highly communal. Most Hindus are communal, and so are most Muslims. This I can say from personal knowledge. When I am with my own relatives, and they are sure no Muslim is around, they often spout venom against Muslims, who are perceived as fanatics and anti-national. When a Muslim is lynched in India most Hindus are indifferent, and some even happy. One terrorist less! In fact, it is because most Hindus are communal that the BJP, which claims to represent the Hindus, won the parliamentary elections in India in 2014 and 2019, and came to power. Thereafter, polarisation of Indian society on religious lines has grown exponentially. No doubt the recent farmers agitation in India cut through caste and religious lines, and the ongoing pandemic has been a reverse to the BJP which is being blamed by the people for not properly handling it. But these are temporary phenomena. Once they are over, the country will again revert to the old status.

The truth is that secularism is a feature of industrial society, as in North America and Europe, but India is still semi-feudal, and most people here are strongly religious. The religious divide between Hindus and Muslims was fanned up by the British rulers by their policy of divide and rule (see my article 'The Truth about Pakistan' and BN Pande's 'History in the service of Imperialism' online), and continued even after Independence in 1947 by some vested interests, particularly after the BJP came to power in 2014.

Some people claim that the recent elections in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu where the BJP and/or its ally (like the ADMK) suffered a reverse, shows that the BJP is on the decline. I do not agree. A few carefully engineered communal riots will neutralise this trend.

Unless India becomes a highly industrialised country, communalism will thrive in India. To end communalism, a radical transformation of Indian society is required, which is only possible by a mighty historical united people's struggle, culminating in a revolution, but this is as yet nowhere on the horizon.

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court. The views expressed are personal.)

Rise of religions and decline of the West

In an increasingly globalised world, there is greater civilisational, social and ethnic self-consciousness. But cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people



SONAL SHUKLA

India has seen an uprising of religious consciousness, pride, assertiveness and aggression in recent years like never before. The credit or blame is reserved for the BJP generally, though now prominent parties like the AAP, TMC and Congress are also seen as following suit. But is rise of religious and civilizational identity particular to India, or is it a global phenomenon of our times? From Islamic nations to Europe, from Brazil to Philippines the phenomenon seems to be taking shape. Three decades ago, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington made such a prophesy for our times.

The post-Cold war world has changed fundamentally, so he wrote. The world has never been multipolar and multicivilizational before -- while being so interconnected - in the entire human history. The most important distinctions between people in this new world will not be ideological or economic but cultural; most important and dangerous conflicts will occur not between rich or poor but between people belonging to different cultural entities. End of Cold war has led to global resurgence of religions around the world, involving intensification of religious consciousness, rise of fundamentalist movements, escalating ethnic conflicts and ethnic cleansing.

Huntington identifies another significant phenomenon taking place in the post-Cold war world: the relative decline of the western power. East is on its way to equating with the West. The US and UN are unable to suppress bloody local conflicts and rising China is increasingly assertive. Asian civilisations are expanding economically. Economic growth creates basis for enhanced military power and political influence. As the power and self-confidence of non-Western societies increases, they assert their own cultural values and reject those imposed on them by West. Most notable cultural resurgence is happening in Asia and Islamic nations generated by their economic and demographic dynamism.

The multi-civilisational world and rise of religions: Huntington writes empires rise and fall, governments come and go, civilizations remain and survive political, social, economic, even ideological upheavals. The great religions are the foundations on which great civilisations rest (Confucianism, Hindu, Islam, Judeo-Christian). The 20th century ideological conflict between Liberal Democracy and Marxist Leninism was only a fleeting, superficial historical phenomenon, a temporary aberration in the centuries-old human history. History of the world has been the history of civilizations, and conflict between them. Religion is the most important factor in determining civilisation.

The most salient cause of religious revival is the process of social, economic and cultural modernization which has disrupted longstanding system of identity and authority. In an increasingly globalised world, there is greater civilisational, social and ethnic self-consciousness -- because people define themselves by what makes them different from others. Cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people.

In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of superpower is replaced by the clash of civilizations. Global politics began to be reconfigured along cultural lines: civilizational identities are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict. Present day conflicts between West and China, West and Islam, cohesion and unity of Islamic nations, China and Islamic connection against



THE GREATEST CHALLENGE COMES FROM ISLAM AND CHINA, THAT EMBODY GREAT CULTURAL TRADITION VERY DIFFERENT FROM WEST AND, IN THEIR EYES, SUPERIOR TO IT. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY, WHEN A CIVILISATION'S POWER HAS EXPANDED, IT HAS ALWAYS USED THAT POWER TO EXTEND ITS VALUES, PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONS TO OTHER SOCIETIES

The author is a public policy analyst and a lawyer. The views expressed are personal.



West, Turkish and Iranian support to Azerbaijan in conflict can all be explained on the basis of this theory. **Is western liberalism universal?**

Most non-western nations take offence to the West's sitting as the jury on the level of democracy and freedom in their governing systems while the non-western world can never judge the west. Huntington questions the imposition of western liberalism on the non-western world: its universalism. He states that western assumption that the only river of civilization is our own and all others are either tributaries to it or lost in the desert sand is an egocentric illusion of the West. Universalism justifies western cultural domination over others by making other societies ape western practices and institutions. What west calls universal, others see as imperialism. It increasingly brings West into conflict with other civilizations, most seriously with Islam and China.

He states major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures. East Asian economic success as well as difficulties in achieving stable democratic political system, has its source in East Asian culture. Islamic culture explains failure of emergence of democracy in much of Islamic world. Japan and India are the only two civilizations which had a class system paralleling that of the West; why only two non-western societies to sustain major democratic governments. The recent coup in Myanmar, dictatorial regimes in Russia and Turkey despite their proximity to the West, failure of West to import democracy to Iraq, Afghanistan,

North African nations after Arab Spring can be understood by Huntington's theory.

Huntington dismisses Fukuyama's End of History theory that predicts victory of western liberalism over all other ideologies. The collapse of communism in Soviet Union doesn't necessarily mean that other societies will import the Western ideology of liberal democracy - this underestimates the non-western culture's creativity, resilience and individuality. This thinking is rooted in Cold War perspective, that liberal democracy is the only alternative to communism. There are many forms of authoritarianism, nationalism, corporatism and market communism (China) that are alive and well in the world today. More significantly there are religious alternatives that lie outside secular ideologies.

Modernisation and Westernisation: Huntington questions that modernization essentially needs westernization. No one political ideology or set of institutions -- elections, civic associations and other hallmark of western life -- are necessary for economic growth. Non-western societies have modernised and can do so without adopting values, institutions, practices of the west. Gulf nations and East Asian economies are the living examples of this in our times.

In fundamental ways the world is becoming more modern and less western. Modernisation strengthens cultures adopting it and reduces relative power of the west. At individual level, modernisation breaks traditional bonds and social relations, creating crises of identity to which religion provides an answer.

Decline of the West: The challenge

that the west faces is not just economic but more importantly to its political influence and liberal value system. The greatest challenge comes from Islam and China, that embody great cultural tradition very different from West and in their eyes superior to it. Throughout the history when a civilisation's power has expanded, it has always used that power to extend its values, practices and institutions to other societies. The era dominated by western ideologies is over, new era will have multiple and diverse civilizations interact, compete and coexist and accommodate with each other.

Second generation indigenisation phenomenon is taking place all over the non-western world. In 1960-70s pro-west governments and west-leaning (often western educated) leaders were threatened by coups and revolutions; in 1980-90s they were increasingly in danger of being ousted by elections. Electoral competitions are won by most popular appeals of ethnic, nationalistic and religious character.

Another challenge that the West faces is the democracy paradox: democratisation conflicts with westernisation. Democracy is inherently a parochialising, not cosmopolitanising, process. As non-western societies take to democracy, or deepen democracy, they seek to assert their own value systems and rebel against the western diktats, often a change from friendly dictator to unfriendly democratic regime for the west. Regionalisation will be the central trend in post-cold war global politics. The US is not likely to have the military capability to manage regional contingencies.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE AAP IS BEHIND THESE POSTERS. I AM BEHIND THE POSTERS. ARREST ME AND OUR MLAs BUT DO NOT HARASS POOR PEOPLE WHO PASTE POSTERS.
— DURGESH PATHAK
AAP LEADER



I WONDER HOW MANY WALLS OF DELHI THE POLICE HAS THOUGHT OF CLEANING, EXCEPT THOSE WHERE PM MODI IS CRITICISED.
— ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI
CONGRESS LEADER

My heart is in the West though I am in the East

When your country burns, there is nothing more important left to do than be with all your loved ones around, all together

For the last few days, despite the very challenging times in India, and Delhi in particular, where I have been living and working for the past two years, I haven't really 'been' in Delhi. I mean: physically, I have. But while I am physically here, my thoughts, my prayers, and my fears are in Israel. My family, my friends, my co-workers, live mostly in areas that have been fired on by Hamas, and so have had to spend the last few days and nights running between their apartments and their shelters.

As a matter of fact, since last Tuesday, Hamas, the terrorist organization controlling Gaza, has fired about 3000 rockets towards Israel. Three thousand times in less than a week, the Israeli population, the elderly, the adults and children, had to move as quickly as possible and run to



ORLY GOLDSCHMIDT

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the closest bomb shelter. Or to the stairway. Or as far as possible from their apartments' windows. And then, after hearing the explosion and feeling the building shaking, they had to go back to what they were doing before the alarm started and try to keep on living their lives, as if this whole situation was normal.

It is almost impossible to understand this when you don't experience it (and God, I pray that no one has to ever experience this), but when the alarm sounds, you have less than 40 seconds (if you live in the South, you may not even have 10 seconds) to run to a shelter. Less than 40 seconds. Think about it: what can you do in less than 40 seconds? It takes me more time to put my shoes on. More time to write a text message to a friend. Much more time to wake my kids up in the morning!



I am a mother of three small children. Just to imagine -- practically -- how I would manage taking the three of

them to the shelter in the middle of the night worries me. What if I don't manage? What does it mean? And what if we

live in a place where there is no shelter?

These surreal situations and dilemmas happen day after day here. A few days ago, an Indian nurse, Soumya Santhosh, who had been working in Ashkelon in the South of Israel for the last eight years, was killed by a rocket fired at the house by Hamas. Soumya Santhosh, the mother of a nine-year-old boy, was working as a caregiver for an elderly woman, and was waiting for the woman's daughter to come home. When the alarm started, she didn't have the time to run to a shelter and unfortunately got hit. A matter of seconds...

My sister doesn't have a shelter in her apartment. When the alarm sounds, they don't have the time to run to a "public shelter". So, they remain at home all together, my sister, her husband, and

their children, and they wait until it passes. Imagine what kind of a feeling that must be, to know that you cannot protect your own children from danger, that you cannot calm them, reassure them.

When our children are born, we are quite clueless, but we all know one thing for sure: we will do everything we can to protect them and give them the best childhood possible. And no one, no one should live through what the families in Israel have been living.

My Indian friends and colleagues from Delhi have been sending me texts since Tuesday, showing love and support, and I know we are blessed to be serving in India in those times. And from here, all I can do is pray for better days in Israel and its surroundings, pray for the day that our neighbours can be our partners, and hope for more

peaceful days and for a brighter future.

There was a Jewish poet who lived in Spain in the Middle Ages, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi. He wanted one thing more than anything in his life: to be able to go to the Promised Land, to Israel. He said: "My heart is in the East and I am in the West".

This sentence reminds Israelis of those who didn't have the chance to go to Israel through the centuries but were dreaming of it. Today, this sentence resonates in me more than ever. As I am sure that it does for my colleagues, Israeli diplomats abroad too. Because when your country burns, you want nothing more than to be with your loved ones, at home, all together. So today, I am in the East, but my heart is in the West, with my loved ones.

Gaza tunnels destroyed in heavy airstrikes

AP ■ GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP)

The Israeli military unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes on the Gaza Strip early on Monday, saying it destroyed 15 kilometers (nine miles) of militant tunnels and the homes of nine Hamas commanders.

Residents of Gaza awakened by the overnight barrage described it as the heaviest since the war began a week ago, and even more powerful than a wave of airstrikes in Gaza City the day before that left 42 dead and flattened three buildings.

That earlier attack was the deadliest in the current round of hostilities between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers.

There was no immediate word on the casualties from the latest strikes. A three-story building in Gaza City was heavily damaged, but residents said the military warned them 10 minutes before the strike and everyone cleared out. They said many of the airstrikes hit nearby farmland.

Gaza's mayor, Yahya Sarraj, told *Al-Jazeera TV* that the strikes had caused extensive damage to roads and other infrastructure.

"If the aggression continues we expect conditions to become worse," he said.

The U.N. Has warned that the territory's sole power station is at risk of running out of fuel, and Sarraj said Gaza was also low on spare parts. Gaza already experiences daily



A Palestinian firefighter extinguishes a fire from a beachside cafe after it was hit by airstrike, in Gaza City on Monday AP

power outages for between eight and 12 hours and tap water is undrinkable.

Mohammed Thabet, a spokesman for the territory's electricity distribution company, said it has fuel to supply Gaza with electricity for two or three days.

Airstrikes have damaged supply lines and the company's staff cannot reach areas that were hit because of continued Israeli shelling, he added.

The war broke out last Monday, when the Hamas militant group fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem after weeks of clashes in the holy city between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police.

The protests were focused on the heavy-handed policing of a flashpoint sacred site during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish

settlers.

Since then, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of airstrikes that it says are targeting Hamas' militant infrastructure. Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired more than 3,100 rockets into Israel.

At least 198 Palestinians have been killed in the strikes, including 58 children and 35 women, with 1,300 people wounded, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Calls mount for Gaza-Israel ceasefire, greater US efforts

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

UN Security Council diplomats and Muslim foreign ministers convened emergency weekend meetings to demand a stop to civilian bloodshed as Israeli warplanes carried out the deadliest single attacks in nearly a week of Hamas rocket barrages and Israeli airstrikes.

President Joe Biden gave no signs of stepping up public pressure on Israel to agree to an immediate cease-fire despite calls from some Democrats for the Biden administration to get more involved.

His ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told an emergency high-level meeting of the Security Council that the US was "working tirelessly through diplomatic channels" to stop the fighting.

But as battles between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers surged to their worst levels since 2014 and the international outcry grew, the Biden administration — determined to wrench US foreign policy focus away from the Middle East and Afghanistan — has declined so far to criticize Israel's part in the fighting or send a top-level envoy to the

President Joe Biden gave no signs of stepping up public pressure on Israel to agree to an immediate ceasefire despite calls from some Democrats for the Biden Administration to get more involved

region. Appeals by other countries showed no sign of progress.

Thomas-Greenfield warned that the return to armed conflict would only put a negotiated two-state solution to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict even further out of reach. However, the US, Israel's closest ally, has so far blocked days of efforts by China, Norway and Tunisia to get the Security Council to issue a statement, including a call for the cessation of hostilities.

In Israel, Hady Amr, a deputy assistant dispatched by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to try to de-escalate the crisis, met with Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz, who thanked the US for its support.

Afghans who helped the US now fear being left behind

AP ■ KABUL

He served as an interpreter alongside US soldiers on hundreds of patrols and dozens of firefights in eastern Afghanistan, earning a glowing letter of recommendation from an American platoon commander and a medal of commendation.

Still, Ayazudin Hilal was turned down when he applied for one of the scarce special visas that would allow him to relocate to the US with his family.

Now, as American and NATO forces prepare to leave the country, he and thousands of others who aided the war effort fear they will be left stranded, facing the prospect of Taliban reprisals.

"We are not safe," the 41-year-old father of six said of Afghan civilians who worked for the US or NATO.

"The Taliban is calling us and telling us, 'Your stepbrother is leaving the country soon, and we will kill all of you guys.'"

The fate of interpreters after the troop withdrawal is one of the looming uncertainties surrounding the withdrawal, including a possible resurgence of terrorist threats and a reversal of fragile gains for women if chaos, whether from competing Kabul-based

warlords or the Taliban, follows the end of America's military engagement.

Interpreters and other civilians who worked for the US government or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa, or SIV, under a program created in 2009 and modeled after a similar program for Iraqis.

Both SIV programs have long been dogged by complaints about a lengthy and complicated application process for security vetting that grew more cumbersome with pandemic safety measures.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters last month that the US is committed to helping interpreters and other Afghan civilians who aided the war effort, often at great personal risk. The Biden administration has also launched a review of the SIV programs, examining the delays and the ability of applicants to challenge a rejection. It will also be adding anti-fraud measures.

Amid the review, former interpreters, who typically seek to shield their identities and keep a low profile, are becoming increasingly public about what they fear will happen should the Taliban return to power.

Blinken hasn't seen any evidence on AP Gaza building strike

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday he has asked Israel for any evidence of Hamas operating in a Gaza building housing news bureaus that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike over the weekend, but hasn't seen any.

Blinken spoke at a news conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, as pressure is increasing on the Biden administration to ask for a ceasefire in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel destroyed a building housing The Associated Press and Al Jazeera and claimed that Hamas used the building for a military intelligence office. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the building a "perfectly legitimate tar-



get" and told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday that Israel passes such evidence through intelligence channels.

"Shortly after the strike we did request additional details regarding the justification for it," Blinken said Monday. He declined to discuss specific intelligence, saying he "will leave it to others to characterize if any information has been shared and our assessment that information."

Britain calls on Israel to act proportionately

London: The British government says Israel must ensure that its military activities against Hamas are "proportionate," and it is deeply concerned by the destruction of media offices and other civilian targets in Gaza.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman, Max Blain, said Britain is "in contact with our US and UN counterparts and urgently seeking more information from the Israeli government" on Saturday's attack, which destroyed a high-rise building housing the offices of The Associated Press and other media organisations.

"We are deeply concerned by U.N. Reports that 23 schools and 500 homes, as well as medical facilities and media offices, have been destroyed or damaged in Gaza," Blain said.

He added that "Israel must make every effort to avoid civilian casualties and military activity must be proportionate."

EU vows to boost efforts to end Israeli-Palestinian fighting

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union will redouble its efforts to end the upsurge in violence between the Israeli military and Palestinian militants, and seek progress during a special meeting of its foreign ministers Tuesday, the bloc said.

The EU also called the weekend destruction of a building housing major international media "extremely worrying" and said safe working conditions for journalists were essential.

The EU has never had the impact Washington can wield in the region and no immediate breakthrough was expected from Tuesday's meeting. Ever since the outbreak of violence last week, the EU has been calling for restraint and condemned attacks that hit civilian populations.

Because EU policy toward the region requires unanimity among the 27 EU member nations, its actions and statements haven't had the impact

that could be expected from a bloc that has large trade and aid interests in the region.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and European Council President Charles Michel both called over the past days to call for an end to the escalation in violence and ensure that civilians get the best possible protection.

Tuesday's meeting is to seek "how best that EU can contribute to diffusing the tensions, stop the escalation and stop the ongoing violence," EU spokesman Peter Stano said.

Pro-Palestinian critics of EU policy insist the bloc has been far too lenient when it comes to imposing sanctions on Jerusalem, but since this too requires unanimity, the issue hasn't yet surfaced for Tuesday's meeting, Stano said.

"Let's not jump ahead. Let's focus on trying to diffuse the situation, trying to solve the situation to normal diplomatic and political means," Stano said.

Report: Microsoft investigated Gates before he left board

New York: Board members at Microsoft Corp. Made a decision in 2020 that it wasn't appropriate for its co-founder Bill Gates to continue sitting on its board as they investigated the billionaire's prior romantic relationship with a female Microsoft employee that was deemed inappropriate, according to a report in The Wall Street Journal.

Citing unnamed sources, The Journal reported online Sunday that board members looking into the matter hired a law firm in late 2019 to conduct an investigation after a Microsoft engineer alleged in a letter that she had a sexual relationship with Gates over several years.

The Journal reported that Gates resigned before the board's investigation was finished, citing another person familiar with the matter.

An unnamed spokeswoman for Gates acknowledged to The Journal that there was an affair almost 20 years ago, and that it ended "amicably."

The spokesperson told The Journal that "his decision to transition off the board was in no way related to this matter."

When he left Microsoft's board last year, Gates said he was stepping down to focus on philanthropy.

In an email sent to The Associated Press late Sunday, Microsoft said that it "received a concern in the latter half of 2019 that Bill Gates sought to initiate an intimate relationship with a company employee in the year 2000. A committee of the Board reviewed the concern, aided by an outside law firm, to conduct a thorough investigation."

Pak issues demarche to Kabul's envoy over critical remarks by Afghan leadership

Islamabad: Pakistan on Monday served a demarche to Afghanistan's ambassador Najibullah Alikhel, protesting against the accusations by the Afghan leadership.

Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO), however, did not specify the statement which angered it. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, in a recent interview, alleged that Pakistan "operates an organised system of support" for the Afghan Taliban.

"The names of the various decision-making bodies of the Taliban are Quetta Shura, Miramshah Shura and Peshawar Shura — named after the Pakistani cities where they are located. There is a deep relationship with the state," the Afghan leader said.

The FO, responding to media queries regarding the allegations made by the Afghan leadership, said Pakistan was seriously concerned about the statements.

France holds global talks to offer debt relief for Sudan

AP ■ PARIS

French and African leaders and international organizations were holding a conference Monday in Paris to negotiate debt relief and raise global support for Sudan's transitional leadership.

French President Emmanuel Macron was hosting the event in the presence Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of Sudan's ruling sovereign council, and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, in charge of making changes in the African nation after a popular uprising led to the military's overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

The conference is taking place along with the heads of state of neighboring Egypt and Ethiopia as well as the International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat.

"It is meant to be a kind of re-introduction of the new Sudan to the concert of nations, ending 30 years of international isolation," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday.

Macron's office said the event aims at having talks on how to boost investment in Sudan and negotiate debt relief.

Sudan's transitional government has taken a set of measures in recent months to transform the country's economy and rejoin the international community after over two decades of isolation.

'So I raped you.' FB message renews fight for justice

AP ■ NEW JERSEY

Shannon Keeler was enjoying a weekend getaway with her boyfriend last year when she checked her Facebook messages for the first time in ages. A name popped up that stopped her cold.

"So I raped you," the person said in a burst of unread messages sent six months earlier.

"If you have a moment give me a call."

"I need to hear your voice."

"I'll pray for you."

The messages rocketed Keeler back to the life-shattering night in December 2013 when an upperclassman at Gettysburg College stalked her at a party, snuck into her dorm and barged into her room while she pleaded with him and texted friends for help. It was the final night of her first semester of college.

Eight years later, she still hopes to persuade authorities in Pennsylvania to make an arrest, armed now with perhaps her strongest piece of evidence: his alleged confession, sent via social media. But is it enough?

Before and after the attack, Keeler followed the protocols designed to prevent campus sex assaults or address them when they happen. She had a male friend walk her home from the party. She reported the rape that day, met with police and endured a painful and intrusive rape exam. And she pushed for charges. Yet, at every turn, the justice system failed her, just like it fails most college rape victims.

For all the focus on sexual



Shannon Keeler poses for a portrait in the United States AP

violence in the #MeToo era, and on student protections under Title IX, very few campus rapes are ever prosecuted, according to victim advocates and the limited crime data available. Only one in five college sex assault victims report to police. And when they do, prosecutors often hesitate to take cases where victims had been drinking or knew the accused.

"It has bothered me over the years that I was never able to do anything," said Keeler, now 26. "If you're not going to help me, who are you going to help? Because I do have evidence."

At Gettysburg, a small school with about 2,500 students, 95 rapes were reported to campus security from 2013 to 2019 — but only 10 non-child rape cases were prosecuted in the entire county during that period, according to school data and county court records.

And that discourages students like Katayoun Amir-

Aslani, who quietly left Gettysburg after her own sexual assault in the spring of 2014, from coming forward.

She met Keeler the night she was assaulted. Then few months later, she was raped at Gettysburg by an acquaintance, she said.

She did not file a report. She did not get a rape kit. Instead, she quietly left school after that spring.

"I didn't have any witnesses, and after the experience I had ... with Shannon, and nothing happened with her, I just (thought), Well, what's the point of me going through all of this for nothing?" said the 26-year-old New Yorker. "So I just didn't really tell anyone."

For Keller, the suspect's withdrawal from school ended the campus Title IX investigation. Two years later, just after the window to file a civil suit closed, then-District Attorney Scott Wagner said he wouldn't be filing charges.

Pak Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif placed on no-fly list

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday added the name of Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif, who has been charged with corruption, to the no-fly list, barring him from leaving the country for medical treatment.

Earlier this month, the Lahore High Court granted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz — also the younger brother of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif — permission to travel abroad once for medical treatment.

Trump to speak at North Carolina GOP convention on June 5

AP ■ RALEIGH (US)

Former President Donald Trump will speak at North Carolina's annual state Republican Party convention next month, party officials announced Monday.

The former president will speak in person at the June 5 convention dinner in Greenville. Trump narrowly carried North Carolina in 2020 and held numerous events in the state toward the end of his campaign. Trump's speech will be closed to the media, and journalists won't be able to view it via livestream or alternate

Writs seeking fresh swearing in of PM Oli filed in Nepal's SC

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Four writ petitions were filed in the Supreme Court of Nepal on Monday demanding that Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli be sworn in again as he disgraced the office of the President by refusing to repeat all the words she recited during the oath-taking ceremony.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office and secrecy to Oli as the prime minister at a scaled-down ceremony at Shital Niwas, the presidential palace, on Friday. During the oath-taking ceremony, Oli, the 69-year-old Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist),

omitted the word "vow" when the President recited it, besides "in the name of God."

"I will take oath in the name of the country and the people," Oli, who has become Nepal's prime minister for the third time, said, while President Bhandari mentioned "God, country and the people."

All four writ petitioners have demanded that Oli take another oath of office and secrecy as the one taken on Friday was illegal, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Senior advocate Chandra Kanta Gyawali and advocates Lokendra Oli and Keshar Jung KC have registered a joint writ while advocates Raj Kumar Suwal, Santosh Bhandari and

Nawaraj Adhikary have registered separate writs on the same issue. The petitioners claim that the prime minister disgraced the office of the President by saying "it is not necessary" even when the President repeated the word twice, the report said.

They have demanded that all the actions of the prime minister be declared null and void until he takes the oath again, it said. The petitioners said the prime minister told the president that a phrase of the oath — "I solemnly and sincerely pledge" — was not necessary and such an utterance by the prime minister during the swearing-in ceremony undermined the prestige of the President's Office.

111-year-old Australian recommends eating chicken brains

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia's oldest-ever man has included eating chicken brains among his secrets to living more than 111 years.

Retired cattle rancher Dexter Kruger on Monday marked 124 days since he turned 111, a day older than World War I veteran Jack Lockett was when he died in 2002.

Kruger told Australian Broadcasting Corp. in an interview at his nursing home in the rural Queensland state town of Roma days before the mile-



stone that a weekly poultry delicacy had contributed to his longevity.

"Chicken brains. You know, chickens have a head. And in there, there's a brain. And they are delicious little things," Kruger said. "There's only one little bite."

WPI inflation hits double digits in April at 10.49 pc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to an all-time high of 10.49 per cent in April, on rising prices of food items, crude oil and manufactured goods, and experts believe that the uptrend is likely to continue.

This is the fourth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. In March, 2021, it was 7.39 per cent.

The low base in April last year, when WPI inflation was (-) 1.57 per cent, also contributed to the spike in April 2021.

"The annual rate of inflation in April 2021, is high primarily because of rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz petrol, diesel etc, and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.

Inflation in food articles in April was 4.92 per cent as



prices of protein-rich items like egg, meat and fish hardened. Inflation in this basket was 3.24 per cent in March 2021.

This was led by 10.88 per cent inflation in 'egg, meat and fish' basket during April, 10.74 per cent in pulses and 27.43 per cent in fruits.

In vegetables, the rate of price rise was (-) 9.03 per cent, against (-) 5.19 per cent in the previous month.

Inflation in the fuel and power basket was 20.94 per cent in April, while in manu-

factured products it was 9.01 per cent.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said at 4.9 per cent inflation in food articles was at a six-month high and data shows a greater impact of supply chain disruptions at the wholesale level.

"We expect the headline WPI inflation to rise further to 13-13.5 per cent in the current month before commencing a downtrend, whereas the core-WPI inflation may continue to rise over the next three prints to a peak of around 10.5

PRICES OF FOOD ITEMS, CRUDE HARDEN

per cent.

"The likely trajectory of the WPI inflation supports our view that there is no space for rate cuts to support the faltering growth momentum, even as we expect the monetary stance to remain accommodative," Nayar added.

India Ratings and Research Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said the impetus to April 2021 inflation came from all the three major groups namely primary article, fuel and power and manufactured products which recorded an inflation of 10.2 per cent, 20.9 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in April 2021.

"Within food components except cereals many major items such as pulses, fruits, eggs, meat, tea etc recorded double digit inflation. In April 2021 core inflation rose to 8.3 per cent. Even inflation ex-fruit and vegetables rose to 10.7 per cent in April indicating that the upsurge in wholesale inflation is not only due to seasonal factors," Sinha added.

Home sales across top 7 cities up 21% in Q1 2021: PropEquity

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Sale of housing units rose by 21 per cent across top seven cities in India in the first quarter of 2021 to 1,05,183 units against 87,236 units in Q1 2020, according to a PropEquity report.

However, the new supply or launches of housing units decreased by 40 per cent in the same period to 59,737 units in Q1 2020 as against 1,00,343 units.

Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, MMR, NCR, and Pune are the cities where home sales witnessed a growth in Q1 2021 versus Q1 2020 at 13 per cent, 29 per cent, 16 per cent, 26 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively. Only Kolkata witnessed downfall of 20 per cent in home sales during the same period.

"Beginning of Q1 was relatively better for Indian realty as compared to last year and there was higher demand in ready to move in units and the projects nearing completion. However, the second wave of Covid will lead to muted



demand going forward and we expect sales to pick up post second wave of Covid ending which should be around Q3 or Q4 onwards," Founder and Managing Director Samir Jasuja said. India's IT capital, Bengaluru saw a rise of 13 per cent in home sales in Q1 2021 at 12,263, but new launches decreased by 40 per cent at 8,492 units. Chennai saw a 29 per cent increase in home sales in Q1 2021 and new launches decreased by 8 per cent to 4,044 units. Kolkata saw an increase of 26 per cent in home sales in the first quarter at 41,323 units, whereas new launches fell by 48 per cent to 20,269 units.

Only NCR witnessed an increase in both home sales and new launches by 6 per cent and

Federal Bank shares gain over 2 pc after earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Federal Bank on Monday gained over 2 per cent after the company reported a nearly 59 per cent jump in its standalone net profit for the quarter ended March.

The stock closed the day with a gain of 2.45 per cent at ₹81.65 on the BSE.

During the day, it jumped 4.70 per cent to ₹83.45.

On the NSE, it gained 2.32 per cent to close at ₹81.50.

Private sector lender Federal Bank on Monday reported a nearly 59 per cent jump in its standalone net profit at ₹478 crore for the quarter ended March.

The bank had posted a net profit of ₹301 crore in the same quarter of the financial year 2019-20.

The profit was higher sequentially also against ₹404 crore in December 2020 quarter.

Sebi proposes framework for gold exchange; suggests trading in electronic gold receipts



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday proposed an elaborate framework for setting up a gold exchange wherein the yellow metal will be traded in the form of electronic gold receipts and will help in having a transparent domestic spot price discovery mechanism.

Also, the proposed denominations - reflecting underlying physical gold - of Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) are 1 kilogram, 100 grams, 50 grams and subject to conditions, those can also be even for 5 and 10 grams.

Apart from issuing a consultation paper on the gold exchange, the watchdog has come out with draft norms for

vault managers and they will be registered as a Sebi intermediaries.

The proposed gold exchange, encompassing the entire ecosystem of trading and physical delivery of gold, is extremely necessary to create a vibrant gold ecosystem in India which is commensurate with its large share of global gold consumption, according to Sebi.

Presenting the Budget for 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that Sebi will be the regulator for gold exchange and Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) will be strengthened to set up the commodity market ecosystem.

Sensex, Nifty log best single-day gains in 7 weeks; banking shares steal limelight

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity gauges Sensex and Nifty registered their biggest single-session gains in about seven weeks on Monday as investor optimism returned amid a consistent drop in new Covid-19 cases in the country.

The BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 848.18 points or 1.74 per cent to end at 49,580.73; and the NSE barometer Nifty surged 245.35 points or 1.67 per cent to settle at 14,923.15 - the biggest one-day gains for both indices since March 30.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, rallying over 7 per cent, followed by SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC and Bajaj Finserv.

On the other hand, L&T, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India, Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Maruti Suzuki and HUL were the laggards.

Of the Sensex constituents, 23 closed with gains and 7 suffered losses.

Sectorally, BSE banking, finance, metal and auto indices rallied up to 3.98 per

Rupee gains for 2nd day on positive equities, rises by 7paise

Mumbai: The rupee rose for the second straight session on Monday to close 7 paise higher at a one-and-a-half month high of 73.22 against the US dollar on the back of positive domestic equities and weak American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened higher at 73.24 and moved in

cent, while telecom and healthcare were in the red.

Broader midcap and smallcap indices surged up to 1.63 per cent.

"Indian indices soared with solid gains led by banking, metal and auto stocks due to fall in infection cases.

The market expects a rapid fall in daily reported Covid cases which helped to ease concerns over extended lockdowns and sharp correction in FY22 estimates.

Banking stocks took a breather as it helped in soothing asset quality concerns,"

a narrow range of 73.16 to 73.26 in day trade. "The Indian rupee appreciated on Monday extending gains from Friday against the greenback tracking strong local equities and on bets that the second COVID-19 wave in the country may have peaked," said Sriram Iyer Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to Binod Modi, Head, Strategy at Reliance Securities, domestic equities witnessed strong rebound as robust Q4 FY21 earnings and early sign of decline in second wave of daily caseload bolstered investors' confidence.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a positive note, while Tokyo and Seoul were in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in mid-session deals.

Telecom moving beyond connectivity, nearly 25% revenues to come from new biz models in coming years

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

As May 17 is observed as World Telecommunications Day, it would not be incorrect to say that telecommunications and Information technology has been one pillar on which the world has been able to sail through the Covid pandemic.

In the last few years, telecommunications has clearly moved beyond providing people-to-people connectivity besides successfully adding layers around it to contribute more meaningfully.

Public health companies today are leveraging emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, geographic information system to help the government and healthcare agencies manage and monitor the virus spread.

Gaurav Vasu, Founder & CEO, UearthInsights, an advisory firm for companies on technology and people issues says "Telecom industry's contribution in the pandemic has been a monumental one where telecom operator created IoT and Sensor-based tracking tech for vac-

nation companies for digital tracking of vaccine supply chains in real-time. Companies also connected citizens to verified supplies of medicines, oxygen, plasma etc and also allowed booking of vaccination slots."

Experts believe that the efforts of leading telecom players have not only helped government and citizens during Covid times but have also helped them test the possibil-

ity to build content, AI/IoT devices and enterprise solutions for the future which are expected to generate 15% to 25% revenue in next 5 years from pools beyond connectivity in content, enterprise solutions and AI/IoT Devices.

While enabling the ecosystem for the society during the pandemic, telecom companies have also invested in their operations to boost capabilities to deliver for the future.

Art of Giving Day Observed Worldwide

It is usually the family from where the sense of love, affection and sharing happiness to others originates. Actually, the love and affection disseminated by the mother become the stepping stone of encouragement for the children to give to others later in their life. Based on this thought, the 8th Art of Giving Day is being celebrated across the world on 17th May 2021.

The Founder of Art of Giving, Dr. Achyuta Samanta has picked 'My Mother-My Hero' as the theme of AOG for

this year to spread the essence of loving others and sharing happiness among them unconditionally. No outdoor activity has been organized to mark the occasion.

he fans and followers of AOG across the globe are celebrating Art of Giving Day enthusiastically by conveying gratitude to their Mothers. Due to the enduring 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic, requests have been made to one and all, to pay gratitude to their mothers on this theme staying at home this year.



Equities rise on lower Covid numbers, banking stocks shine

IANs ■ MUMBAI

India's key stock markets maintained their solid gains during the late-afternoon trade session on Monday on the back of healthy buying witnessed banking and financial sector.

Both the key indices kicked-started the week on a positive note with a gap up opening. Among sectors, banking, financial services and auto space witnessed healthy buying, where as marginal losses were seen in pharma, metal and media indices.

At around 3 p.m., the S&P BSE Sensex traded at 49,570.05, higher by 837.5 points or 1.72 per cent from its previous close.

Similarly, the Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange traded at 14,916.15, up 238.35

points, or 1.62 per cent, from its previous close.

"Currently, Nifty is moving within the territory of a falling channel from last few weeks and is in verge of giving breakout from the same," said Jay Purohit, Technical and Derivatives Analyst, MOFSL.

"A move above 14,970 will lead to a breakout and then we can see a buying momentum towards the 15,300 zone. At current juncture, support for Nifty is inching higher at 14,725 and then the 14,600 zone."

According to Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia: "India's equity benchmarks extended their gains made in the morning session, with frontline gauges surpassing their critical levels."

SBI's New Delhi Main Branch opens over 13,000 FCRA accounts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India on Monday said its New Delhi Main Branch has opened 13,729 Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) accounts till date for transfer of foreign contribution to be spent by NGOs and charitable organisations for social cause.

This branch was designated to open FCRA accounts by the Ministry of Home Affairs in October 2020, SBI said in a statement. Out of the total 22,598 active FCRA associations, 17,611 entities (NGOs and associations) approached SBI for opening of FCRA accounts and the bank has already opened accounts of 78 per cent of the applicants, it said. The rest of the accounts shall also be initiated once their pending documentation formalities are completed, it said.

TAIPA writes to CMs for priority vax for telecom workers

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

The Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA) has written to the chief ministers of the states and union territories urging for the priority vaccination for the telecom infrastructure field engineers and technicians under frontline workers category. In a statement the telecom infrastructure body said that the whole country is facing the second wave of Covid-19 which is more intense than the previous one. In this regard, Taipa has written to the chief ministers addressing that the telecom infrastructure provider industry have huge manpower consisting of frontline workers (technicians and field engineers) who have been working tirelessly during lockdowns to maintain the telecom services.

UJVN LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006,
Telephone: 0135-2763808, Fax 0135-2763508,
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

e-Tender Notice दिनांक 17.05.2021

Office of the Executive Engineer (M) Tiloth Power House, Uttarkashi invites online bid from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

Tender No.:- 03/EE/(M)/2021-22
Name of work :- Polysulphide epoxy resin based protective coating on outer surface of exposed penstock and at C-point of Tiloth Power House, Uttarkashi.
Estimated cost :- ₹ 34,96,724.00 (excluding taxes)
Date of availability of bid document on website :- 19.05.2021 at 16:00 hrs.
Last date of submission of bid on website :- 10.06.2021 at 16:00 hrs. For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in".
Executive Engineer (M)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

O-187

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
KALAHANDI RWS&S DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA.

INVITATION OF BID THROUGH e- TENDERING
Bid Identification No- 11/EE/RWS/ 2021-22 /Bpt Dated-13.05.2021

01.Name of the work :- As per ANNEXURE - A

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online for bidding on office hour only.	Date of opening (Technical Bid)
1	2	3	4
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna	11/EE/RWS/2021-22 /Bpt Dated- 13.05.2021	20.05.2021 10.00 AM	04.06.2021 05.30 PM
			05.06.2021 10.00 AM onwards

Cost of tender paper to be made online payment system. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>. The original documents should be scanned and uploaded.
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi RWS&S Division, Bhawanipatna
OIPR-25005/11/0007/2122

Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 19-20 years, **Sex:** Male, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Injury Marks :** Head Injury, **Recovery Place :** was found dead at K.M. Pole No. 15/32-34 passed dead at Rly Line Near Sultan Puri Fatak Rly Station. Delhi on 10.05.2021 at 12:32 PM. In this regard, a **DD No. 14A,** dated **10.05.2021** has been lodged at PS Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any, person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Sarai Rohilla Rly. Station, Delhi
Ph. : 011-28711697, 8750871308
DP/143/RLY/2021

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA CORRIGENDUM

SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NTT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	RFP NO.306/PM/UBHVN/2021-22	DATE OF CLOSING E-TENDER: 01.06.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF OPENING OF PART- 1 : 02.06.2021 (15:00 HRS)	www.ubhvn.org.in	01723019143 cepsdc@ubhvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

RO NO. 2955

DOCYARD

DR SUBHASH CHANDRA

Chairman & HOD,
Cardiology

BLK-MAX SUPER SPECIALITY
HOSPITAL



Manage hypertension effectively



Hypertension or high blood pressure, the silent killer disease needs to be managed in an effective manner to avoid complications related to COVID-19. Apart from the regular risks associated with patients with hypertension, patients with COVID-19 were found to have a high rate of co-morbidities. Hypertension affects vital organs such as the kidneys, heart and brain even though the person has no symptoms. Heart or kidney failure, as well as a debilitating paralytic stroke, can be the first sign of hypertension. According to WHO, India accounts for over a fifth of these deaths. Undetected and untreated hypertension has been ranked as the highest risk factor for heart disease and related deaths.

Though a majority of COVID-19 patients experience mild symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough and are able to recover fully, it has been noticed that some patients who have hypertension, Diabetes and heart diseases are at the risk of developing more severe symptoms and the resultant complications. The ICMR has thus advised extra care for these patients.

It has also been speculated that hypertensive patients may not respond to anti-covid treatment protocols in comparison to non-hypertensive patients. Therefore, hypertensive patients can become very critical with respect to COVID-19 prognosis. A majority of the hypertensive patients are given medications known as "ACE-Inhibitors". Since these drugs work via the ACE receptors, and the coronavirus binds itself to the ACE receptors located on lung cells (pneumocytes), it was being assumed that patients taking ACE inhibitors to regulate blood pressure might do worse than others. However, to the relief of the medical fraternity in majority of the trials, this hypothesis has been disproved. It is therefore advised that patients who have successfully regulated their blood pressure with these medications should continue to do so and those who have COVID-19 should monitor their blood pressure closely and try to regulate it as much as possible. They must also be in regular touch with their consulting doctors and must immediately contact them in case of any major fluctuations in the blood pressure so as to manage Covid-19 more effectively.

It has been observed that in the early stages of hypertension, patients do not experience any pain or sickness and hence it goes undetected only to surface during a routine check-up. Factors that increase the risk of high blood pressure and heart diseases include unhealthy weight, obesity, an unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, and poorly controlled cholesterol levels, among others. A doctor will look for signs such as high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, lack of appetite, shortness of breath, ankle swelling and chest tightness while diagnosing hypertensive heart disease.

This year, the World Hypertension Day theme was "Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer," with a focus on combating low awareness rates worldwide, especially in low to middle income areas, as well as accurate blood pressure measurement methods.

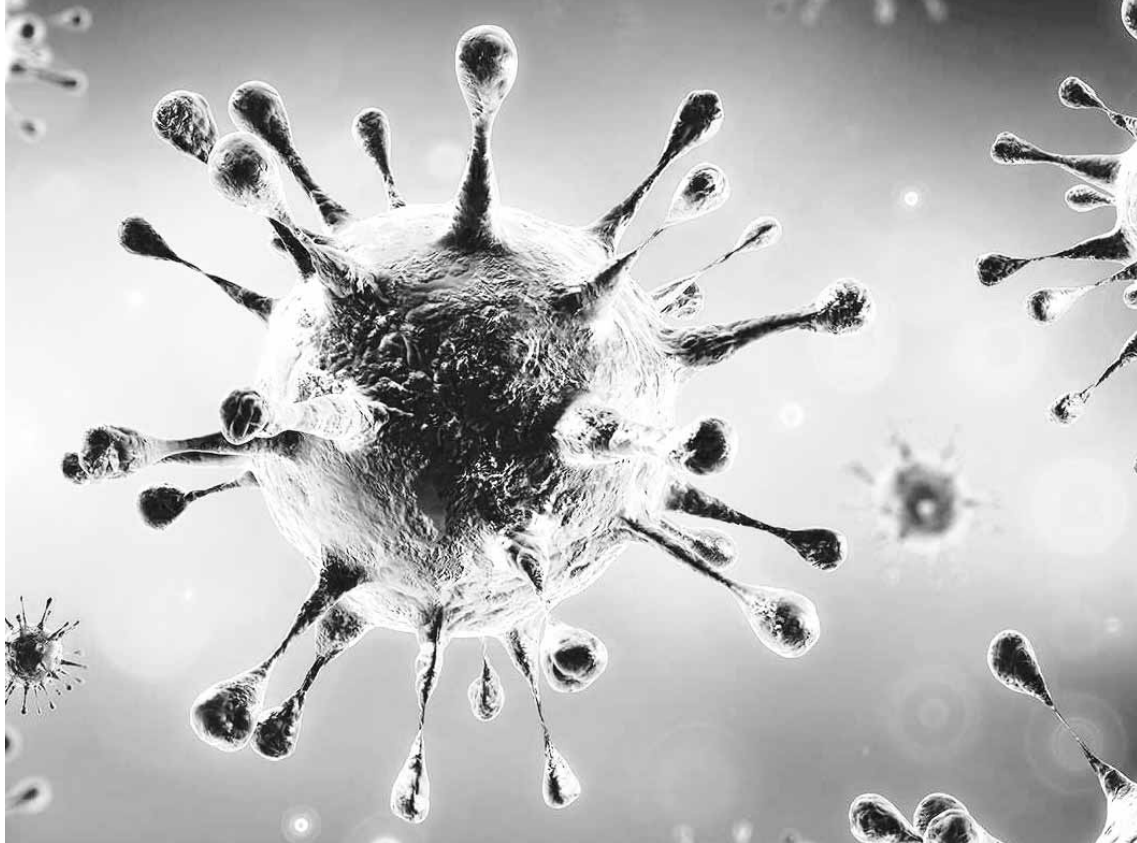
We must understand that the highest spike in blood pressure occurs early in the morning, around 4 to 5 am and before 7 am, in a 24-hour circadian period. Therefore, heart attacks and strokes happen early in the morning. The early morning surge in blood pressure is caused by a high level of catecholamines in the body. As a result, the drugs must be picked up in a way that guarantees 24-hour blood pressure regulation or delivered at a time that addresses the morning blood pressure spike. For example, if a person has a morning surge-on a 24-hour blood pressure monitor, he should be given some of the medicine in the evening, about tea time in order to avoid heart attacks, paralysis and strokes.

COVIDCARE

COCONUT WATER: If you were down with COVID, you might understand the importance of keeping yourself hydrated and what role coconut water has to play in it. Be it weakness or fatigue, coconut water is expected to give you a refreshing feel because of the presence of electrolytes, while also boosting your energy and not giving you a nausea attack at the same time.

Not only this, coconut water is also rich in Calcium, which is vital for

more than just strong bones and teeth. It helps muscles contract and work properly. As you exercise, your muscles pull on your bones and break them down slightly. As your body recovers, your bones use calcium to get stronger and repair. In addition to all of its hydrating benefits, coconut water contains antioxidants that help to neutralise oxidative stress and free radicals created by exercise. Look for fresh coconut water to get the highest levels of antioxidants.



MUTANT DANGER

World Health Organisation has termed the B.1.617 variant of COVID-19 as a variant of global concern. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with doctors to bring you a report on what makes the mutant so dangerous and the efficacy of available vaccines against this mutant

COVID-19's raging fury seems to not stop any time soon. Adding to the woes, is the rapid mutation of the virus. Why, you ask? The continuous mutations in the virus are increasing its severity and infection rate.

If this was not all, the B.1.617 variant, which was reportedly first found in India have been termed as a variant of global concern by the World Health Organisation.

"This new variant is said to have double mutation which means an increase in transmission as well as reduction in neutralisation, possibly stunting the ability of vaccines to curb them. That's why there is a Tsunami of cases in India, thereby making the country the world's second most worst-hit," Dr Yash Javeri, Critical Care, Anaesthesia and Emergency Medicine, Regency Super speciality Hospital, Lucknow, tells you.

Generally, viruses mutate all the time, as part of evolutionary biology, but some mutations weaken the virus while others may make it stronger, enabling it to proliferate faster or cause more infections. "And, latter happened in India and that's making the whole scenario worrisome," Javeri adds.

Many doctors are also terming the variant unique. "The variant is unique as it has both higher infectivity and higher severity. Unprotected exposure has lead to huge clusters in families and communities. Most of the time whole family or clusters are infected. Mutations in the spike gene can make the virus inherently better at infecting people or can help the virus to escape neutralising antibodies. This means if the virus mutates in the "right way", it can reinfect someone who has already recovered from COVID-19," he says.

While, this may answer your queries on people who are getting infected with virus in a span of just five months, this is nothing short of an alarm to not put your guards down, even if you have got COVID previously.

The variant is very infectious and easily transmissible hence, it has now passed on to fifty countries. "This virus is mutating because of expected changes in the RNA virus. The worrisome part is that this virus is directly going into lungs and hence, we are witnessing more cases of chest infection, which is increasing the need of respiratory therapy in the form of ventilators.

This new variant is said to have double mutation which means an increase in transmission as well as reduction in neutralisation, possibly stunting the ability of vaccines to curb them
— Dr Yash Javeri

Other symptoms of this mutant are loss of smell and taste, fever, diarrhoea and dry cough," Dr HK Mahajan, Anaesthesiologist, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Vasant Kunj, tells you.

The recovery and survival rate of patients depends on the stage. "Mostly 85 per cent patients recover easily (home isolation as per the doctors advise), 5 to 10 per cent need hospitalisation (oxygen bed) and remaining 1 per cent of the cases who are from moderate to

severe need extensive care including ventilator. Asymptomatic patients get recovered early, patients with moderate symptoms get recovered in two to three weeks and severe patients takes 2 to 3 months as they have to face post-Covid syndromes too," Mahajan explains.

While, there is not much data to prove the efficacy of the available vaccines against this mutant, Mahajan says, that Covaxin is said to be effective. "Recently, we got a batch of Sputnik V and we are hopeful that this vaccine will also give good results," he says and adds the only way out of this pandemic is to increase vaccination.

Not only this, but Javeri says, more mutations are likely to happen. The virus mutates constantly. "Mutations might increase or decrease lethality and infectivity and might make vaccine less efficacious. Booster doses might be needed for these mutants. The issue is multiple mutants are spreading across the globe. The challenge of mutants is ever growing and is a major deterrent in the war against COVID. Worrisome mutations could also become more common if antibody therapies aren't used wisely," Javeri opines.

BEAT STRESS AND ANXIETY

It is more important than ever to look after our mental and physical wellbeing.

EIRINI PETRATOU

shares tips that can help ward off anxiety

The year 2020 was officially cancelled and we all were looking forward to a great 2021, but it didn't last too long. The nation has been unexpectedly hit by the second wave of COVID-19 and this time it has inched closer to home. The rising number of cases has caused a lot of misery and confusion among people and brings with it issues of anxiety and stress.

Facing the new normal of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues has made us prone to anxiety, stress and depression. Hence, it is more important than ever to look after ourselves and our mental and physical wellbeing. Keeping yourself safe mentally and physically is the key to staying healthy. Here are five ways to keep anxiety and stress at bay during these tough times:

Write a journal: Journaling is a form of self-expression that can enable you to understand your complex feelings and boost your mood. Journaling is known to have positive effects such as calming and clearing your mind, identifying and accepting your emotions, releasing pent-up feelings and everyday stress, and letting go of negative thoughts. The best part about journaling is that it doesn't restrict you to a format: write about how you feel, write down your goals, make lists or even doodle. Be yourself and write whatever or however you want without any fear of judgement.

Mandala colouring: Mandalas have been identified as an important tool to reduce stress, combat depression, and lower blood pressure. Also, colouring is proven to be a stress-buster, which makes Mandala colouring books your best friends during quarantine. Colour a mandala using pencil crayons, crayons, paint, or pastels, as it combines the benefits of meditation and art therapy into a simple practice that can be done at any time and place.

DIY Projects: Indulge in some Do It Yourself (DIY) projects with material available at home to keep your mind occupied in a constructive manner. DIY projects help your brain to function creatively and can help minimise any negative thoughts building up in your head. For example, make your own candles with crayons or photo frames out of old magazines and newspapers.

Reduce your time on social media: Social media has emerged as a very useful tool for people in these trying times. It has become a source for connecting, staying informed and helping each other. However, it is important to minimise your time on social media because constant exposure to negative information can trigger anxiety and stress. It is important to stay informed, but an overload of information can aggravate your emotions in a way that is not healthy.

Workout: Physical and mental health are interlinked. It is recommended that including some kind of workout in your daily routine helps release "feel good" endorphins, which can help reduce symptoms of anxiety or stress.

The writer is Senior User Research Manager, BIC

DadiKaKehna

Boosting immunity is all that matters in COVID times. ROSHANI DEVI shares a list of foods that can help strengthen your immune system and ward off infections



It is more important than ever to have a strong immune system. Feeding the body certain foods may help keep your immune system strong.

One of the most important ways to increase

immunity is to include Vitamin C in the diet. Eat peppers, spinach, Kiwi, broccoli, grapefruit, strawberries and oranges. One can also take a Vitamin C supplement to boost intake of this vitamin.

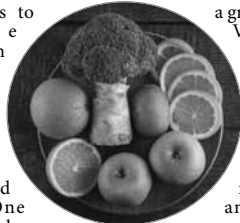
Garlic can build a strong immune system. One can eat garlic in a variety of recipes. Garlic soup is a delicious way to boost

immune system. Dark chocolate, as also pointed out by the Government, can help boost the immune system by protecting the body's cells.

Eat broccoli. It is a great source of Vitamin C. Eat this vegetable regularly.

Ginger besides having anti-inflammatory and antioxidative properties, it can several illness and boost immunity.

Almonds are an excellent source of Vitamin E. Eat a small handful or a quarter of a cup of almonds to build immunity.



Keep an eye on black fungus

DR VINEET SEHGAL tells MUSBA HASHMI how black fungus is resulting in loss of eyesight, dos and don'ts to keep in mind and the treatments available

Black fungus has rung alarm bells in the Capital and several other States with a surge in cases. The rare fungal infection is now turning frequent among COVID patients.

Apart from the various other complications that the infection causes, one of the most severe is loss of eyesight. "Mucormycosis can destroy all ocular tissues and cause widespread destruction. It also can cause blockage of the arteries supplying blood to the eye (Central Retinal Artery) causing rapid vision loss. The symptoms start from mild sinusitis and nasal discharge and can lead to eye infection and blindness in no time. It doesn't stop here and can also cause damage to the brain, leading to death," Dr Vineet Sehgal, Senior Glaucoma Consultant, Sharp Sight Eye Hospitals, tells you.

While there is not much that one can do to prevent the fungal infection, Sehgal lists a few dos and don'ts.

"Wash your hands regularly. Keep regular check on your Diabetic status, since Diabetics, who have or had COVID are more prone to catching this infection. Keep wearing proper mask. Wear your glasses when you visit outside to prevent respiratory droplets going inside eye. Don't take steroids without prescription. This increases your chance of getting infected with black fungus. Last, but not the least, don't touch your eyes without washing hands," Sehgal explains.

The treatments available, he says, are Intravenous Amphotericin B, endoscopic debridement of the necrotic tissue and exenteration.

"Amphotericin B has become the gold standard in the systemic treatment of mucormycosis. Liposomal amphotericin B is the first choice of treatment, as it crosses the blood-brain barrier more effectively. Those who present earlier have better chances of survival. The Amphotericin B

should be given in doses according to the renal status of the patient as it can be a nephrotoxic drug," Sehgal tells you.

A critical stage in the treatment of mucormycosis is the endoscopic debridement of necrotic tissue by ENT specialist. This is usually accompanied by the Amphotericin B irrigation. The endoscopic clearing of all the involved sinuses and debridement of the walls that are infected is done. It is better than open surgery as it gives better visualisation and lesser morbidity.

"Exenteration is the last resort by an ophthalmologist to limit the spread of infection to the brain and rest of the body. In exenteration, the eyeball is removed with its adjoining structures like orbital fat, eyelids and periorbital fascia. It is reserved in the cases when permanent damage has been caused to the eye which cannot be restored and has immediate risk of spreading intracranially," Sehgal tells you.

INBRIEF

One may have never thought that a treatment could be designed not for your hair or skin but for your clothes. You may have heard about the fire resistant clothes but mosquito repellent, anti-microbial, anti-viral or anti odour clothes is something that no one has ever imagined.

With an ambition to protect the world with the power of fabric during a pandemic, Faibr-x, a Nanochemiqs venture, has recently introduced and developed protective anti-viral treatment services in its operations for your clothing. Faibr-x treatments converts any common fabric into a tool, a lifeguard and a utility that helps ease our normal life. Combined with Nanotechnology we make formal, casual, linen, sports wear, undergarments, upholstery or any fabric in a smart machine and that too at the door step of a consumer, as a service.

Faibr-x is a special treatment introduced for your wearable that creates an invisible yet effective shield on your clothes that make them antimicrobial, Antiviral, Anti-Odour and Antifungal. This treatment can be done on any fabric like linen, cotton, etc," says Sasha Bose, MD, sNanochemiqs.



DON'T LOCK YOUR SPIRITS DOWN

Pandemic-induced lockdowns have become a way of life. After talking to a few clinical psychologists, CHRISTY VARGHESE realises how important it is to change our response to reality when we cannot change our reality

While the first case of the novel Coronavirus in India was detected on January 27, 2020, it did not affect the common citizens until the end of March, when a three-week nationwide lockdown was announced. And then there were drastic changes in our lives, the way we knew it. Exams were indefinitely postponed. The academic calendar has been in a disarray since last year. For many students, online classes were a luxury because they did not have access to devices or a data connection. Offices encouraged employees to work from home, some of them even providing the equipment needed to facilitate such a change. Domestic helps were out of a job for months on end. But things gradually slipped into a routine. Families, which stayed apart for a huge portion of the day, have since gotten used to being around each other for extended periods. The maids are back at work. Children have settled into online classes even though they might not be completely happy with these.

If we say things have changed in these 14 months, it would be almost akin to an understatement. Besides observable events, there are other incidents happening in the background which are just as noteworthy, if not more. While, on the surface, children and adults have got used to being away from their peers and colleagues, other issues chipping away at their mental health. According to psychiatrist and Founder & Director of The Happy Tree, De-addiction And Mental Health Hospital, Dr Anunet Sabharwal, "It can be easily observed that lack of structure and routine is causing significant stress among children. College students and school-going children alike are experiencing increased levels of anxiety because they are not able to meet their friends and attend classes physically. Similarly, working from home (WFH) has created many mental health challenges for the working class as it has been observed that the eponymous model has led to greater emotional exhaus-



tion and cognitive distress. The lack of physical connection and social support that one requires from ones colleagues is leading to more stress. Setting boundaries happen to be an integral part of the WFH model, the lack of which results in an increasing urge to work for longer periods leading to rising levels of stress and anxiety impacting the long term productivity of the employees."

However, clinical psychologist, author and Harvard alumni, Dr Rajat Mitra, approaches it from a different perspective and believes that it has its share of positives as well. He shared that one prominent benefit which cannot be denied happens to revolve around families, which would spend most of the day away from each other. People who constitute such families

have had an opportunity to examine themselves and their relationship with their near (pun unintended) and dear ones. "While parents are still engrossed with work, they now have a chance to observe their children the entire day, whereas earlier, they would be too tired to interact with them after getting home from work on weekdays. The lockdown has presented working parents with the opportunity to connect and engage with their children. Many parents who consult me rue the fact that their children don't experience childhood the way they did. While that is unavoidable in these times, I recommend them to have a conversation with their kids and take a break from the digital world along with them. Simple activities such as being involved in indoor games — carrom

or ludo — go a long way in dissipating while encouraging unfiltered interaction," he said.

Dr Mitra also voiced his thoughts on how the pandemic could be changing our psychological wiring. He said, "We are dealing with adaptability here. We, humans, are resilient beings and time is a testament to the fact that we can adapt at will. We will survive this pandemic, there is no doubt about that. However, we would have changed in certain aspects. For example, various studies have indicated that introverts are dealing with lockdown better than extroverts who have had to spend precious time and energy developing coping mechanisms which are more in line with these times. Introverts are being held in high esteem by employers today,

while that was not the case before the pandemic."

He also feels that there is a good possibility we have developed some new neural circuits since we have to adapt to the needs of these times. "I can't remember the last time I met my students in a classroom. Ever since the world has been made digital, I have realised that I have subconsciously learnt to recognise my students based on their respective voices. Even when I step out, just about everyone has a mask on and my psyche has been forced to adjust. While earlier one's face was their most dominant identifier, I now recognise people by their voice," Dr Mitra said.

Moreover, sitting at home in these dystopian times is underlined by confusion and disorder due to information overload. Simply put, information overload (also known as infobesity, infoxication, information anxiety and information explosion) is the difficulty in understanding an issue and effectively making decisions when one has too much information about that issue. An author and clinical psychologist, Pulkit Sharma, said, "A lot of information is easily accessible in these digital times. Most of it related to the pandemic might be true, but trust me, a lot of fake news is being circulated. Is it all relevant? Of course not. While this digital age has its boons, having access to unlimited information is turning out to be a major disadvantage. This has led to a growing sense of fatigue and pessimism among the masses. There is no need to drown yourself in the news or social media which will only lead you to worry and panic. Reports have determined that of all those who were afflicted with COVID-19, 98 per cent survived. Yes, the reality is that the pandemic has a mortality rate of just two per cent but we are blowing things out of proportion."

"We have to understand that there are times when we cannot change our reality. However, in those instances, we do have control over our response to that reality. So, in these times I believe our focus should

be on ourselves and how we can make this gift of life meaningful," he added.

A sentiment that was echoed by Dr Mitra, "During online consultations, I see that more and more people are turning inwards and indulging in introspection without any coercion. It is a global occurrence, to be honest, one which has been unheard of in recorded history."

Both psychologists agreed on the fact that it ultimately comes down to how one perceives things. "For a long time, everyone in the urban jungle felt that there was no time to do things that they wanted to do. Now that time is abundant, one should be thankful for it and make use of the same. For the working class following the WFH model, it is very important to make a schedule and stick by it. Being mindful of the things that you wish to do and incorporating them into your schedules has a very wholesome feel. On the other hand, after making a schedule if you fail to abide by it right at the beginning, the rest of the schedule goes to waste. Hence, the simple act of making or planning a schedule is an exercise in being the right frame of mind in the immediate future. This enables one to be present and constructively make use of time," expressed Dr Sharma.

Additionally, Dr Sabharwal provided a concise guide on how to keep one's self grounded in these uncertain times. He said, "Try to focus on things you can control instead of focussing too much on things you can't control. Check-in with your loved ones as often as you can. Try to regularly engage in some light exercises such as stretching, walking as they might help you feel better and will allow you to stay active. Don't forget to take a break from social media and news channels now and then as listening and watching about the pandemic might be upsetting and overwhelming."

Staying at home can be just the opportunity to take stock of your lives, be thankful for your blessings and structure your priorities.

Not against remixes: Kumar Sanu

Playback veteran Kumar Sanu is not against the current trend of remixing old songs. He says that he likes a remixed number even better if the original voice is retained. He also opened up with nostalgia on his association with composers Nadeem-Shravan.

"I was never against remixes. There are some songs that the new generation does not even know who had composed the music or who had sung them. They get to learn about it through its remix, which is a plus point. Secondly, remix is not bad if the lyrics and composition are kept intact and only the arrangement is changed. Also if a superhit song is remixed and the remix also becomes popular, it is certainly a plus point for today's music directors and producers. It is good for everyone," Sanu said.

Quizzed if he is personally fond of remixes, the singer replied: "Personally I like remixes when the remix of a song also features its original singer."

Sanu became popular in the nineties, particularly singing romantic numbers that reigned that charts back then, and among his biggest hits were songs he recorded for Nadeem-Shravan, starting *Aashiqui* in 1990. Shravan Kumar Rathod of the Nadeem-Shravan duo passed away last month. Walking down the memory lane, Sanu recalled how he has a special memory with literally every song he sang for them.

"Music composer duos like Nadeem-Shravan are rare and Shravan ji's demise is a great loss for our industry. I have so many memories with them. Shravan ji was a soft spoken and jovial person, and loved me a lot. They used to call me Tiger. I have a separate memory associated with every song I sang for them, the shows we did together, the tasty food I had at their place, the tips they shared to help me during song recording. I remember how, at times, they would try to make a song a little tougher with a classical touch while I would try to make it easier, and how we celebrated after every recording was completed. These are the things which keep flashing in my mind now," Sanu recalled.

Any Nadeem-Shravan number close to his heart? "Every song I have sung for them



is special to me. Their songs used to have melody and good lyrics, for which people remember me. One song, *Zindagi ki talash mein hum maat ke kitne paas aa gaye* from the film *Saathi*, is a meaningful song and really close to my heart," revealed the singer.

Times are difficult especially when the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc in India and the veteran singer suggests everyone to get vaccinated at the earliest.

"I have completed my second dose of the vaccine. It has been 12 days since I took my second dose and I haven't experienced any side effects, which people are talking about, like pain or fever. Everybody should get vaccinated. It is good for them," Sanu suggested.

What is it that he is missing the most being stuck at home during lockdown? "I miss live concerts and recordings. I enjoy doing live performances a lot and I am definitely missing it," shared Sanu.

—IANS



Solace in nature

Artist OLIVIA FRASER's latest exhibition — *Indian Summer* — features a selection of her latest body of works, all executed in the past year during her time spent between India and the UK. By UMA NAIR

Between the Amaltas, the Bmango and artist Olivia Fraser's prismatic flower and bee series, the suite of works offers succour to the soul in troubled times of sorrow and tragedy. Grosvenor Gallery London presents her exhibition — *Indian Summer* — which features a selection of Olivia's latest body of works, all executed in the past year during her time spent between India and the UK.

Being in and out of lockdown, Olivia turned to and found solace in nature. Whether it was among the blossoms of the Amaltas trees or the bounty of sweet Indian mangoes, the spiritual connections associated with nature provided a boon to the soul and a pleasure to the senses signalling a hope for the future.

"I painted these works during the first lockdown in India, just as the summer heat was notching up into the early forties (degrees). As a Northern Scot, even after all these years in Delhi, I find extreme heat challenging, but when the Amaltas trees (the Indian laburnum) burst into bloom in May, their golden boughs light up and lift the streets of Delhi out of their hot torpor," says Olivia.

She also adds that she is fascinated by the idea of harness-

ing the senses during meditation. She states that when she creates a *Bloom* with both bee and flower petals, she is drawing on the idea that the bee and flower become one as in *Bhramari*, which is a yogic asana involving the sound of the bee. Look closely and the work is more like an insignia of surreal splendour. The petals of the bloom and the wings of the bees have about them a fulsome lushness. Anatomical perfection and precision is as important as botanical meticulousness. At once you know that Olivia has a deepened sense of both the garden of earthly delights as well as yogic symbolism and evocations.

In *Bloom*, the blue Lotus flower is surrounded by two golden bees. The lotus flower has ancient sacred associations within the art of India. As a flower that blooms out of the mud, it is associated with purity, perfection, resurrection and



spiritual growth. The lotus along with the colour blue are both used to depict Lord Krishna in Hindu mythology.

She quotes the Gheranda Samhita C 1700 and says, "Slowly draw in air and perform *Bhramari Kumbhaka*, exhale it

very slowly and then the sound of the bee will arise. On hearing the sound of the bee from within, lead the mind there. *Samadhi* will occur, together with the bliss arising from the realisation 'I am that.'"

The Amaltas trees and mangoes depicted in *Indian Summer I and II* are a reminder of the summer season in India and the joy the season can bring. "I watched the Amaltas tree outside my studio window come into its sunshine bloom over the course of the weeks that I was painting this." Olivia's continued interest in yoga, the different visualisations used in meditation and nature itself (an inner and outer vision) have also influenced these new works.

She first came to India in 1989 and had her first show in Delhi in 1991. Following in the footsteps of her ancestor, James Baillie Fraser who painted India, its monuments and land-

scape in the early 1800s, Olivia set out to continue where her ancestor had left off, painting the architecture of India and its people. James Baillie Fraser also commissioned local artists to paint what has become the famous 'Fraser Album' — the greatest masterpiece of Company School Painting portraying the different types of people and their jobs, crafts or castes against stark white backgrounds. This hybrid form of painting where Indian artists created something that mixed techniques and ideas from the East and West has greatly influenced Olivia's work during the 1990s.

Since then, she has studied the traditional Indian miniature painting technique under Jaipuri and Delhi masters, and now uses this in her work with its gem-like stone colours, its unique miniature brush work, and its elaborate decorative and burnished surfaces. Having been, especially influenced by Nathdwara *pichwai* painting in recent years, Olivia has been exploring its visual language, honing it down to create one of her own that seeks to convey the very essence of the Rajasthani tradition.

(The exhibition opened on May 17 at the prestigious Cromwell Place in London.)

TREND BLAZER



'ACTORS CAN PICK UP STUFF THAT'S HATKE'

Actor **NEENA GUPTA** had no inhibition about portraying a nonagenarian in the forthcoming film *Sardar Ka Grandson*. She says nowadays, just like filmmakers, actors too have a chance to pick stuff that is "hatke."

Talking about actors not shying away from portraying older characters, Neena said, "Times have changed, and the way people are writing scripts. The way actors are getting a variety of roles and the most important thing is that the audience is accepting it have also helped. It is encouraging."

fairtalk MANAV KAUL



"This was only last year but feels like I can't remember when was the last time I visited the mountains. When was the last time I had a hearty laughter or hugged someone after meeting them? Last year I thought that I will forget this like a bad dream but now we are living in this bad dream and keep reminiscing about our good old times."

dailytalk SHILPA SHETTY



"To be able to stay united and help each other, we need to be gentle with ourselves. Prioritise what needs and deserves your attention before everything else. Please don't neglect your health, your food, your sleep or even your water intake. You can ensure everyone around you is okay only when you are okay."

DON'T HAVE INSTINCT FOR MARRIAGE: KELLY

Model-actor **KELLY BROOK** has been with her beau Jeremy Parisi for years, but is not desperate to have children or tie the knot. "I've got a bucket list and I have to say a wedding is not on it," Brook said.

"I feel like marriage and children are not things I've wanted. I like travelling and being with my partner. I like my freedom. I like being spontaneous," she said.

She added that having children is a huge commitment.



Eng Tests aren't warm-ups for WTC final: Wagner

▶ **shortpasses**

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner on Monday said his team is not going to treat the upcoming two-match series against England as warm-ups for the World Test Championship (WTC) final versus India.

India and New Zealand will lock horns for the inaugural WTC title, at Southampton's Ageas Bowl, from June 18-22, four days after the Test series against hosts England is scheduled to conclude.

"We're not going to treat these two Test matches against England just as warm-ups (for the WTC final)," Wagner told reporters at the Auckland airport before his departure.

"I know for a fact we're going to get out there and pride ourselves the way we've been playing Test cricket and we want to win Test matches for New Zealand," he added.

A majority of the New Zealand Test players arrived in London on Monday for the two-match series against England and the WTC final against India, but Wagner was part of the second batch of cricketers to leave for their UK tour.

Wagner, ranked number three in the world among Test bowlers, trained with the Dukes ball in Lincoln before departing for England.

Dukes ball is used for Test matches in England.

He said he benefited from the camp.



NZ pacers Neil Wagner, center, and Tim Southee, right, during training camp. ©BLACKCAPS



A majority of the New Zealand Test players arrived in London for the two-match series against England and the WTC final against India. The players arrived on Sunday afternoon after flying from Auckland via Singapore and were transferred to the Ageas Bowl in Southampton where they will be based for the first two weeks of the tour. ©BLACKCAPS

"It's been quite nice, it's obviously got different characteristics to the Kookaburra," Wagner said.

"The way we've been training for the last while is something we didn't always have in the past, having the facilities and having a marquee up and getting a number of training sessions in before going to England.

"On tours in the past you rock up there and you've only got a couple of training sessions and maybe one head out with the Dukes ball before the first Test and with that you can find yourself a little bit behind."

He added, "Having had those little bit of trainings leading into it has been quite beneficial, just because it's a little bit different, and obviously adapting to it. It's been really good

preparation and everybody is excited bowling with it."

This will be Wagner's third trip to England as part of the New Zealand squad, although he played there only during the 2013 Test series, besides playing in the County Championship for Lancashire.

"Sometimes you have to control all that because there's a high expectation of the ball doing a lot and moving around but sometimes you can get there and it can be quite flat and slow as well," Wagner said.

"The nice thing about it is we've got a wealth of experience and the guys have been there before so we can feed off each other and bounce ideas off each other as well," he added.

Archer out of NZ series

London: England pacer Jofra Archer, who recently returned to action after missing the now-suspended IPL, has been ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand as his elbow injury has resurfaced.

The 26-year-old played a game for his County side Sussex against Kent but had to be pulled out of the game after bowling just five overs.

Before this match, the fast bowler had also featured in a game against Surrey last week in a second XI game, bowling 29.2 overs.

"England and Sussex seamer Jofra Archer has been ruled out of the LV= Insurance Test Series against New Zealand starting next month," an England and ales Cricket Board (ECB) statement read.

".....He was suffering from pain in his right elbow when bowling and was unable to bowl in the final two days of the match."

Archer had declared himself fit for the Test series against New Zealand, starting June 2 in London, but the pain in his elbow scuttled his and ECB's plan.

The cricket board is now pondering the right treatment for Archer. The England squad for the New Zealand series will be named on Tuesday. PTI

SS DAS IS EVES BATTING COACH

NEW DELHI: Gutsy former India opener Shiv Sunder Das has been appointed the batting coach of the Indian women's for the tour of England and he is looking forward to use his coaching stint at NCA to guide the youngsters during the trip. Das, who has played 23 Tests between 2000-02, has a decent average of near 35 with more than 1300 runs, including two hundreds and nine fifties.

INDIA'S TESTS WEREN'T FIXED: ICC

DUBAI: The ICC on Monday dismissed claims made by news channel Al Jazeera that India's Test matches against England (2016) and Australia (2017) were fixed, saying the passages of play identified as fixed were entirely predictable, and therefore "implausible as a fix".

DORTMUND, WOLFSBURG IN CL

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund and Wolfsburg clinched Champions League qualification on Sunday night. Dortmund won 3-1 at Mainz and Wolfsburg drew 2-2 at Leipzig to ensure both sides will finish among the top four to qualify.

EVERTON END CL HOPES

LIVERPOOL: Everton's slim hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League were extinguished on Sunday by a 1-0 loss to last-place Sheffield United.

AC MILAN COMPLICATE CL FATE

MILAN: AC Milan complicated their passage to the Champions League with a goalless draw at home against Cagliari. They could have sealed a return to CL with a win but dropped points with a top-four finish going down to the wire in their final game.

IGA ENTERS WTA TOP 10

ROME: Iga Swiatek, who won the Italian Open on Sunday jumped six places on the WTA Tour rankings to enter the top 10 on Monday. The 19-year-old player is now ninth. Agencies

Oz IPL cricketers return home

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's IPL players, including Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell and Steve Smith, arrived in Sydney on Monday after a stop-over at Maldives due to travel ban from Covid-ravaged India, almost two weeks after the T20 league was suspended due to the health crisis.

Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including players, officials and commentators who participated at the non-suspended league, landed at the Sydney airport Monday morning after spending 10 days at Maldives.

Australian players, however, couldn't head home immediately as the country had imposed a travel ban from India, which is battling a deadly second wave



Glenn Maxwell arrives for hotel quarantine in Sydney on Monday. AP

of the coronavirus.

They will all be spending two weeks in a Sydney hotel for the mandatory quarantine.

According to national broadcaster ABC, Smith, Cummins, Warner and Ricky Ponting, who coached Delhi Capitals, were among the people on the Air Seychelles flight.

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey also

headed home on Sunday via Doha after testing negative for Covid-19 on Friday.

CA GRATEFUL TO BCCI

Cricket Australia's interim chief executive Nick Hockley on Monday said he was "grateful" to the BCCI for ensuring a "safe and quick" return of Australia's IPL contingent from India following a stopover in Maldives.

"We are delighted. We're really grateful to the BCCI for getting them home quickly and safely. I haven't spoken to them since they've landed, but obviously we've been in text exchange and I'm sure they'll be very relieved and very appreciative to be home," Hockley was quoted as saying in Sydney Morning Herald.

Federer excited for his comeback

AFP ■ GENEVA

Roger Federer on Monday said that he expects to return to the top tier of tennis even though the next generation of players will have gained ground during his lengthy injury lay-off.

Federer begins his comeback-proper on Swiss home soil in Geneva on Tuesday, with the 39-year-old tennis legend starting a run of tournaments including the French Open, Halle, Wimbledon and then the Tokyo Olympics.

Federer returned to the courts in March, having been out for more than a year following two knee surgeries, winning his first match in Qatar before losing his second.

Doha was his first appearance since January 2020 and an Australian Open semi-final defeat to Novak Djokovic.

"I'm just concerned about where my game is at. The guys on tour are all in a good rhythm. The level that everybody is producing in great. I want to achieve that as well again," Federer told reporters.

His old rivals Djokovic and Rafael Nadal played out a two-hour 49-minute final in Rome on Sunday, with Nadal claiming a 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 victory to match the Serbian world number one's record of 36 Masters 1000 series titles.

Starc back for WI tour

Sydney: Australia welcomed back their star players and picked four spinners in an extended 23-man squad named Monday for a white-ball tour of the Windies in July. The team will be captained by Aaron Finch and will feature the return of Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, David Warner and Pat Cummins, who all missed the recent trip to New Zealand. The tour starts with the first of five T20Is in St Lucia on July 9 and ends with the third of three ODI in Barbados on July 24 as the teams prepare for the T20 World Cup in India later this year. AFP

Serena gets 1st clay win of season

Parma: Serena Williams brushed aside the challenge of local teenager Lisa Pigato in the opening round of WTA tournament in Parma on Monday.

Williams, ranked eighth in the world, beat the 572nd-ranked Pigato, making her WTA debut, 6-3, 6-2 in the first meeting between them. Serena made a sluggish start as the 17-year-old came up

with three glorious winners to break the 23-time Grand Slam champion in the first game.

Williams, however, was full of praise for her teenage opponent.

"L i s a played really well," she said in her on-court interview.

"She told me she was only 17. Her future is super-bright. She handled the moment well, so I look forward to cheering for her in the future."



Serena Williams

'No surprise': Clarke on Bancroft's revelations on ball tampering issue

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former captain Michael Clarke won't be surprised if it comes to light that more players were aware of the ball-tampering plot in 2018 as he accused Cricket Australia of sweeping the issue under the carpet.

The scandal had led to a review of Australia's win-at-all-cost team culture and led to one-year bans being slapped on then captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and a nine-month suspension on opener Cameron Bancroft, who had the sandpaper in his possession.

The issue was put under the spotlight again when Bancroft last week revealed that Australian bowlers in the team at that time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

"If you are playing sport at the highest level you know your tools that good it's not funny. Can you imagine that ball being thrown back to the bowler and the bowler not knowing about it? Please," Clarke told Sky Sports radio on Monday.

"I love how the articles in the paper are, 'It is such a big surprise that Cameron Bancroft has made a ...' Actually, if you read his quotes, it is not what he did say as what he didn't say in regards to other people knowing about 'sandpaperage,'" he said.

Following Bancroft's interview, Cricket Australia said it was open to a re-investigation into the incident and its integrity team has already approached the pacer for more information.

"What's the surprise? That more than three people knew? I don't think anybody who has played the game of cricket, or knows a little bit about cricket, would know that in a team like that, at the highest level, when the ball is such an important part of the game," Clarke said.

"If you'd played the game of cricket, you would know more than three people know what was going on in there. The problem Cricket Australia has is the fact they've tried to sweep it under the carpet and not come out and tell the full story.

"You don't have to have played cricket at the highest level. If you know anything about the game of cricket, you know on that day, on that field, what went down, more than three people had to know about it. Impossible not to..."

"That's why there's going to be finger-pointing until, I think until someone writes their book and tells the complete, honest truth. It will continue because it hasn't been finished, so much is left unsaid from the players and even what happened with staff."

Clarke also threw his weight behind Bancroft. "I don't think Cameron Bancroft should be smashed for what he's come out and said, he's tried to say nothing but he's doing an interview," he said.



Barcelona players hold the trophy aloft after the UEFA Women's Champions League final match between Chelsea and FC Barcelona in Gothenburg on Sunday. Barcelona won 4-0. ©FCBtwitter

French title chase down to wire

AFP ■ PARIS

Lille's bid to win the Ligue 1 title will go to the final weekend of the season after Sunday's goalless draw with Saint-Etienne allowed Paris Saint-Germain to moved to within a point of the leaders.

Reigning champions PSG strolled to a simple 4-0 win over 10-man Reims to pile the pressure on Lille, who will nonetheless claim the French title for the first time since 2011 if they win at mid-table Angers next Sunday.

Christophe Galtier's Lille hit the post in the final seconds of a

frustrating match with little in the way of goalmouth incident.

It was not the display the fans who had gathered to follow the team bus to the Stade Pierre Mauroy ahead of the match expected and will leave those supporters with frayed finger nails next weekend.

PSG meanwhile were gifted a perfect start at the Parc des Princes when Yunus Abdelhamid handled Kylian Mbappe's shot in front of an empty goal, conceding a penalty and being sent off in the process.

Neymar slotted home the spot-kick in the 13th minute and 11 min-

utes later Mbappe pounced on a wayward pass across the area by Thomas Foket to tap home the second. Marquinhos made it three in the 68th minute with a thumping header from Neymar's corner.

Kean rounded off an easy win for PSG one minute from the end.

Monaco are also still in with a potential shout for the title after their 2-1 home win over Rennes moved Niko Kovač's third-placed side three points behind Lille with one to play.

However the Principality club have a significantly inferior goal difference to both Lille and PSG.

Ter Stegen out of Euro 2020

AFP ■ BARCELONA

German international goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen on Monday announced that he is to undergo an operation on his right knee that will rule him out of Euro 2020.

"I have decided together with the medical team of the club (Barcelona) that I will do a complementary intervention on my knee. I'm sad that I will miss the Euro 2020 this summer with Germany," the 29-year-old said on Instagram. "For the first time in many years I will be a fan at home supporting my country, I hope we win it!"

Barca said in a statement that Ter Stegen is scheduled to go



under the knife on May 20 in Malmö, Sweden, ruling him out of the club's final LaLiga game of the season next weekend.

His announcement comes a day after Barca were officially left out of the running for the La Liga title after a 2-1 home defeat by Celta Vigo left them seven points behind La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid with one game to play.

Ter Stegen has played just 24 times for his country as he has struggled to dislodge Bayern Munich stopper and Germany captain Manuel Neuer from the number one spot.

Germany are in Group F alongside world champions France, Euro 2016 winners Portugal and Hungary.

e-Procurement Notice for Road & Building works Identification No.				
Online-02/RWD-I/KJR of 2021-22				
1 Name of the Work :- Road & Building works				
2 Total No. of works :- 15 Nos.				
3 Estimated cost :- Approx. Estimated cost of Rs.50.00 lakhs				
4 Class of contractor :- "D & C" & "C & B" & "B & A" class as per eligibility criteria				
5 Period of completion :- 4 to 6 calendar months as per financial eligibility				
6 Other details :-				
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in OIO EE RW Divn-II, Keonjhar.
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Keonjhar	02 of 21-22	17.05.21 at 10.00 A.M. To 27.05.21 up to 1.30 P.M.	26.05.21 up to 2.00 P.M.	28.05.21 at 11.00 AM
Further details can be seen from the web site www.tendersorissa.gov.in				
OIPR-25093/11/0003/2122				
Executive Engineer R.W. Division-II, Keonjhar.				

E-96 OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER : BARGARH	
Short Tender Call No. 4150	dt. 15.5.2021
SHORT TENDER CALL NOTICE	
Sealed tenders are hereby invited from authorized Agencies / firms/Suppliers for supply of Drugs, Chemical, Reagents, Medical Consumables & miscellaneous items for COVID-19 hospital of C.D.M & P.H.O.Bargarh district. Bid documents should be submitted through Regd.Post/ Speed Post/courier. For date, time & terms and conditions regarding Tender Call, please log on to the district web site www.bargarh.nic.in	
Sd/- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Bargarh	
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE	
No. 4152	dt. 15.5.2021
Due to lockdown for Covid -19 pandemic, the last date for receipt of tender document, reference No.3758/dt.27.04.21 for procurement of drug, medical consumables, BCL and Miscellaneous items and reference No. 3744/dt.27.04.21 for procurement of chemical, reagent and medical consumables are extended up to dt.31.05.2021 at 12.30 PM and the opening date will be dt.01.06.2021 at 11 AM. All other terms and condition of the tenders are remain same.	
Sd/- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Bargarh	
OIPR-10124/11/0005/2122	

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, KENDRAPARA.	
At : Ichhapur, Post : Shree Baladevjevi, Email: eerws@kendrapara@gmail.com	
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement]	
Bid Identification No. RWS/ 09 /2021-2022	
Letter No. 2098 / Dated 12.05.2021	
1	The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites lump sums its bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes in Kendrapara District.
2	Name of the work :- Execution of RPWS scheme to Ratanpur under Marshaghai Block in Kendrapara District.
3	No. of Work :- One
4	Value of the Work :- ₹ 51.63 Lakhs
5	Concerned tender inviting :- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara authority
6	Cost of Bid documents (Rs.) :- ₹ 10000/-
7	Class of Bidder :- "B" & "A"
8	Period of Completion :- Six months
9	Availability of bid documents in the website :- From date, 20.05.2021 at 10.00 A.M to date, 01.06.2021 till 5.30 P.M
10	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification :- On to 27.05.2021 till 1.00 P.M
11	Date of Opening of Bid :- On date, 02.06.2021 at 10.00 A.M.
The bidders have to participate in the tender through ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be had from the Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall only be appeared in the above website.	
OIPR-25004/11/0002/2122	
(Er. B.K.Nayak) Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara	