



Pages 12 | ₹5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



DEVE GOWDA ASKS MODI
TO HELP HORTICULTURE
FARMERS

P4



MAHA TO GET 60K VIALS
OF MUCORMYCOSIS
DRUG: TOPE

P5



BIDEN SPEAKS WITH
EGYPTIAN PREZ ON
MIDEAST CONFLICT

P10



'BUMRAH
VULNERABLE
TO INJURIES'

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 40 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 67% Min: 19%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 39.4°C (-1) Min: 23.0°C (-4)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:25 hrs 19:11 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

19:14 hrs 05:58 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Desolate look during lockdown at Chandni Chowk, in the Capital on Tuesday.

Subodh Kumar Jaiswal is new CBI Director: Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, the former police chief of Maharashtra, has been appointed as the chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation for a two-year period. The government notification came this evening after a series of meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Justice and opposition leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. Mr Jaiswal is a 1985-batch IPS officer of Maharashtra cadre. He is currently serving as the chief of the Central Industrial Security Forces.

Ex-West Bengal CM Buddha hospitalised: Ex-West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who tested Covid-19 positive last week, was admitted to a hospital here on Tuesday after his health condition deteriorated, officials said. His oxygen level slipped below 90 per cent this morning, following which doctors advised hospitalisation, they said.

Manhunt launched for missing Mehul Choksi: Lawyer

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, wanted in a Rs 13,500 crore loan fraud in Punjab National Bank, has gone missing in Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since January 2018, his lawyer and the Royal Police Force of the Caribbean island nation said.

The businessman was last seen on Sunday in his car. Police recovered the vehicle after a search but Choksi could not be found, a statement from the Antiguan police said on Monday night India time.

His lawyer Vijay Aggarwal confirmed that Choksi had been missing since Sunday. Police in Antigua have started search operations for him. The family is worried about his safety," Aggarwal said today.

The CBI, which is probing allegations against Choksi, is verifying the reports through "formal and informal" channels.

The statement from the Antiguan police carries a photograph of the businessman and seeks information from the public.

"The Police are investigating a Missing Person Report made of 62-year-old Mehul Choksi of Jolly Harbour. Mehul was reported missing on Sunday 23rd May 2021 at the Johnson Point Police Station," it said.

Antiguawirenewsroom, a local media outlet, quoted police commissioner Atlee Rodney as saying that the police is "following up on the whereabouts of Indian businessman Mehul Choksi", who is "rumoured" to be missing.

PTI

Yaas landfall likely near Odisha's Dhamra Port: IMD

Yaas intensifies into very severe cyclonic storm, says IMD; red-coded warning alert issued

SNS & PTI

BHUBANESWAR/KOLKATA/RANCHI,
25 MAY

Odisha and West Bengal have evacuated lakhs of people from vulnerable areas to safety as severe cyclonic storm Yaas is nearing the coasts and is expected to make landfall near Dhamra Port in Bhadrak district early on Wednesday morning.

Neighbouring Jharkhand is also preparing for Yaas impact.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that her administration has evacuated over nine lakh people to safe shelters.

The Odisha government said it has moved over 2 lakh people from vulnerable areas in coastal districts to safety and will complete the evacuation of 7.5 lakh people by 9 pm tonight.

IMD Director General Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said that Yaas has intensified into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm (VSYS) on Tuesday evening. He said the cyclone's impact will be severe for six hours before and after the landfall and Chandbali will witness the maximum damage.

Dr Umashankar Das, a scientist at the Regional Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar said that the landfall will most likely be between Dhamra and Chandbali in Odisha's Bhadrak district.

Bhadrak and Balasore districts will be in the eye of the storm' while bordering Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapara districts will be severely impacted by Yaas, said Odisha Special Relief Commissioner P K Jena.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik said that each life is precious, our policy is zero casualty while stressing on drinking water, Covid care, uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen and round the clock monitoring. Over 5,000

'BIG TREES, ELECTRIC POLES MAY GET UPROOTED'

► Yaas very likely to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach near north Odisha coast close to Dhamra port by the early morning tomorrow.

► Chandbali is likely to face the maximum fury.

► Wind speeds will increase to 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph over northwest Bay of Bengal and along and off north Odisha and adjoining West Bengal coasts.

► In Odisha's Mayurbhanj district and West Bengal's Midnapore (east) and South 24 Parganas districts, wind speeds may increase to 100-120 kmph gusting to 145 kmph.

officers have been deployed for rescue and relief work, he added.

Wind velocity has picked up in Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Bhadrak districts causing damage to houses, uprooting trees and disrupting power supply.

Miss Banerjee said over 74,000 officers and workers and over 2 lakh policemen and civic volunteers have been deployed.

Senior IAS officers will monitor the situation in different districts, she added. KMC board of administrators' chairman Firhad Hakim is monitoring the situation from home, she said.

Jena said that over 2.10 lakh people residing in kutchha houses in low-lying areas have been moved to cyclone shelters and the target is to shift 7.5 lakh.

Around 5,000 pregnant women expecting delivery by 1 June have been admitted to hospitals, a health official said.

"Big trees and electric poles may get uprooted. Chandbali is likely to witness the maximum damage due to the cyclone," Mohapatra said.

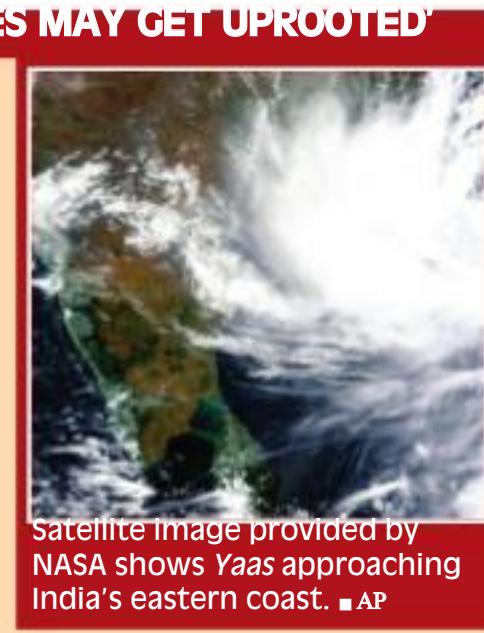
Wind speeds will increase to 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph over northwest Bay of Bengal and along and off north Odisha and adjoining West Bengal coasts during landfall, it said.

South Eastern Railways has announced the cancellation of several passenger special trains till Wednesday.

Jharkhand has evacuated people to safety in East and West Singhbhum districts, a senior official said. The cyclone is likely to hit the Kolhan division comprising east and west Singhbhum and Sarda-Kharasnagar districts, besides Bokaro and Khunti, disaster management secretary Amitabh Kashish said, adding that eight NDRF teams have been deployed in Kolhan division areas.

Hospitals have been asked to ensure alternate arrangements for electricity, oxygen and other essential supplies. DGP Neeraj Sinha said police machinery is also ready to deal with any exigency.

IMD senior scientist Dr R K Jenamani said Jharkhand is likely to witness wind speeds from 110kmph to 120kmph. See pg 5



Satellite image provided by NASA shows Yaas approaching India's eastern coast. ■ AP

'Highest-ever' number of NDRF teams for Odisha, Bengal

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The NDRF has earmarked its highest-ever number of teams for deployment in Odisha and West Bengal as part of its preparations for Yaas, a senior officer said on Tuesday.

A total of 112 teams in five states and the UT of Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been deployed. Out of these, the highest number of 52 teams are designated for Odisha followed by 45 for Bengal.

NDRF DG S N Pradhan tweeted that this was the "highest ever" commitment of its teams in Odisha and Bengal. ■ PTI

gal coasts during landfall, it said.

South Eastern Railways has announced the cancellation of several passenger special trains till Wednesday.

Jharkhand has evacuated people to safety in East and West Singhbhum districts, a senior official said. The cyclone is likely to hit the Kolhan division comprising east and west Singhbhum and Sarda-Kharasnagar districts, besides Bokaro and Khunti, disaster management secretary Amitabh Kashish said, adding that eight NDRF teams have been deployed in Kolhan division areas.

Hospitals have been asked to ensure alternate arrangements for electricity, oxygen and other essential supplies. DGP Neeraj Sinha said police machinery is also ready to deal with any exigency.

IMD senior scientist Dr R K Jenamani said Jharkhand is likely to witness wind speeds from 110kmph to 120kmph. See pg 5

Narada: SC allows CBI to withdraw appeal against HC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

law into their hands, should the accused suffer because of it. You can proceed against those persons who have taken law into their hands," the bench said.

The bench noted that there is ample remedy in the Constitution to address such situations, and remarked, "We are not here to advise the government or CBI."

The bench told Mehta: "Why should the accused be made to suffer because of a dharma by the chief minister and law minister?...Proceed against them if you wish to."

The bench said: "We do not like to mix liberty of citizens with whatever illegal acts of politicians. We will not do that."

However, the top court asked CBI who is more in a position to influence the witnesses: "those who were named in charge-sheet or politicians. Who haven't been?"

On CBI's contention to move the trial to another state, the bench observed that it may demoralise the High Court.

The top court said that Calcutta HC's five-judge bench was already hearing the matter, and asked CBI whether it wants to withdraw its appeal.

Mehta submitted, "it is happening periodically in the state that the CM barges into investigating agency office to help the accused".

However, CBI withdrew its appeal from the top court.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court asked the Centre and West Bengal government to respond to a plea seeking directions to prevent the alleged exodus due to "state-sponsored" violence after the assembly polls, constituting an SIT to probe the issue and take action against culprits.

Daily Covid cases fall below 2-lakh mark

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 25 MAY



day, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

The active Covid-19 case-load has also reduced with a net decline of 1,33,934 cases being witnessed in a span of 24 hours. It now accounts for 9.60 per cent of the country's total infections.

The active cases have decreased since its last peak on 10 May.

Delhi's positivity rate dips to 2.14 pc: Delhi today reported 156 Covid-linked fatalities — its lowest since April 16 — and 1,568 new coronavirus cases while the positivity rate dipped to the nearly two-month low of 2.14 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

Health ministry said so far in the country.

The daily Covid-19 positivity rate has reduced and now stands at 9.54 per cent, while the single-day recoveries continue to outnumber the new cases for the 12th consecutive

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES 2,69,48,874

ACTIVE CASES 25,86,782

NEW CASES 1,96,427

NEW RECOVERIES 3,26,850

TOTAL DEATHS 3,07,231

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M.
TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

AERIAL VIEW



Desolate look of city from the top of Balswa landfill during lockdown, in the Capital on Tuesday.

'Covid toolkit': 2 Cong leaders get notices; Rahul says 'truth remains unafrid'

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

help us in carrying the investigation forward," the officer said.

A preliminary enquiry into the complaint is still being carried out by the Delhi Police's Special Cell team and no FIR has been registered in the matter yet, officials said.

On Monday, the Delhi Police's Special Cell sent a notice to Twitter India in connection with the probe into a complaint about the alleged 'Covid toolkit', asking it to share information based on which it had classified a related tweet by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra as manipulated media, officials had said.

The police teams also descended on the microblogging site's offices in Lado Sarai in Delhi and in Gurgaon Monday evening.

"These are not fresh notices. These notices were served around 8-9 days ago based on a complaint received from the Congress. They (Congress social media head Rohan Gupta and party spokesperson MV Rajeev Gowda) were asked to join the probe so that it could help us in carrying the investigation forward," said Senior Police Officer DELHI POLICE.

These are not fresh notices. These notices were served around 8-9 days ago based on a complaint received from the Congress. They (Congress social media head Rohan Gupta and party spokesperson MV Rajeev Gowda) were asked to join the probe so that it could help us in carrying the investigation forward.

These notices were served around 8-9 days ago based on a complaint received from the Congress. They (Congress social media head Rohan Gupta and party spokesperson MV Rajeev Gowda) were asked to join the probe so that it could help us in carrying the investigation forward.

These notices were served around 8-9 days ago based on



Cremation of the body is an integral part of the 'circle of life'

NEERAJ ZIMBA, MLA, DARJEELING

Delhi reports 156 fresh Covid deaths, lowest since 16 April

Capital's positivity rate dips to nearly two-month low of 2.14 pc; 1,568 new cases logged

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Delhi today reported 156 Covid-linked fatalities — its lowest since April 16 — and 1,568 new coronavirus cases while the positivity rate dipped to the nearly two-month low of 2.14 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

This is the third consecutive day that the daily coronavirus cases in the national capital have remained below the 2,000 mark.

The new fatalities pushed the city's Covid death toll to 23,565, the health bulletin said.

The number of Delhi's Covid deaths reported today is the lowest since April 16 when it had recorded 141 fatalities.

Today's positivity rate of 2.14 per cent is also the lowest since March 27, when it had stood at 1.70 per cent, according to the official data.

The national capital had yesterday recorded 1,550 fresh infections and 207 fatalities. The positivity rate was 2.52 per cent. On Sunday, 1,649 cases



A health worker collects swab sample of a passenger at a testing counter at New Delhi Railway Station on Tuesday.

and 189 deaths were recorded, while the positivity rate had dipped to 2.42 per cent.

Before they started coming down some days ago, both the daily cases and the deaths count had been spiking since April 19, with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on April 20. Delhi reported 306 fatalities on April 22. On May 2, the city registered a record 407 deaths, according to official fig-

ures.

Today's fresh cases were detected out of 73,406 tests, including 47,494 RT-PCR tests and 25,912 rapid antigen tests, the health bulletin stated.

Out of 25,035 beds in hospitals meant for Covid patients in the city, 17,163 were said to be vacant.

The number of Delhi's cumulative Covid cases rose to 14,19,986 while over 13.7 lakh

patients have recovered from the infection so far, the bulletin said.

The number of active cases in Delhi currently stood at 21,739, of which 11,915 patients were under home isolation. The number of active cases was 24,578 yesterday.

The number of home isolation patients dipped to 11,915 from yesterday's 13,806, while the number of containment

zones dropped to 39,640 from 45,483 a day before, the bulletin added.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had yesterday said that his government had begun preparing for what is being termed as a "third Covid wave".

Kejriwal had told an online press briefing that "Now the cases are reducing significantly. For the country, this is the second wave but for Delhi, this is the fourth wave, and this time, in the last week of April around 28,000 cases were recorded but now they have come down to 1500."

The infection rate had also reached 36 per cent in the last week of April, coming down to around 2.5 per cent now, he had then said. "It seems that this wave is subsiding but there has been no laxity in the efforts by the Delhi government. We have already started preparing for the next, what is being called the third wave."

Amid escalating cases of black fungus in the national capital, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain has asked people to be watchful and not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids.

The infection rate had also reached 36 per cent in the last week of April, coming down to around 2.5 per cent now, he had then said. "It seems that this wave is subsiding but there has been no laxity in the efforts by the Delhi government. We have already started preparing for the next, what is being called the third wave."

Amid escalating cases of black fungus in the national capital, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain has asked people to be watchful and not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids.

Publicise Covid info like 'hum do hamare do' family planning campaign: HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Delhi High Court Tuesday stressed on the need to spread awareness among public about the COVID-19 pandemic through advertisements more frequently saying it could be done on the lines of hum do hamare do campaign for family planning as it worked very well.

The high court said there is a need to keep on bombarding valid information on public in relation to COVID-19 and directed the Centre and Delhi government to undertake publicising all relevant helpline numbers and information through all audio, video and print medium on a continuous basis as frequently as possible so as to educate people on facilities created by the state for testing and treatment of COVID-19 as well as other issues like mental health and issues arising in the society on account of the pandemic.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said there is lack of continuous and adequate publicity of most relevant and genuine information to the public at large and gave an instance that various helpline numbers have not been broadcast as frequently and efficiently as it should have been done.

Mere publication on a few days on one or more medium will not work, the court said, adding that even if you are in war, war needs propaganda.

Asserting that there is a need for being little proactive and agile, the bench said the advertisement has to be a regular thing and a daily dose has to go out as it is like a dose of medicine you have to give daily and it has to be in people's memory.

The amount of advertisement we used to see earlier on family planning hum do hamare do it was there on DTC buses, radio, papers and everywhere it actually worked.

We need something like that now for COVID-19. We need to keep on bombarding it on public, the bench said, adding that even now if a person gets coronavirus, he or she does not know what to do so the helplines are required for them. COVID helpline toll free is 1075, COVID Helpline Delhi is 011-22307145, Child



helpline is 1098 and senior citizen helpline is 14567.

The court further said, We direct the Centre and Delhi government to undertake publication of all relevant helpline numbers and information through all audio, video and print medium on a continuous basis as frequently as possible so as to educate people on facilities created by the state for testing and treatment of COVID-19 as well as other issues like mental health and issues arising in the society on account of the pandemic.

It is like starting a writ petition with most respectfully and nobody is reading it and even not interested. You need to be little pro-active in your approach. People are aware of COVID-19 protocol. It is high time that you update them with COVID-19 helpline number which is the most important part of the message. You have to be agile on your feet on this, the bench said, adding that the government can get the message recorded and circulate.

It said a corner or column on a page could be dedicated for these helplines in the newspapers and remarked that the government was lagging behind on this aspect.

In newspapers, one does not find these inserts on a daily basis.

These things should be there in the papers every day. Fix a corner or column, may be on page 1 or page 3. Some column on a page should be dedicated to it daily so that people know where to go when they need it. People would be habituated. This is where you are lagging behind, the bench said.

It added that helpline numbers don't register in people's mind immediately and they might forget so they should be publicised daily so that citizens know that even if they don't need it today, they can find the helpline details at a particular place in the newspaper.

The court's observation came after the amicus curiae said if government could consider publicising more the helplines and other data in newspapers, it would be helpful. Delhi government's counsel said they are advertising it and will do more now.

Hindu College professor dies due to Covid

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

COVID-19 task force in college and had arranged hospital beds and oxygen for many of his colleagues.

Dr Anju Srivastava said, "I am not able to come to terms with it. He joined the college in 2006 and was very bright and committed to his work. We were able to arrange a bed for him in AIIMS but we lost him. He was initially admitted to a hospital in Alwar."

Jonwal was infected with coronavirus around April 29 and left Delhi in the first week of May, she said.

Initially, he was under home isolation. When his oxygen levels dropped, he arranged for the gas at home but had to be hospitalised in Alwar on May

10. He underwent treatment there but his condition worsened.

The college principal said around 35 teachers of the college, including him, have been infected by the virus till now. "There were one or two serious cases but they have also recovered," she said.

According to Dr Anupam Varshney, HOD of the Zoology Department of the college, he was brought to AIIMS and was found to be suffering from severe Covid pneumonia.

"His oxygen levels had crossed 90 a couple of days ago but his BP was low and in the early hours today, he suffered a cardiac arrest," she said.

Jonwal's wife was also infected but she has recovered and was taking care of him.

"I think she forgot her own pain while taking care of him," Dr Varshney said.

Srivastava and Varshney said they both received long thank you messages from Jonwal 10 days ago for checking up on him and personally monitoring his condition.

The department also held an online condolence meeting for him. Jonwal had written on Facebook about how the varsity should set up a Covid care centre for its staffers.

At least 40 staffers of the varsity have succumbed to the virus till now.

Expedite policy on providing ration to poor during pandemic, HC tells Delhi govt

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Delhi High Court Tuesday expressed hope that the Delhi government would expediently finalise its policy for providing ration to poor people, especially destitute women and disabled children, "so that they do not starve for want of food" during the pandemic.

Justice Rekha Palli observation came after the Delhi government, represented by standing counsel Santosh K Tripathi, said its policy to provide ration and food to the poor was underway and would be finalised soon.

The submission by the Delhi government came after the court asked "what do you want them (poor people) to do? Beg for food?"

Vaccination or cancellation: Delhi govt's suggestion to Centre on class 12 board exams

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Tuesday reiterated his demand of "vaccination or cancellation" in his suggestions sent to the Central government on conducting class 12 board exams.

Sisodia, also Delhi's Education Minister, recommended the tabulation of results taking into account the marks students scored in class 10, class 11 and assessment during class 12 so far.

In a letter to Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhrayal Nishank, Sisodia said if experts suggest against giving Covishield or Covaxin jabs to class 12 students, the Centre government should procure Pfizer vaccine which has been approved for children above the age of 12 years.

"If Centre and state government get on the task together all class 12 students and teachers involved in the examination process can be vaccinated within three to four weeks," he added.

AIIMS resident doctors up in arms against Ramdev

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The controversial statement issued by Patanjali owner Baba Ramdev against allopathy doctors took another turn on Tuesday when AIIMS doctors held a symbolic protest against Ramdev in the Capital.

A day after Baba Ramdev posted an open letter on his Twitter handle in which he posed 25 questions to Indian Medical Association (IMA), AIIMS resident doctors have also written an open letter challenging the yogi guru to practically compare both the allopathic and ayurvedic treatments on different people.

In its letter, AIIMS RDA charged Baba's allegation as part of his propaganda. And invited him for a clinical trial to treat two patients who need bypass surgery. The results will

be compared by an unbiased third party. The result will speak for the merit. RDA president Dr Amandeep said that they will continue their symbolic protest against the statement.

In his letter Baba questioned the efficacy of allopathy medicines. Ramdev Monday asked the IMA if allopathy offered permanent relief for ailments such as hypertension and diabetes. He also asked if allopathy offered permanent relief from hypertension (BP) and type-1 and type-2 diabetes. "Does the pharma industry have permanent treatment for thyroid, arthritis, colitis and asthma?" he asked. Ramdev went on to ask if allopathy had medicines for fatty liver and liver cirrhosis. "Like you found a cure for TB and chicken pox, look for treatments for liver ailments. After all, allopathy is now 200 years old."

Process on to fix formula for MRP of O2 concentrators, Centre tells High Court

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Centre Tuesday informed the Delhi High Court that pricing authority NPPA has initiated the process to fix a formula to determine the MRP of oxygen concentrators, needed for COVID-19 treatment, as people were being charged exorbitantly.

The process for fixing the formula for MRP is likely to be concluded and the court will be informed about the development on May 31, the Centre said. A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh asked the Centre's counsel to take instructions and file a report before May 31.

Justice Sanghi observed that the pricing formula was important as most of the manufacturers were not putting MRP or maximum retail price on oxygen concentrators and are not readily available in shops. It is not that it is available at Khan Market, it is through back door only that peo-

ple have been able to secure oxygen concentrators, he said.

In a lighter vein, Justice Singh added actually this time it was available only at Khan Market, after which those present in the virtual court room burst into laughter. In a recent raid, Delhi Police seized 524 oxygen concentrators from a Khan Market restaurant.

Central government standing counsel Kirtiman Singh said the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has initiated the process for fixing formula to determine price of oxygen concentrators and it is proceeding on the same lines as suggested by the court earlier in order to minimize the margin. The high court had earlier asked the Centre why it could not fix a formula to determine the MRP of oxygen concentrators which are in demand for COVID-19 treatment. It had said it was not asking the government to fix a price in rupee or paisa, but to

fix a principle on which oxygen concentrators will be charged.

The bench had suggested a formula like the landed price of the product plus duty charge (GST) plus 15 per cent profit margin.

The court was hearing a plea relating to fixation of price of oxygen concentrators by Delhi resident Manisha Chauhan who has also sought appointment of special public prosecutors for dealing with such cases before the special fast track courts. The petitioner's counsel had told the court that in the absence of a notification declaring medicines and equipment meant for COVID as essential commodities, these are being hoarded and black marketed.

There was a confusion on the MRP as exporters kept changing the prices, the Centre's counsel said, adding that if the government fixed a price, even the current supplies may be hit.

49% of HP's total Covid deaths for want of timely medical help

1,372 Covid patients in home isolation in Himachal Pradesh have died till 23 May for want of timely medical help or delay in their hospitalisation, raising serious questions over the entire healthcare system in the hill state.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 25 MAY

As many as 1,372 Covid patients in home isolation in Himachal Pradesh have died for want of timely medical help or delay in their hospitalisation, raising serious questions over the entire healthcare system in the hill state. This grim tally of deaths of Covid patients in home isolation accounts for about 49 per cent of the total coronavirus-linked fatalities in HP till 23 May according to official figures. A total of 1,81,256 persons have tested positive for Covid in HP so far, with 2,873 patients succumbing to the contagious, deadly viral disease till 25 May.

HP chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said focus must be given on shifting serious Covid patients in home isolation to hospitals so that they could be provided timely treatment as 49 per cent patients in home isolation died due to delay in shifting the patients to hospitals.

"About 38 per cent deaths have been reported within 24 hours of admission in various hospitals. Similarly 7.7 per cent deaths have been reported in home isolation and 4.1 percent patients were brought dead to hospitals," he said.

He added that ASHA workers and other health workers must keep constant vigil on condition of patients in home



Health workers checking on the condition of home isolation patients in Pachad area of Sirmour district in Himachal Pradesh. SNS

added.

The highest number of deaths in home isolation or delay in shifting patients to hospitals was reported in Kangra district with 373 fatalities, followed by Shimla (230), Solan (127) and Una (99), he said.

He urged the people to be extremely vigilant about the warning signs of Covid-19 disease as a timely medical intervention can save their lives.

"In case of home isolated Covid positive patients, the patients must be in regular communication with the treating physicians and keep monitoring their vitals."

If the baseline oxygen saturation is less than 94 per cent or their SpO2 goes less than 94 per cent after a 6 minute walk test, the patient should immediately be transferred to the hospital for medical management to achieve good clinical outcomes and minimise mortality and morbidity," he added. Today, Himachal recorded 1,999 Covid cases—which took the number of total active cases to 23,073—and 60 deaths, which pushed its Covid death toll to 2,873, while 1,57,031 persons have recovered from the viral disease so far.

The worst affected districts in the second wave of Covid are Kangra with 6,832 active cases, followed by Shimla (26,06), Mandi (2,391), Solan (1,938), Sirmour (1,756) and Hamirpur (1,663).

Ex-gratia plea for Covid patient's death due to negligence: HC seeks Delhi govt, NDMA reply

PTI
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Delhi High Court Tuesday asked the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Delhi government to respond to a plea seeking compensation for the parents and wife of a COVID-19 patient who died allegedly due to want of medical attention.

The family sought an appropriate compensation for the loss of life of deceased due to complete mismanagement and criminal negligence of the authorities.

The bench impleaded NDMA as a party to the petition, after perusing an order of the Supreme Court which noted that the authority has fixed a minimum ex-gratia compensation to be payable to the kin of deceased on account of the COVID-19

still the doctor of the hospital did not recommend for admission and due to the medical practitioner's negligence, he died while waiting for an ambulance.

The court said let the counter affidavits be filed by the Delhi government, hospital and NDMA and listed the matter for further hearing in July. Senior Advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi Government, informed the court about the apex court's order on the issue of compensation and added that the state government is proposing to give ex gratia relief of Rs 50,000 each to families of COVID-19 deceased and that that will be placed before the cabinet next week.

The court was hearing the petition filed by the parents and wife of Naveen, who died of COVID-19 on the intervening night of April 26-27 allegedly due to want of medical attention and doctor's negligence. The petitioners, represented through advocates Anuj Chauhan and Anand, said the oxygen level of the deceased was recorded in the Rao Tula Ram Hospital to be at 60 per cent, yet medical treatment was denied to him. The family was asked to take away the patient from there and they kept trying and waiting for ambulance to take him to another hospital and even the ambulance driver refused to carry the victim after enquiring about his oxygen level.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT 'NOTICE INVITING TENDERS'

Sealed item rate tenders on form 6&8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Bhawana Division HP.PWD. Bhawana on behalf of the Governor of H.P for the following works from the approved and eligible contractors enlisted in HP.PWD. (BAR) whose registration stood renewed as per revised rules and also registered under the H.P General Sales Tax Act 1968 so as to reach in his office on or before 10/06/2021 up to 11:00 AM. And the same shall be opened on the same day at 11:30 A.M. in the presence of 10/11 intending contractors or their authorized representatives. The tender documents can be had from his office against cash payment (Non-refundable) on 09/06/2021 up to 4:00 P.M and the application for issue of tender form shall be received on 08/06/2021 up to 12:00 noon.

The earnest money in the shape of NSC/FDR/saving account of the Post office/Bank in H.P duly pledged in favour of the XEN must accompany with each tender. Conditional/ incomplete tenders & tender without earnest money will be summarily rejected. The XEN reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders or drop the proposal of tenders without assigning any reasons.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Earnest Money	Time Limit	Cost of Tender form
1	C/o Kiarwan Saroot road (SW:- C/o 3.00 meter span RCC slab culvert at RD 1/525),	4,86,261/-	9700/-	Three Months	350/-
2	C/o Link road to village Kotha under SCSP (SW:-P/L Tarring in Km 0/750 to 1/500),	4,76,293/-	9600/-	Two Months	350/-
3	C/o Link road from Manjha/Society to Bhujal Km 0/0 to 1/0. (SW:-C/o R/wall at RD 0/070 to 0/095, 0/100 to 0/115 & 0/135 to 0/150),	3,74,121/-	6300/-	Three Months	350/-
4	Restoration of rain damages on Hamirpur Sujanpur Thural Maranda road Km 24/135 to 59/775 (SW:- C/o R/wall at RD 55/960 to 55/975 near PWD office Bhawana)	1,35,090/-	2700/-	Two Months	350/-
5	A/R & M/O link road Galtaji/Chandani Baba Kirpa Km 0/0 to 4/500 (SW:- C/o 1.00 mtr. span slab culvert & R/wall at RD 1/10 to 1/060) (Missing CD)	4,00,502/-	8000/-	Three Months	350/-
6	A/R & M/O Dehan/Arth Malag road Km 0/0 to 10/0 (SW:- C/o B/wall at RD 2/445 to 2/455 & R/wall at RD 2/835 to 1,07,912/- 2/843)	2,200/-	2200/-	Three Months	350/-
7	C/o Jeppable road to Village Kharana (SW:- P/L CC Pavement in Km 0/100 to 0/400)	3,53,169/-	7100/-	Three Months	350/-
8	C/o Chombu/Kurna road (SW:- P/L Tarring work in Km 0/00 to 0/750)	4,76,293/-	9600/-	Three Months	350/-
9	C/o Badminton Ground for Govt. Middle School Malag in GP Malnu (Deposit work)	74837/-	5000/-	Three Months	350/-
10	C/o Pira Hodarao' (SW:-P/L Tarring in Km 1/500 to 2/500)	4,76,293/-	9600/-	Three Months	350/-
11	C/o Health Sub-Centre building at Bhatrol Tehsil Dheera Distt. Kangra (SW:- Site Development work)(Deposit work)	1,58,985/-	3200/-	Two Months	350/-
12	C/o Link road to village Androl Km 0/0 to 1/0 (under SCSP) (SW:- Imp. & widening of road in Km 0/0 to 0/690)	1,72,947/-	3500/-	Two Months	350/-
13	C/o Link road from Durga Mata Mandir to Kumber (Bal) Moksh Dham road Km 0/0 to 0/800 (SW:- Cutting of Hill-side)(Deposit work)	398373/-	8000/-	Three Months	350/-
14	A/R & M/O on Hamirpur Sujanpur Thural Maranda road Km 24/135 to 59/775 (SW:- C/o V-shape drain with edge wall at RD 34/765 to 34/975)	2,73,968/-	5500/-	Three Months	350/-
15	C/o M.C.C.M Degree College Thural (SW:- P/L 80mm thick interlocking concrete block pavement in front, back & side of newly constructed building)(Deposit work)	4,73,766/-	9500/-	Three Months	350/-
16	A/R & M/O on various roads under HP PWD Sub-Division Bhawana (Section Khera-II)(SW:-P/L Patch work on Manjha to Tappa Km 0/0 to 1/200 & Link road from Thandoi to Bhoura Km 0/0 to 2/400)	4,83,591/-	9700/-	Three Months	350/-
17	C/o Additional Accommodation to GSSE Dehan (SW:-P/L Kota stone)(Deposit work)	4,09,136/-	8200/-	Three Months	
18	Restoration of road damages on Menjhato upper/Menjhato road Km 0/0 to 4/270 (SW:-P/L 80mm thick interlocking concrete block pavement in Km 2/380 to 2/490)	4,99,262/-	10,000/-	Three Months	
19	C/o Ambulance road to Katwal Basti Lower Boda G.P Boda Km 0/0 to 0/100 (SW:-Cutting & C/o R/wall)	2,04,042/-	4100/-	Two Months	
20	C/o GYM & Badminton Court at village Mangher GP Silod	74956/-	1500/-	Three Months	
21	C/o Link road from Babdi to Bagla/Chamshanghat (SW:- C/o R/wall and CC Pavement)	329202/-	6600/-	Three Months	
22	C/o Ambulance road alongwith R/wall to protect land of Capt. Suresh Katoch & Others in GP Khera (Deposit work)	103166/-	2100/-	Three Months	
23	C/o Interlocking paving block near Govt. Primary School at Pahra (Deposit work)	3,07,481/-	6200/-	Three Months	

Terms & Conditions:

Following documents should accompany the application for tenders.

1. Sale tax No. with latest Sales tax clearance certificate.
2. Copy of G.S.T. number.
3. Valid copy of Registration.
4. Machinery will be of the contractor where required.
5. Certificate regarding possession of machinery.
6. Telegraphic/Fax tenders are not acceptable.
7. The tender documents can be received by registered/ Insured post which should be received in this office on or before the date of opening of tender by 11:00 A.M. positively.
8. Contractor should have successfully executed two works of similar nature of 1/3 amount of estimated cost or similar single work of amount equal to estimated cost during the last preceding three years.
9. The Contractor will have to submit affidavit along with application for issue of tender that he has not more than two works in hand. Next tender will be issued only after completion of previous works in hand.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that a male person namely **Puneet Sharma**, S/o V. R. Sharma, R/o H. No. 11, Puskar Apartment, Mundka, Delhi, Age: 40 years, Height: 5'8", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Wearing: Blue Chaddar Shirt, Blue Paint and Black Kholapuri Chappal in his feet has been missing/kidnapped from Nitya Farm House, Tikri Border, area of P.S. Mundka since 24.04.2021. In this regard vide DD No. 77A, dated 26.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Mundka, Delhi.

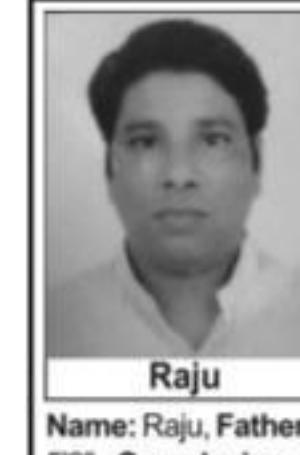
Puneet Sharma

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far, if any one having any information about this person please inform us.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax: 011-24368639
DD/910/OD/2021

SHO
P.S. Mundka, Delhi
DP/506/SD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that a male named **Raju S/o Bangali Babu**, R/o H.No.242B, Ph-IV, Aya Nagar, New Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 13.04.2021 from the area of Fatehpur Beri, New Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 45-A dated 20.04.2021 has been registered at PS, Fatehpur Beri, New Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped male is as under:

Name: Raju, Father's Name: Bangali Babu Age : 36 years, Height: 5'3", Complexion : Wheatish, Face : Round, Built : Medium, Wearing : White Colour Shirt & Pant and Brown Colour Chappal in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : http://cbi.nic.in
e-mail : cic@cbi.nic.in
Fax : 011-230111334
Ph. : 011-23014046, 30115229, 23015218, Ext. 210
DP/506/SD/2021

SHO
P.S., Fatehpur Beri, New Delhi
Ph.: 011-26659511, 26659611, 8750870826

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas, M/s Renuka Traders Private Limited is in the process of undertaking of development of Affordable Group Housing Colony in Sector-37C, Gurugram over an area measuring 7.53125 acres in the revenue estate of Gadoli Khurd in accordance with the provision of License No. 15 of 2018 dated 13-02-2018 and additional license no. 09 of 2020 dated 09.03.2020, granted by Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh.

And whereas, several individuals have made bookings/ entered into purchase agreement for allotment of property in the said colony (hereinafter referred as allottees).

And whereas, the building plan earlier approved for the above said colony are now proposed to be revised.

And whereas, the office of Director General, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has required seeking of objection against the revision of building plan as a pre-condition for allowing such revision in the building plan.

Accordingly, vide this public notice objections are hereby invited from any of the allottees in the said colony on the proposed revision of the building plan of the said colony. A copy of the building plan approved earlier vide Memo. No. ZP-1238/AD(RA)/2018/28705 dated 08.10.2018 & the building plan now proposed to be revised and in-principally approved vide Memo. No. ZP-1238/AD(RA)/2021/12390 DATED 21.05.2021 are available for perusal on our website http://www.aashiyara.com. The said building plan can also be perused at the office of undersigned at A-25, Mohan Co-Operative Industrial Estate, Mathura Road, New Delhi-110044 as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner, HUDA Complex, Sec-14, Gurugram.

Any allottee having any objection on revised building plan, may file his objection in the office of Senior Town Planner, HUDA Complex, Sec-14, Gurugram within 30 days of the publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed revision in the building plan.

Sanjeev Khawasla
(CRM Head)
M/s Renuka Traders Private Limited

RENUKA TRADERS PRIVATE LIMITED CIN: U74899DL1983PTC014992
CORP. Office: A-25, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, Mathura Road, New Delhi-110044
Telephone No. 011-46469999 - http://www.aashiyara.com



Beneficiaries wait in a queue to receive the Covid-19 vaccine dose at a vaccination camp organised by the Nagercoil Municipal Corporation in Kanyakumari.

AGENCIES

Health workers suspended: Five health workers here have been suspended for alleged negligence in performing Covid duty, officials said on Tuesday. A case has been registered against them at Sukhpura police station and the probe is on, station in-charge Cagan Raj Singh said.

PTI

AP boat accident: The toll from the accident involving country boats in Sileru river on Tuesday rose to three, with the authorities fishing out two more bodies. Among the dead were two children.

PTI

Rain & wind velocity picks up ahead of Yaas

State govt has begun mobilising disaster response forces to evacuate people

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 25 MAY



Heavy rain and gusty winds have taken complete control over most parts of coastal and northern Odisha, signalling towards the strike of severe cyclonic storm Yaas even as the State authorities on Tuesday made it amply clear that the storm's landfall will be in the Bhitarkanika national park area in Kendrapara district and Chandbali-Dhamra coast in Bhadrak district.

To meet the impending cyclone, the state government agencies have begun mobilising large groups of disaster response forces to evacuate people from low-lying areas by Tuesday night as the cyclone landfall is likely to be during noon hours.

The IMD has forecast landfall of Yaas in an area between Dhamrai in Bhadrak district and Balasore district, but we have broadened this band as we feel it will hit anywhere between Bhitarkanika in Kendrapara district - Dhamra - Balasore, said Jena. Precautionary measures and evacuation have been taken up on war footing in districts of Bhadrak, Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, parts of Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Angul districts he said. Jena said even Cuttack and Bhubaneswar will witness

high velocity wind speed and due precautions have been taken.

The cyclonic storm over east-central Bay of Bengal intensified into a severe cyclonic storm late last night and it will intensify further and transform into a very severe category storm, said Bhubaneswar regional centre of India Meteorological Department here on Tuesday. The impact of the cyclonic fury will be most intense 6 hours before & after the landfall. The coastal parts of Chandbali and Dhamra in Bhadrak district will initially experience the impounding of the very severe cyclonic storm. The cyclone's landfall is likely to occur during noon hours of 26 May.

Teams of the NDRF and Odisha Disaster Rapid Action

Force (ODRAF) and Fire Services are already stationed in these districts likely to be affected by the cyclone. The dedicated Covid-19 hospitals and Covid care centres are now equipped with standby power, oxygen, drinking water and food materials. As a precautionary measure, the South Eastern Railways has announced the cancellation of several passenger special trains till Wednesday. "We have faced cyclones with resilience in the past. Danger is lurking at us. So we will take no chances as wind speed is gradually picking up. By evening we will shift to cyclone shelters and available government buildings. We have resolved to abide by Covid-19 protocol as virus infection threat remains uppermost in our minds," said Raghav Mandal, a native of seaside Talchua village in Kendrapara district. Meanwhile Indian Navy has set up a 24x7 cyclone monitoring centre at Chilika in rendering assistance to local administration in evacuation of people from vulnerable pockets, Commodore NP Pradeep, Naval officer Odisha in charge.

Deve Gowda asks PM Modi to help horticulture farmers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 25 MAY



Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately help the horticulture farmers as the lockdowns, across the country due to the pandemic, have broken the market network.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, he emphasised that the pandemic had caused a major crash in the prices of their produce, impacting the growers adversely.

Accordingly, it was imperative for the central and state governments to find an immediate solution to help the growers as the pandemic had affected their livelihood.

These problems, according to Gowda, should not be allowed to grow into a "heated social cauldron of unrest."

"Covid reaching rural India is a worrying problem but crashing prices of horticultural produce is delivering a twin blow to rural masses and is affecting their small, yet self-sustained livelihoods," Gowda pointed out.

Stating that the horticultural products are not served by the Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism, Gowda pointed out that the governments are already burdened with vaccine procurement and building Covid infrastructure and they are left with little funds to rush to the help of small and medium horticulture farmers.

According to him, it will be

a good idea if the Prime Minister asks the horticulture and agriculture departments in the states to spend time on this crisis that is brewing, find a solution and help farmers.

"Or else, people in rural areas may survive the pandemic, but may have nothing to live on," Gowda cautioned.

With urban areas shut down and reverse migration happening, the pressure of living in villages has gone up manifold, the JD(S) supremo said.

"The unemployment figures are growing too, and all this should not lead to a heated social cauldron of unrest," Gowda pointed out.

Many states in the country including Karnataka have imposed a lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Strict restrictions are in place in Karnataka since April 27 and will continue till June 7. Due to the lockdown in the state, Covid cases have come down from over 50,000 new cases a day a month ago to 25,311 on Monday.

Covid effect: Austerity at weddings

MANOJ CHAURASIA
PATNA, 25 MAY

The pandemic and the resulting precautions in place have changed the existing wedding trends, drastically. The families are not only inviting a limited number of guests at the weddings but are also keeping it simple, thanks to the Covid restrictions.

Although many weddings have taken place during the Covid period in Bihar, what remains the talk of the town is the one solemnised in Banka district last week when a groom came for the wedding alone on a bicycle! He reached the bride's home without any wedding procession.

The wedding of Gautam Kumar, a resident of Uchha-gaon village in Banka district, had been fixed with Kumkum Kumari from Kanchnapur village in neighbouring Bhagalpur district, last year. The wedding was scheduled to be performed last year itself but right in the nick of time, Covid's first wave hit the region, bringing the country under lockdown. As a result of which the wedding had to be postponed.

The same problem occurred this year too. Even as both the families had begun preparations for marriage, the second wave of the virus came as an obstacle. Eventually, the groom came with a unique idea. Instead of leading any wedding procession, he himself left for the bride's home on a bicycle and after driving some 24 kms, he finally reached the girl's home for the wedding.

The bride's family members were pleasantly surprised when they saw the groom



dressed in suit and pants reaching the wedding venue on a cycle. Eventually, the wedding was solemnised without any pomp and show, dowry and baratis (wedding guests). The local district administration has announced to reward the couple for this unique wedding.

Another very interesting wedding was reported from Begusarai district where the groom and the bride used sticks to place garlands on each other's neck while wearing face masks, adopting a rather unique way of maintaining social distancing as a result of Covid outbreak. Also, a little about 40 guests from both sides were invited to attend the wedding which took place in April when the state was not under complete lockdown.

No doubt Covid has destroyed many lives but has also left some positive impact in the society. As such, in the Covid era, the concept of big, fat wedding has been replaced with small and simple ceremonies. Also, the wedding guests are now being welcomed with attractive masks and sanitisers, instead of flowers and perfumes.

been under total lockdown for the past one month, the state government has fixed the number of guests for weddings too. Now, a maximum of 20 persons can be invited to the wedding, failing which legal action can be taken. Quite many weddings have been solemnised online too with the groom and the bride staying at two different locations and the clerics performing the wedding.

A super spreader is an individual who is likely to infect more number of people compared with other typically infected people. Many of them are often asymptomatic and hence difficult to detect.

The list includes LPG delivery staff, fair price shop dealers, petrol pump employees, autorickshaw and cab drivers, vendors in farmer's markets as well as flower, fruit, vegetable and meat and fish markets.

Telangana to vaccinate super spreaders

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 25 MAY

In a shift in its vaccine policy Telangana is gearing up to launch a special drive to vaccinate the super spreaders including bus employees, autorickshaw and cab drivers, LPG delivery boys, petrol pump staff, street vendors and fair price shop dealers who are more likely to infect a wide number of people with Covid-19. The state government has also finally allowed private vaccination centres to vaccinate people in the age group between 18 and 44 and also vaccination through workplace.

After a gap of almost 10 days Telangana has resumed vaccination after receiving fresh stock of vaccines. At present it is continuing with its special drive to vaccinate those requiring second doses.

Meanwhile, the state government is drawing up a strategy to vaccinate the super spreaders and the logistics involved. Today the finance minister met with chief secretary and health officials to draw up a strategy for the special vaccination drive.

The health department has already estimated over 25 lakh people as super spreaders going by their job category in order to vaccinate them as quickly as possible and tackle the spread of the virus.

District collectors have already been asked to make a list of people considered to be super spreaders.

A super spreader is an individual who is likely to infect more number of people compared with other typically infected people. Many of them are often asymptomatic and hence difficult to detect.

CM K Chandrasekhar Rao had discussed with Union health minister a few days back about the need to prioritise and vaccinate those who usually meet a large number of people due to the nature of their work.

Yesterday, during a review meeting of the pandemic situation the chief minister asked the finance minister T Harish Rao to chalk out a strategy to identify the super spreaders and the logistics involved.

Today the finance minister met with chief secretary and health officials to draw up a strategy for the special vaccination drive.

The health department has already estimated over 25 lakh people as super spreaders going by their job category in order to vaccinate them as quickly as possible and tackle the spread of the virus.

District collectors have already been asked to make a list of people considered to be super spreaders.

LDF's MB Rajesh elected Kerala Assembly Speaker

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 25 MAY

MB Rajesh of CPI-M, the legislator from Trithala constituency and LDF candidate was elected as the Speaker of the 15th Kerala legislative assembly on Tuesday. Rajesh got 96 votes, while Congress' opposition UDP candidate Kundara MLA PC Vishnunath secured 40 votes in the election. Pro-term Speaker PTA Rahim did not cast his vote and three other MLAs could not take part in the election due to ill-health.

Following his election, CM Pinarayi Vijayan and Opposition leader VD Satheesan accompanied Rajesh to the Speaker's chair.

MB Rajesh is the 23rd speaker of the Kerala Assembly. Rajesh was a Lok Sabha member from Palakkad between 2009 and 2019. SNS

Newly elected Pondy MLAs to be sworn-in today

PUDUCHERRY, 25 MAY

The swearing-in of newly elected MLAs in this Union Territory will be held on Wednesday but the AINRC-led NDA coalition cabinet is yet to take shape, although its leader N Rangasamy has taken oath as the CM.

Besides the elected legislators, three nominated BJP MLAs will also take oath on 26 May, three weeks after the results of the April 6 polls in the UT were declared.

AINRC MLA K Lakshminarayanan would be sworn-in as pro-term Speaker tomorrow with Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan administering the oath of office to him.

The NDA emerged victorious from 16 of the 30 seats, with AINRC coming out trumps in 10 and the rest going to its scaffold. Another constituent AIADMK drew a blank.

A majority of the six inde-

pendents are said to be favourably disposed towards Rangasamy. Opposition DMK and Congress have six and two seats, respectively.

The immediate task before Rangasamy would be the expansion of his ministry. Usually Puducherry would have a six-member cabinet including the chief minister. The strength could be increased to seven this time, even as AINRC sources pointed out at BJP's preference for three cabinet posts, including the deputy CM itself.

Having witnessed a spike in its daily coronavirus cases earlier before witnessing a dip recently, Puducherry awaits the new government to handle key issues including Covid management, although Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan is presently addressing related issues.

A full-fledged budget is also required to be passed for the fiscal 2021-2022 although an interim allocation. PTI

TENDER

TP WESTERN ODISHA DISTRIBUTION LIMITED
(A Tata Power & Odisha Govt. Joint venture)
Corporate Office : Burla, Dist.-Sambalpur (Odisha)-768017

Corrigendum to Notice Inviting Tender (NIT)

1) TPWODL/SD/O/SER/010/Corrigendum/001-Rate Contract for Enforcement Activities

The e-procurement tender notice issued vide this office letter No PW/KMDA/B/TA/Tender/2021-22 dated 30/04/2021 which was published online on 05/05/2020. Due to social distancing to contain the spread of COVID-19 (curfew) the tender could not be opened on 28/05/2021. Hence the tender is hereby cancelled.

(Er. G. L. Thakur)

Executive Engineer,

Mechanical Division,

KULLU-175101

PHONE/FAX: 0192-222052,

E mail eeems-kul-hp@nic.in

1043/2021-2022 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK



Things have become better. The shortage of oxygenated beds has lessened considerably.

KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER BS YEDYURAPPA
COMMENTING ON STATE'S CURRENT COVID STATUS

THUMBNAILS



NDRF team members alert villagers ahead of cyclone Yaas at Digha coastal area in East Midnapur on Tuesday.

■ BHASKAR MALLICK

Phone tapping case: The Mumbai cyber police have recorded the statement of senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla in connection with a case of illegal phone tapping and alleged leaking of sensitive documents related to police postings, official said on Tuesday.

PTI

Cabinet approves creation of post: The government has approved the creation of a post of Director at the National Disaster Response Force Academy in Nagpur. The approval for the creation of the post in the Senior Administrative Grade (SAG) was given at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an official statement said.

PTI

Event community steps: Amidst the lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, the event community also took charge and came to the forefront by providing help and assistance to the people who are in distress. EEMA, the apex body for events in the country, led to the formation of the second wave Covid taskforce. This formed the backend support of the operations and comprised of zonal teams executing them at the forefront. Under this umbrella, teams took charge of certain initiatives and executed them with full potential.

SNS

Tornado hits Bandel: Residents of Bandel were caught unaware by a tornado that caused havoc on Tuesday in Bengal. A localized tornado hit the Chakbaria area. The tornado uprooted eight trees, one electric pole and blew up tin sheds of many shops.

SNS

MSN initiates phase III trials of Molnupiravir: MSN Laboratories Pvt. Ltd. (MSN) on Tuesday announced it is initiating phase III clinical trials of Molnupiravir capsules for the treatment of Covid-19 in India.

IANS

Snakes rescued: A number of snakes, including a cobra, have been rescued by the Wildlife SOS from various spots in Agra.

IANS

3 held for killing of two BJP workers, Bengal tells SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY



Abhijit Sarkar was killed on 2 May by a mob comprising of 20 supporters of TMC

The West Bengal government informed the Supreme Court on Tuesday that three people have been arrested in connection with the alleged killing of two BJP workers in poll-related violence on May 2 in the state and FIRs have been registered in these cases.

The state government told a vacation bench of Justices Vineet Saran and R Gavai that investigation is going on.

The apex court asked the respondents, including the Centre, Bengal government and National Human Rights Commission, to file counter affidavits on the plea by the victims' kin seeking court monitored probe and transfer of cases to the CBI or Special Investigation Team. You file your counter affidavits. We will have it after two weeks, the bench said.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for West Bengal, told the top court that a five-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court is dealing with the matter related to post poll violence in the

Violence against women: NCW asks DGP to appear before it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The National Commission for Women has sent a notice to the Director General of Police, West Bengal to appear before it in person on May 31 with complete action taken reports on incidents of alleged violence against women in the state after assembly polls.

The NCW had set up an inquiry committee while taking suo motu cognisance of several incidents of violence against women in Bengal. The NCW said the committee had also visited the state and observed that the

state and it had also passed some directions on 18 May. FIRs stand registered and they are under investigation. Three persons have been arrested in these cases which were lodged based on the complaints, Luthra said. He said the issue regarding post poll violence was listed for hearing today before

the high court.

Luthra said the matter could not be taken up for hearing by the high court today and it would be heard on Wednesday. The bench asked Luthra and counsel appearing for other respondents to file their counter affidavits and posted the mat-

ter for hearing after two weeks.

On May 18, the apex court had issued notices to the Centre, Bengal government and others seeking their responses on the plea filed by Biswajit Sarkar, whose elder brother was killed and co-petitioner Swaranalata Adhikari, the widow of Haran Adhikari, who was a local booth worker at Booth No.199A at Sonarpur Dakshin Vidhan Sabha.

whose husband was also killed in poll related violence.

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for the petitioners, had said that this is a very serious case and the state has not been taking any action into the brutal killing of two BJP workers, which happened on the day of counting of votes for assembly elections. He had argued that matter required to be probed by an agency like the CBI or a SIT under court supervision, as the state police has not been taking any action despite a complaint being made.

The plea, filed by advocate Sarad Kumar Singhania,

has alleged that Abhijit Sarkar was killed on 2 May by a mob comprising of 20 supporters of the TMC.

Petitioner No.1 (Biswajit Sarkar), his mother who was also molested are the eye witnesses of this gruesome murder, while Petitioner No.2 (Swaranalata Adhikari)

is the widow of Haran Adhikari, who was a local booth worker at Booth No.199A at Sonarpur Dakshin Vidhan Sabha.

With Cyclone Yaas expecting to hit West Bengal and Odisha around midday tomorrow, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and governor Jagdeep Dhankhar together monitored the movement of the cyclone from the control room at the state secretariat today.

Dhankhar reached Nabanna this evening after visiting Alipore MET office. After being received by Banerjee and chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay, Dhankhar headed to the control room from where he monitored the situation along with the chief minister. Prior to this, Dhankhar called up Banerjee to inquire about the state's preparedness. "Had useful briefing and interaction," he tweeted after the visit.

Mamata monitors Yaas from Nabanna control room

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA 25 MAY

HC seeks reply of Maha govt, BMC on reliefs for traders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

eye to such violations.

However, state's counsel Jyoti Chavan told the HC that the state government's resolution issued earlier this year strictly prohibited all retailers and traders, including e-commerce websites, from selling or delivering non-essential goods during the restrictions.

The HC directed the state to clarify in its affidavit the steps it was taking to ensure e-commerce websites were not flouting the government's standard operating procedure (SOP) on the delivery of non-essential goods during the period of curbs.

The petitioners had also sought waivers in license fee and municipal taxes till the time they were prohibited from resuming their businesses.

The HC directed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to address the issues in its affidavit.

It directed the state and the BMC to file their respective affidavits within two weeks.

The petitioners had also sought waivers in license fee and municipal taxes till the time they were prohibited from resuming their businesses. The court will continue hearing the pleas on 21 June.

90,000 people evacuated in Midnapore(E)

MIDNAPORE, 25 MAY



Fishermen anchor their boat on the bank of River Hooghly in Nadia, Tuesday.

As many as 90,000 people have been evacuated in coastal blocks of East Midnapore as cyclone Yaas gathered pace. The mass evacuation process began on 24 May from low-lying areas of coastal villages and they have been taken to nearby cyclone shelters while maintaining all Covid protocols, said Aditya Vikram Jinnai, SDO (Contd).

To monitor the situation, the district administrative officials have been camping at Digha since last night and they have deployed disaster management teams along with Police, PWD, Fire, Forest and WBSEDCL employees at strategic locations at each block in the district.

Seawater entered human habitation through the breaches on the two-kilometer saline embankment between Sankarpur and Tajpur today, threatening as many as 15 villages under Ramnagar-I block.

More than 200 families evacuated to safer place by Rishra civic body: The Rishra Civic body evacuated more than 200 families residing adjacent to the Hooghly riverbank area. Many of these residents are daily wagers or ones who lost their jobs since the jute mills closed down. Affected by the lockdown, they had been residing adjacent to the wide stretch in the riverbank from the Rishra Baghkhali area.

Authorities opined these people can be severely affected by the cyclone.

The Rishra civic body administrator, Vijay Sagar Mishra said, as per the directives from the chief minister steps are being taken to prevent loss of human lives, livestock, and property. "We evacuated more than 200 families to different school buildings and community halls."

SNS

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-L-DELHI,
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001.

OA No. 1082/2019 HDFC Bank Limited ... Applicant Versus Akshay Arora...Defendants To, Akshay Arora Son of Shri Vijay Kumar Arora, Resident of House No. H-274, Block, Vikas Puri, Delhi - 110018. Also Available At : C-1076, Ansul Esencia, Sector - 67, Badshahpur, Gurugram, Haryana-122101 Email : akshay_arora@gmail.com

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 28,61,479.85/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lacs Sixty Nine and Eighty Five Paise Only) against you and whereas it has been way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Ld. Registrar on 12.07.2021 at 10.30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.tribunal.gov.in Ph. Number : 011-23748473). Take notice that in case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Videos Conferencing and for that purpose :-
(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application / Software;
(ii) "MeetingID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing quo casées to be available on day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head; (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 08th April of 2021.

Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry.
Mr. Amit K.Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone No.: 011-23748473.
Email : drt1-delhi-dfs@nic.in

By order of this Tribunal, For Registrar.



Vessels anchored on the banks of the Ganga ahead of cyclone Yaas in Kolkata on Tuesday.

IANS

Maha to get 60,000 vials of mucormycosis drug: Tope

2,245 patients of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, in Maharashtra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

Maharashtra would get 60,000 vials of Amphotericin-B, the key drug for the treatment of mucormycosis patients, from 1 June onwards through the global tender floated by the government in addition to the allocation made by the Centre, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Tuesday.

There are 2,245 patients of mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, in Maharashtra, Tope told reporters after attending a review meeting on the mucormycosis and Covid-19 cases in the state.

"The state has floated a global tender for procuring Amphotericin-B vials for the treatment of mucormycosis. The state would get 60,000 vials of the medicine from 1 June onwards. It will be an additional supply apart from the current allocation of the medicine by the Centre," he said.

The minister said there are 2,245 patients of black fungus in the state and out of them, 1,007 are already covered under the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Jan Arogya Yojana (MJPYAY). The entire cost of the treatment of mucormycosis patients under the MJPYAY will be free, including the cost of the medicine.

The state is also trying to cap the cost of the treatment of mucormycosis patients who are admitted in private hospitals, he said.

Tope said the Maharashtra government has issued a GR (government resolution) regarding such treatment and the finance department has

Tope said the case positivity rate in 18 districts is higher than the average positivity rate of the state. The state government has decided to stop home isolation completely in these 18 districts.

The collectors are asked to set up more Covid Care Centres (CCCs) and admit all the active patients there, he said.

It is also decided to use 25 per cent funding of the 15th finance commission for erecting CCCs and similar facilities for isolation of Covid-19 patients in villages and rural areas, the minister said.

The collectors have been directed to use the premium charged for the minor mineral auction for setting up the CCC in the villages, he said.

Testing has to be done in a focused manner. Once a person tests positive for coronavirus, all the high and low risk persons should be tested diligently. The state has also asked the collectors of the 18 districts to avoid random testing in a large number to artificially lower the positivity rate, the health minister said.

Speaking about the pandemic scenario, Tope said Maharashtra currently has 3,27,000 active Covid-19 cases while the case recovery rate has improved to 93 per cent. Maharashtra's current case positivity rate is around 12 per cent while the case fatality rate is 1.5 per cent, he said.

Maharashtra's current case positivity rate is around 12 per cent while the case fatality rate is 1.5 per cent, he said.

He said all the collectors in

the state have been directed to complete the fire audit in their respective areas at the earliest.

"The Asha workers, who work as an extension to several government schemes, will now be trained with (to operate) RAT and self-testing kits of Covid-19," Tope said, adding these workers will be asked to encourage villagers to undergo testing as well as sensitize people about vaccination.

Responding to a question on global tenders issued for vaccine procurement, the minister said, "There has been no response to our global tender by any vaccine producers. We have sent email for Sputnik-V but yet to hear from them. The state is of the opinion that the Centre take an initiative to float a tender on behalf of the state and procure vaccines."

Earlier, Maharashtra government had shunned the option of home isolation for patients and instead made institutional quarantine must in areas that have a high Covid positivity rate.

District collectors will issue orders in their respective districts and accordingly, publicise them, the government said. The number of active cases in the district stands at 60,938 and 48,79,625 people have recovered, as per data.

Mamata monitors Yaas from Nabanna control room

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA 25 MAY

With Cyclone Yaas expecting to hit West Bengal and Odisha around midday tomorrow, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and governor Jagdeep Dhankhar together monitored the movement of the cyclone from the control room at the state secretariat today.

Dhankhar reached Nabanna this evening after visiting Alipore MET office. After being received by Banerjee and chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay, Dhankhar headed to the control room from where he monitored the situation along with the chief minister. Prior to this, Dhankhar called up Banerjee to inquire about the state's preparedness. "Had useful briefing and interaction," he tweeted after the visit.

A new normal?

While there is some consternation about the World Health Organisation not having approved Covaxin, India's indigenously developed vaccine, for emergency use yet, Indians who had opted for Covishield believing that the vaccine made using technology developed by AstraZeneca ~ which would hence be widely acceptable ~ are also in for a surprise. Unlike AstraZeneca, which has been approved by 101 countries, its Serum Institute of India developed cousin has passed muster with only about 40. While the AstraZeneca vaccine is approved by most European countries, besides a host of others, Covishield has only been approved by Hungary in Europe. This means that fully vaccinated Indians who had hoped that overseas travel would now be easier have reason to feel some frustration. While leisure travel is virtually ruled out in the circumstances that prevail around the world, and the myriad restrictions that are in place, the unacceptability of Indian vaccines will especially hamper several elderly persons unable to cope alone in India and needing to travel overseas to be with their children. Already, many countries around the world are planning to ease restrictions on international travel on the basis of what are called vaccine passports, digital or paper records attesting to the holder having been vaccinated. While such measures are necessary to ease the pressure on severely battered airline and tourism businesses, they also serve to overcome vaccine hesitancy. This month, the United Kingdom launched its digital vaccine passport through an app developed by the National Health Service. The European Union is also preparing to issue vaccine passports to citizens of its 27 member states. The move has been cleared by officials and is awaiting ratification by the European Parliament. In any event, Europe plans to clear this hurdle in time for the summer tourist season, a move that will be hailed by the beleaguered travel industry. Admittedly and as the UK government notes, "there are not many countries that currently accept proof of vaccination. So for the time being, most people will still need to follow other rules when travelling abroad ~ like getting a negative pre-departure test." But Europe and the UK have taken the first steps towards international travel as the world once knew it. India, battling a ferocious second wave, is still way behind the world in terms of using vaccination as a means to boost travel and tourism. While Covishield and Covaxin may not be accepted in many countries, should they not pass muster within India? Yet even fully vaccinated and healthy citizens need a negative RT-PCR report to travel to several states including West Bengal and Punjab. Entry requirements have been left for state governments to decide and this has resulted in the country having possibly the most exhaustive ~ and confusing ~ set of requirements for domestic travel. It would be prudent for the Union government to step in and impose a uniform set of requirements that allow fully vaccinated persons to be allowed to travel, just as those with negative RT-PCR reports are. Surely, vaccination must pave the way to normality.

A red rover

Within the span of a week, China has registered yet another outstanding achievement when its Mars rover undertook its first drive on the surface of the Red Planet. A remote-controlled Chinese motorised rover drove down the ramp of its landing capsule on Saturday and onto the surface of Mars, making China the first nation to orbit, land and deploy a land vehicle on its inaugural mission to the planet. Zhurong, named after a mythical Chinese god of fire, drove down to the surface of Mars at 10.40am Beijing time (02:40 GMT), according to the rover's official Chinese social media account. China this month joined the United States as the only nation to deploy land vehicles on Mars. The former Soviet Union landed a craft in 1971, but it lost communication seconds later. The 240 kg Zhurong, which has six scientific instruments including a high-resolution topography camera, will study the planet's surface soil and atmosphere. Powered by solar energy, Zhurong will also look for signs of ancient life, including any subsurface water and ice, using a ground-penetrating radar during its 90-day exploration of the surface. Zhurong will move and stop in slow intervals, with each interval estimated to be just 10 metres (33 feet) over three days, according to the official China Space News. "The slow progress of the rover was due to the limited understanding of the Martian environment, so a relatively conservative working mode was specially designed," Jia Yang, an engineer involved in the mission, told China Space News. He would not rule out a faster pace in the later stage of the rover's mission, depending on its operational state at the time. He said the rover was designed to be highly autonomous because the distance to Mars, at 320 million km (200 million miles), means a signal takes 40 minutes to travel both ways, posing a hurdle for real-time control of the rover. Martian temperatures are no less a problem. A night-time drop to minus 130 degrees Celsius freezes carbon dioxide, covering the uneven ground with a layer of dry ice, in itself a terrain risk for the rover. Dust storms could also affect the rover's ability to generate power through its solar panels. To overcome this, the panel surface is made with a material that cannot be easily stained by dust and can easily shake the dust off by vibration. "Perseverance" and "Zhurong" are among three robotic rovers operating on Mars. The third is NASA's "Curiosity", which landed in 2012. China has ambitious space plans that include launching a crewed orbital station and landing a human on the moon. China in 2019 became the first country to land a space probe on the little-explored far side of the moon, and in December returned lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since the 1970s.

Science v quackery ~ I

As further proof that that we are not scientifically-minded, we have important ministers and officer bearers brazenly defending bunkum ~ the cow is the only animal that exhales oxygen and caressing and massaging it is a remedy for respiratory ailments



"Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf

Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
... Gall of goat and slips of yew
... Finger of birth strangled babe

Ditch-delivered by a drab
Make the gruel thick and slab
And thereto a tiger's chaudron
For the ingredients of our cauldron."

[Macbeth. IV.i 22-36]

The witches' brew, with incantations from the nether world, lulled a false sense of invincibility in Macbeth, the eponymous play by Shakespeare. Bubonic plague periodically struck London in the 16th and into the 17th century, reaching a climax with the Great Plague of London (1664–65). The uncertainties which shrouded medical opinion cleared the way for the proliferation of quacks. In fact, with every pandemic, be it cholera or plague, and now as is seen, Covid-19, the patent-medicine industry is seen to be eager to provide a cure and to make a quick buck. But with people in government who set greater store by voodoo and quackery than by science, at whose watch some 3-lakh people have died of the virus so far, the official sanction has darker significance.

Shahid Jameel, an eminent virologist who had said complacency had contributed to the ferocity of India's second Covid-19 wave, resigned as the head of the scientific advisory body from the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSAACOG). In a guest article in The New York Times on India's Covid-19 epidemic, he wrote only a few days ago how his fellow scientists were "facing stubborn resistance to evidence-based policymaking". Way back in March this year, a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government warned Indian officials of "a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus taking hold in the country", says a Reuters report, but the "authorities were not paying enough attention to the evidence as they set policy".

"Policy has to be based on evidence and not the other way around," Dr Jameel told Reuters. "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, policy-making is the job of the government."

Disdain for scientific protocols was evident from the government of Uttarakhand's decision to go ahead with the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar from April onwards despite the sharply worsening Covid scenario. The enormity of the reckless exercise can be gauged by the fact that the Mela was attended by nearly 30 lakh people in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call on April 17 urging that the weeks-long religious festival "should now only be symbolic" came a little late in the day, in the wake of nearly 2,000 devotees testing positive in around a week's time and two royal baths having already taken place giving rise to the possibilities of thousand others getting infected. How a Kumbh Mela was allowed to take place is surprising because quite a few Kumbh Melas played a major role in the spread of cholera outbreaks and pandemics earlier.

A cholera epidemic broke out during the 1783 Kumbh Mela in Haridwar killing more than 20,000 people. In 1891, a massive cholera outbreak in India caused the Kumbh Mela to be dispersed but still at the end of the Mela, 169,013 cholera-related deaths had been reported in Haridwar. While tens of thousands of farmers were allowed to remain camped on the outskirts of the capital New Delhi to protest against new agriculture laws, the Election Commission's decision to allow political parties to hold massive electoral rallies and to hold elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry when infection rate was at its mortal peak was another epidemiological disaster waiting to happen.

As further proof that that we are not scientifically-minded, we have important ministers and officer bearers brazenly defending bunkum ~ the cow is the only

animal that exhales oxygen and caressing and massaging it is a remedy for respiratory ailments; that Indians had built planes fit enough for inter-planetary aviation thousands of years ago; the 'proof' of plastic surgery in ancient India lay in Ganesh's head on a human body; Arjuna's arrows were examples of their being weaponized with "nuclear power" and that the Indian engineers built the Ram Setu known formerly as Adam's Bridge, a chain of limestone shoals between India and Sri Lanka, and many such pearls, that made us a laughing stock to the scientific fraternity of the world.

In February this year, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan alongside Cabinet colleague Nitin Gadkari were seen at a press conference on the occasion of publication of a double-blinded, randomised clinical trial in a research journal. The putative drug was Coronil, an Ayurvedic pill promoted by Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved, which since June last year, was pitching to be deployed into India's Covid-19 management protocol. Which could be fair, had it never made an outlandish claim of being a miracle drug with '100 per cent recovery guaranteed'.

This week, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) took serious exception to Ramdev's claim that allopathy was a "stupid science" and that medicines such as Remdesivir and Favipiravir approved by the Drugs Controller General of India for coronavirus treatment had failed. "Lakhs of patients have died because of allopathic medicines rather than a shortage of oxygen," Ramdev reportedly claimed to which an extremely livid IMA demanded his prosecution under the Epidemic Disease Act "for disobeying and causing danger to the life of many". Hours after the backlash, Patanjali Yogipeeth and its MD Acharya Balkrishna issued a statement claiming that the 'truncated' video being referred

was totally out of context, that Baba Ramdev had no ill-will against modern science and practitioners of modern medicine and maintained that what was being attributed to the former was "false and nugatory".

But with the pandemic, the battle between science and quackery rages on. Last year, Rajasthan BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuria, a lawmaker from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur constituency, suggested that sitting in mud and blowing conch shells boosted immunity and helped the body to fight Covid-19 infection. That the MP later tested positive is beside the point. BJP's West Bengal unit chief Dilip Ghosh said in November 2019 the milk produced by Indian cows contains gold. Last year, during a programme in Durgapur, Ghosh suggested cow urine and ayurvedic medicine for protection against coronavirus. Recently a video of people smeared with cow dung and urine mixture on their bodies considering it to be a cure for Covid-19, and allowing it to dry as they hugged and honoured cows and practised yoga ~ the pack would have to be washed off with milk or butter-milk ~ apparently shot at the Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Vishwavidyalaya Pratishthanam Gaushala, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad ~ went viral.

In Madhya Pradesh, among the many states reeling under a massive second wave of Covid-19, the spectacle of Bhopal MP Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur advising people to consumer gau mutra (cow-urine) of a desi (Indian) cow for its 'benefit' in fighting lung infections also did the rounds.

She explained that she consumes gau mutra after offering prayers saying, "Aap hamare liye amrut ke swaroop hai, mein aapko grahan kar rahi hu. Aap mere bheetar ki raksha kare kyu ki mera jeevan rashtre ke liye hai (you are like amrit to me, I am consuming you. Please protect me because my life is for the nation)." The problem about political leaders making such absurd proclamations is that people might actually practise them with serious public health implications.

(To Be Concluded)

ease and death and all policy recommendations must be geared towards that goal.

There is no room for knee-jerk reactions that can compromise this objective. We all must be a single entity as far as the fight against coronavirus is concerned and support the government for better management of a national crisis.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra,
Mohali, 24 May.

EYE ON NEPAL

SIR, This refers to the report, 'Nepal Prez dissolves Parl, announces mid-

term poll' (23 May). Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari has dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on November 12 and 19 after she determined that neither embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli nor the Opposition alliance were in a position to form a government. Interestingly, both Oli and Deuba had claimed the support of some of the same lawmakers.

The second wave of Covid-19 has not only ravaged India but has also begun to affect its landlocked neighbour Nepal, leaving citizens reeling under oxygen shortages, spikes in daily case loads, and fatalities.

The government isn't in a position to make major decisions. At this juncture, all political forces should have been working together putting aside all past differences to end the coronavirus crisis. The polity must rise to the occasion and work towards an alternative stable regime.

New Delhi needs to keep a careful watch on the unstable state of affairs since negative developments in Nepal have a bearing on India's security.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,
Nadia, 23 May.

LEARN FROM KERALA
SIR, This is with reference to the report 'Vijayan leads LDF for 2nd term as CM' (19 May). I think the state CPI-M has realised what went wrong in West Bengal and decided not to repeat this in Kerala.

This is why they introduced new faces at the ministry level. We have seen the consequence of projecting age-old leaders in West Bengal. Thus, Kerala has shown the party leadership what the process of survival should be.

But I don't think it will be acceptable in West Bengal as a few leaders are still hanging on to their posts even though the people have rejected them.

If they don't learn from their colleagues in Kerala, they will be wiped out.

Yours, etc., Abhijit Chakraborty,
Bally, 19 May.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Concerted action against deadly virus

SIR, It's high time that all the political leaders come together and join hands with the government at this crucial juncture when the country is facing a deadly virus killing thousands of citizens. Every one knows that inoculation is the only proven tool working efficiently against the virus and so, maximum number of citizens need to be inoculated with vaccine in the shortest possible period so as to create herd immunity and eradicate the virus.

If the government has decided to increase the interval between two doses of Covishield vaccine, Opposition parties instead of criti-

cising the decision must take it as positive step, as the gap has been widened on the lines of what other advanced countries like UK and Canada are following. With a gap of 12-16 weeks, the vaccine will be more effective for individuals and also it will make surplus millions of doses for those who haven't been even inoculated once.

Given that many Indians have still not been exposed to the virus and newer, threatening variants abound, there is no reason to be complacent that people will be protected from future waves. The aim of vaccines is to prevent severe dis-

ease and death and all policy recommendations must be geared towards that goal.

There is no room for knee-jerk reactions that can compromise this objective. We all must be a single entity as far as the fight against coronavirus is concerned and support the government for better management of a national crisis.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra,
Mohali, 24 May.

EYE ON NEPAL

SIR, This refers to the report, 'Nepal Prez dissolves Parl, announces mid-



A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Leprosy must not be forgotten

The 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) takes place from May 24 to June 1. This year's gathering is likely to be dominated by Covid-19, but here I want to talk about a different disease ~ leprosy ~ and a resolution that was adopted at the WHA exactly 30 years ago. This resolution called for the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the global level by the year 2000, with elimination defined as a prevalence rate of less than one case per 10,000 population. It was a landmark resolution for the time. Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacillus Mycobacterium leprae. It mainly affects the skin and peripheral nerves and is said to be one of the oldest diseases in human history. Today an effective treatment exists in the form of multidrug therapy (MDT) and with early detection and treatment, the disease is completely curable.

But if treatment is delayed, leprosy can cause impairments to the skin, nerves, face, hands and feet, and lead to permanent disability. Together with deep-seated fears and misperceptions about the disease, this has subjected persons affected by leprosy as well as their family members to severe discrimination, which continues to this day. And, amid the coronavirus pandemic, we can see parallels between the discrimination and hos-

The Phnom Penh Post
tility toward Covid-19 patients, their families and health personnel that has been reported in different parts of the world and society's attitudes toward leprosy.

Following the 1991 WHA resolution, elimination of leprosy as a public health problem was successfully achieved at the global level by the end of 2000, and almost all countries, including Cambodia, have replicated that success at the national level. Unfortunately, this does not mean that leprosy has disappeared.

Each year, around 200,000 new cases of leprosy are reported each year ~ Cambodia sees around 100 to 200 cases ~ and there are still endemic areas and scattered hot spots of leprosy in many countries. Some three to four million people are thought to be living with visible impairments or deformities due to leprosy. Meanwhile, the persistence of stigma and discrimination toward persons affected by leprosy can inhibit people from seeking treatment.

Since becoming the World Health Organisation (WHO) Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination in 2001, I have visited some 120 countries and observed the situation on the ground myself. This has led me to think of leprosy in terms of a motorcycle: the front wheel symbolises curing the disease, and the back wheel represents eliminating discrimination. Unless both wheels are turning together, we will not reach our ultimate goal of zero leprosy.

As regards the front wheel, the WHO recently published its new Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030, which includes the ambitious targets of zero leprosy patients in 120 countries and a 70 per cent decrease in new cases detected globally by 2030. In order to achieve these targets, there will need to be commitments and financial support from governments; this is not something the WHO can achieve on its own.

BHARAT DOGRA

Some of the most distressing images of recent times have related to dozens of dead bodies floating down the Ganges or excessive activity at cremation places. These images disturb all of us a lot, but at the same time we should avoid jumping to any hasty conclusions. If we draw hasty but flawed conclusions, then we will not be able to have an evidence-based Covid response which is really needed.

This much is clear that there is significant excess mortality, but regarding the composition of this excess mortality we are not yet sure. Careful analysis and collection of data is needed to get a better idea.

To give an example of the factors at work, we may look at the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-15. As Ebola is recognized as a high fatality disease and the talk of this pandemic had dominated the region at that time, most of the deaths were invariably attributed to Ebola. However subsequent analysis, also accepted and quoted by the WHO in its recent documents, revealed that the mortality caused by a mix of pre-existing diseases mainly measles, malaria, HIV and tuberculosis was even higher.

What had happened was that as the weak and inadequate health system had got centered mainly on Ebola, those suffering from other important killer diseases had not received normal treatment and care. Ultimately this proved so costly that the mortality caused by four pre-existing diseases turned out to be higher than the mortality caused by Ebola. What is more, some of the patients suffering from these other diseases got sent initially to the special facilities, exposing them to a delay and harassment and mistreatment, before they could be diagnosed properly sent to the proper treatment place, if at all.

Now suppose that this reality, instead of being brought to light at a post-pandemic stage by careful researchers, had been realized by the health authorities much earlier. In that case they would have changed their policy to take into account this reality and by taking corrective measures many precious lives could have been saved. Hence it is clear that understanding causes and composition of excess mortality at an early stage is very important for a proper policy aimed at reducing overall mortality and distress. More detailed data of excess mortality at a national scale is likely to emerge much later, so we must rely on whatever information we have to get as reliable an understanding as possible, while undue haste, rumour-mongering and sensationalism must be avoided.

A careful reading of the evolving

Mortality rates need careful evaluation



situation in India during 2020-21 provides adequate basis for the fact that excess mortality exists and it has increased in more recent times. This excess mortality is likely to be composed of a mix of factors. Covid mortality is likely to contribute to only a part of this. Another important part of this is likely to consist of other serious diseases and medical conditions (such as those relating to complicated pregnancies and childbirths as well as injuries) which could not receive normal attention during the last 14 months or so. Another factor is that uncertainty, panic and mental tensions have increased during these times and this can also contribute to excess mortality directly and indirectly. Non-rational medical interventions and self-medication increase in times of uncertainty and profiteering and these too contribute to excess mortality.

Livelihoods have been badly dis-

rupted for a very large number of vulnerable people who were not exactly in good health before the pandemic struck. Initially, it is likely they had some reserves on which they could draw, but as the livelihood crisis lingered and then struck again with more ferocity in recent weeks, people faced new difficulties with depleted or zero reserves. It is likely that higher levels of hunger, malnutrition and deprivation of other basic needs have all contributed to excess mortality. In fact, the excess mortality caused by non-Covid factors may even be higher than that relating to Covid-19 factors, particularly if we remember that in numerous cases of co-morbidity, a death with Covid virus is not necessarily a death caused by Covid virus, and the other aspects of co-morbidity may well be the more dominant factor.

Hence policy interventions should seek to control and reduce all

these aspects of mortality instead of being concentrated only on Covid-19 aspects. This approach is likely to lead to a much higher contribution to overall reduction of mortality.

Here it may be interesting to look at some recent aspects of this debate in the USA. The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA, have put the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the USA in 2020 at 376,504. However, for another recent year, 2017, which was called a bad flu year, the same CDC data put the excess mortality numbers at 401,000. In the absence of other exceptional factors, this excess mortality is likely to be attributed mainly to the bad flu. Hence questions have been asked as to why there was so much panic and extended lockdowns in 2020 with 376,504 Covid-19 deaths, while there were no lockdowns at all and no big panic with 401,000 bad flu deaths.

But the situation is actually even more peculiar than what is suggested by this data, as the higher mortality in 2017 affected the younger generation much more. To capture this aspect, medical statisticians calculate YLL or years of life lost. In the USA, as mentioned also in calculations presented in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 13.3 million YLL were lost in excess mortality of bad flu year 2017, three times more than the loss of 4.41 million YLL attributed to Covid-19 in 2020.

This only re-emphasizes the importance of not rushing to hasty conclusions in pandemic times and looking at a more balanced view in a proper, wider perspective. This will ensure that distorted responses to the pandemic, which can accentuate difficulties, are avoided.

The writer is a journalist and author. His recent books include *Planet in Peril* and *Man Over Machine*.

Where will new hotspots be?

MICHAEL HEAD

Beneath the many complexities of the marathon that is the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a simple hypothesis: if the coronavirus is introduced into a susceptible population, and those people are able to mix, then there will be significant community transmission. Across 2020 and 2021, we have seen this happen around the world, including, recently, in India.

Could we see further situations like those in India, with cases rapidly spiking and health systems being overwhelmed? The short answer, sadly, is yes. Globally, there's been an encouraging downturn in daily new cases in May 2021, but despite this, cases are still at a very high level overall, with worldwide statistics masking huge differences across countries and areas. The global vaccine rollout is also progressing slowly, with most of the world still susceptible to Covid-19. These factors mean there's potential for further spikes like those seen in India.

We only need look to Nepal to see a similar situation unfolding. Other countries have rising caseloads too, with many eyes looking nervously at Latin America, south-east Asia and some of the smaller island nations.

In terms of where cases are

sluggish, with less than 4 per cent of the population having received a first dose. In this author's view, the Olympics should not go ahead this year.

Latin America continues to experience a huge burden of Covid-19 disease and so is also at risk. Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Colombia are all still in the top ten countries in terms of daily new confirmed cases per million people. On the other hand, sub-Saharan Africa has on the face of it – with some exceptions – handled the pandemic relatively well, with countries praised for an early and decisive response, having learned lessons from the west African Ebola outbreak of 2013-16.

Of course, our conclusions must be cautious. Creating high-quality real-time data during a public health emergency is complicated, and data is patchy and slow in most parts of the world. The extent of transmission within refugee camps and in conflict settings, for instance, is very much unknown. Some vulnerable areas may slip under the radar.

The reporting of data may also be influenced by local politics. Some countries, such as Tanzania, have chosen to downplay the severity of Covid-19. The former Tanzanian president, John Magufuli, died in March 2021 – and news coverage sug-

gested he may have died of Covid-19 amid reports of uncontrolled outbreaks around the country and sharp increases in deaths. However, officially the impact of Covid-19 in Tanzania has been low.

Similarly, Belarus is reporting low death rates (27.8 per 100,000), having refused to consider Covid-19 a serious threat. But the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) has modelled the country's actual death rate to be one of the highest in the world, at 472.2 per 100,000 people. IHME modelling puts Azerbaijan at the top of that list, with a death rate of 672.7 compared with official numbers of 46.3 per 100,000.

The timing of elections and volatility of political governance may be interesting factors to observe when trying to predict future spikes in cases. Political mass gatherings in India are likely to have contributed to the extensive recent transmission. The prime minister and health minister encouraged people to attend, wrongly believing earlier in the spring that India had reached the end stages of the pandemic.

Elsewhere, Donald Trump's campaigning events caused numerous super-spreading events in the US, while in Myanmar there were reported breaches of Covid-19 protocols due to electioneering and mass gath-

erings. Myanmar's elections in October 2020 were preceded by the highest spike in cases the country had experienced. Soon after the election, stricter policies were put in place and case rates lowered. Countries that engage in similar behaviour – or, like India, declare success too early – could well be the next hotspots.

Of course, the next outbreak may prove difficult to spot. Few of us could easily point to Timor on a map. This lack of knowledge influences our perception over local situations and also the news coverage that countries get. Compare Nepal and Timor to Brazil and India, on which public reporting has been extensive. Plus, some countries might not be reporting good-quality data – Belarus, Azerbaijan or indeed Russia may have much bigger burdens of Covid-19 than appears to be the case.

The "next big outbreak" will be reliant on a perfect storm of few variables coming together. At the core of this storm will be a slow vaccine rollout and susceptible populations mixing freely. Political rallies, large-scale festivals and protests are examples of mass gatherings that can seed new outbreaks and facilitate sufficient spread to rapidly overwhelm a health system. But depending on where this happens, we may not even notice.

The writer is Senior Research Fellow in Global Health, University of Southampton. This article was published on www.theconversation.org

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Our London correspondent has transmitted a report of the striking speech delivered by Mr. Charles M. Schwab, the American "Steel King," at a reception given in his honour by the New York Chamber of Commerce. After visiting Europe, Mr. Schwab has returned with a conviction that the Allies are in danger of losing the fruits of victory simply because of Germany's appreciation of the stern necessities of the industrial situation. German workmen, says Mr. Schwab, are efficient; they are eager for work; and they are giving a full day's work for a full day's pay; with the result that already they are underselling competitors. The examples of such underselling cited by Mr. Schwab were those of steel in England, and pneumatic tyres in America. Mr. Schwab thinks the difference in prices is solely a matter of labour costs. Mr. Hoover, after investigation, has declared that the huge sum of 50,000 million marks, approximately, is being devoted by Germany to subsidising production. If both these factors are at work - economic labour on the one hand, and State subsidies on the other - the consuming public is likely to reap the benefit, and the Germans will be better occupied in replenishing the world's markets than in spreading devastation. What does follow is that this object must be pursued without impairing the keenness for his work which has made the British craftsman pre-eminent in the world of industry.

NEWS ITEMS

SEQUEL TO ORIENTAL NAVIGATION CASE

At the High Court yesterday, before Mr. Justice Buckland, the rule came on for hearing which had been issued against Charoo Chunder Mitter, secretary of the Oriental Navigation Co., to show cause why, under section 195 of the C.P.C., he should not be prosecuted for having, as found by Mr. Justice Buckland, given false evidence on March 22 and 23, 1920, in a suit against the Oriental Navigation Co. In these judicial proceedings it was charged that Mr. C.C. Mitter in answer to questions put to him in the course of his evidence in that suit that the first four pages of the Company's postal certificates filed and marked as Ex. 2 in those proceedings were in his handwriting. His lordship allowed time till June 10 when a day will be fixed for the next hearing.

MAHARAJA OF JAIPUR'S SUCCESSOR

Simla, May 25
H.E. the Governor-General in Council has passed orders recognising and confirming under the provisions of the Canning Adoption Sanad 1862, the adoption of a son and successor by H.H. the Maharaja of Jaipur, who has no male descendant. On March 24 last, His Highness performed publicly the religious and customary ceremony of adoption, the adopted being the ten year old son of the Thakur of Isardha, a Rajawat family of the Jaipur State. His Highness the present Maharaja succeeded to the gaddi in 1880, being nominated thereto by His late Highness the Maharaja Ram Singh shortly before he died. His Highness before succession also belonged to the Isardha family from which the Maharaj Kumar has now been selected for adoption.

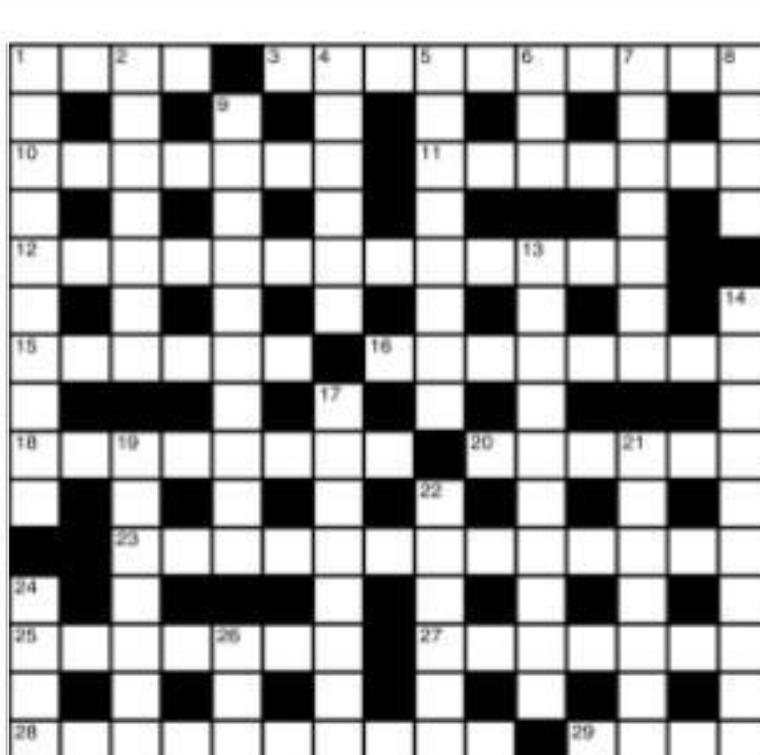
R.I.M. OFFICER'S TRAGIC DEATH

Rangoon, May 25
Commander Edmund Wilmot Dawson, R.I.M., Port Officer and Collector of Customs, Moulmein, accidentally shot himself while cleaning his revolver in his bungalow on Monday evening, and death is reported to have been instantaneous. It appears from the meager details to hand that the revolver went off unaccountably and the bullet which entered the mouth penetrated into the brain. Commander Dawson was a very popular official and only joined the Service in July last year and had been stationed at Moulmein since. His tragic death is greatly mourned by all who know him. The funeral took place yesterday with full honours and was attended by many prominent residents of Moulmein.

PROTECTION OF TEMPLES AND SHRINES

At a meeting of Sikhs held at Amritsar yesterday under the auspices of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, resolutions were passed expressing the opinion that the proposed Gurdwara Bill as amended was unsatisfactory, and would be unacceptable unless it was framed on different lines. It was decided not to suggest any names as commissioners for the purposes of the Gurdwara Bill so long as the Sikh prisoners were not released. A working committee of seven was appointed to carry on the work connected with the Gurdwara legislation and the situation created by it. All those in Government service were requested to continue in the faithful discharge of their duty as the time for any other action had not yet arrived.

CROSSWORD



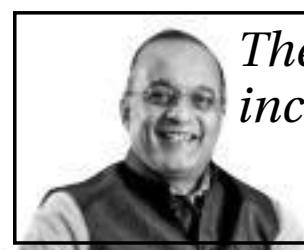
YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

S	P	R	U	C	E	T	S	T	T	U	B	E	E
R	N	O	H	A	A	I							
H	E	N	H	O	S	M	I	N	N	O			
Y	E	I	W	P	K	S							
P	R	Y	R	I	I								
A	R	I	D	L	O	R	I	K	E	E			
I	A	R	I	D	L	O	R	I	K	E			
E	O	S	D	E	I	N							
A	V	I	F	A	U	N	A	L	O	C	H		
B	B	B	B	V	L	E							
N	I	T	R	O	U	C	R	B					
C	I	C	U	N	E	S							
E	G	G	H	E	A	D							
A	Y	E	A	Y	E	E							

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

NO 28923

1	Without notice, alter fitting (4)	25	shortfall (6,7)	8	short of time (7)
3	Charm ebbed unexpectedly in sleeping quarters (10)	27	Angry young man rings most of island (7)	9	Smack in Staffordshire town changing hands (4)
10	Angry demand of shellfish gatherer heard (7)	28	content to be released (7)	13	Thug wanting bit of attention admitting twisting Trump's slogan, wretched child (10)
11	Oblivious of finely-crafted work by Stubbs? (7)	29	Product, primarily, in nut tree fluid (10)	14	Made responsive broadcast claiming 'Setti is close to Carlisle' (10)
12	Current measures to protect the earth I designed for combatting areas with crowds (13)	1	Jill's friend caught leaving appetisers for mischievous child (10)	17	Most expensive ways to hold sword up (8)
15	Food with missing Friends (6)	2	Priest cuts shin up with large knife (7)	19	One takes in Canadian singer's claim to be short of energy (7)
16	Spice is new dope inhaled by Deep Purple? (8)	4	Unrefined cycling centre unknown (6)	21	Perform wearing hat, being touchy? (7)
18	Relocate German in Abu Dhabi, perhaps (8)	5	Range of political blocs announced (8)	22	Be next to a judge overwhelmed by murder (6)
20	Hams it up as English test is in Spanish (6)	6	I'm surprised captain with prosthetic leg has no foot (3)	24	Fight roughly, the first to be thrown out (4)
23	Move by Tory leader, jerk, if journalist recalled financial	7	British businessman in a pickle,	26	Seafood that's line caught (3)



The otherwise resilient retail segment is expected to report a higher incidence of asset quality stress due to second wave of Covid-19.

SASHIDHAR JAGDISHAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & MD, HDFC BANK

THUMBNAILS

BSE SENSEX		May 25, 2021
Top Losers		
Open:	50,922.32	Change:
Close:	50,637.53	-14.37 (-0.03%)
Previous close:	50,651.90	
Closing Price in ₹	50,637.53	Change
HDFC Bank	1,479	-2.02
Axis Bank	732	-1.26
Reliance	1,965	-1.06
IndusInd Bank	996	-0.82
HDFC	2,529	-0.45
ITC	211	-0.31
Kotak Bank	1,750	-0.28
Bharti Airtel	526	-0.12
Ultra Tech	6,568	-0.05
KBK Infographics		

GDP growth estimated at 1.3% in Q4 of FY 2020-21: SBI report

Economy may see contraction of around 7.3 per cent in financial year 2020-21, says the report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

The country's GDP is likely to grow by 1.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of financial year 2020-21 and may see a contraction of around 7.3 per cent for the full financial year, according to an SBI research report "Ecowrap".

The e-National Statistical Office (NSO) will release the GDP estimates for the March 2021 quarter and provisional annual estimates for the year 2020-21 on 31 May.

"Based on our 'nowcasting model', the forecasted GDP growth for Q4 would be around 1.3 per cent (with downward bias) as against NSO (National Statistical Office) projection of a negative (-1) per cent," the research report said.

"We now expect GDP decline for the full year (FY2020-21) to be around 7.3 per cent (compared to our earlier prediction of minus 7.4 per cent)," it said.

State Bank of India (SBI) has developed a "nowcasting model" with 41 high-frequency

Real GDP loss would be in



the range of Rs 4-4.5 lakh crore and, hence, real GDP growth would be in the range of 10-15 per cent (as against RBI forecast of 26.2 per cent), it said.

The research report further said both deposits and credit of all the banks declined in April and May. However, the trend in deposits has changed from FY'21.

Deposits had increased by a staggering Rs 2.8 lakh crore in 2020-21; and in the current financial year, it has already increased by Rs 1 lakh crore till 7 May.

"The interesting point to note is that deposits have shown alternate periods of expansion and contraction in FY'22 in the first three fortnights," it said.

According to the report, it is possible that such expansion, followed by contraction, could indicate household stress as people getting salary credits in the first fortnight are withdrawing it in the second fortnight for health expenses. They are also stocking up currency for precautionary motive and an uncertain scenario, and the trend continues.

In the plan, Wadhawan had proposed to repay lenders by selling assets.

In November 2019, RBI had referred DHFL ~ then the third-largest pure-play mortgage lender ~ for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

DHFL had gone bankrupt with more than Rs 90,000 crore in debt to various lenders, including banks, mutual funds and individual investors who kept fixed deposits with the company.

Last year, Wadhawan had made his settlement offer to the CoC and it was rejected, citing lack of credibility and the valuations attached to the proposed asset sales.

In the plan, Wadhawan had proposed to repay lenders by selling assets.

In view of the problems related to the pandemic, the Central government has announced accepting the request of the gem and jewellery industry stakeholders to postpone the 1 June deadline to hallmark gold jewellery in the country. 15 June has been set as the new date to implement the process.

Late last night, the consumer affairs ministry also announced forming a committee to "resolve implementation issues and ensure the roll-out by 15 June."

The Bureau of Indian Standards director-general Pramod Tewari has been appointed as the convener of the committee that includes department of consumer affairs additional secretary Nidhi Khare, representatives of jewellers associations, trade and hallmarking bodies.

As reported in The Statesman on 18 May, industry associations such as the Mumbai-based All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council had deemed the 1 June 2021 deadline as "impossible" and had sought an extension.

A hallmark is an official marking on jewellery to certify the content of gold, platinum, silver, palladium, to avoid customers being cheated.

In its 15 January 2021 order, the consumer affairs ministry had mandated all gold jewellery items and artefacts

Barclays lowers FY'22 GDP growth forecast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

A British brokerage today cut India's FY'22 GDP growth estimate by a sharp 0.80 per cent to 9.2 per cent, saying the economic impact of the second wave of infections has been deeper than initially expected.

Barclays chief India economist Rahul Bajaria also mentioned the slow pace of vaccinations in the country and the rolling lockdowns across many states for the estimate.

It can be noted that the last month has seen a slew of similar forecasts from analysts, even as the RBI maintained its estimate of a 10.5 per cent growth in real GDP. The analysts' estimates range from 8.5 per cent to little above 10 per cent. The higher growth number has been made possible by a low base of FY'21, where

the economy contracted by over 7.5 per cent.

"Although India's second Covid-19 wave has started to recede, the related economic costs have been larger owing to the more stringent lockdowns implemented to contain the outbreak. We lower our FY 2021-22 GDP growth forecast a further 0.80 per cent, to 9.2 per cent," Bajaria said.

He said the overall situation is coming under control even though parts of the country are still experiencing an increase in new cases and this can result in a gradual reopening of the economy.

It can be noted that the second wave had witnessed new infections top 4 lakh a day with over 4,500 deaths. While the new infections have gone down, the daily deaths ~ even the reported ones ~ continue to be high.

DHFL insolvency: Appellate Tribunal stays NCLT order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) today stayed the direction of NCLT Mumbai directing the lenders of DHFL to consider the offer by the debt-ridden mortgage firm's erstwhile promoter Kapil Wadhawan.

A vacation Bench of NCLAT comprising acting chairman Justice AIS Cheema and member technical VP Singh stayed the order passed by the Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

On 19 May, NCLT Mumbai had directed the settlement plan offered by Wadhawan to be considered by the lenders of DHFL, one of the lawyers engaged in the matter said.

On 19 May, NCLT Mumbai had directed the settlement plan offered by Wadhawan to be considered by the lenders of DHFL, one of the lawyers engaged in the matter said.

The order of the NCLT is yet to be updated on the website of the appellate tribunal.

Last week, NCLT Mumbai Bench asked the RBI-appointed administrator of DHFL to present the settlement plan offered by Wadhawan to

the CoC.

The tribunal gave ten days' time for the CoC to consider the offer.

Last year, Wadhawan had made his settlement offer to the CoC and it was rejected, citing lack of credibility and the valuations attached to the proposed asset sales.

In the plan, Wadhawan had proposed to repay lenders by selling assets.

In November 2019, RBI had referred DHFL ~ then the third-largest pure-play mortgage lender ~ for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

DHFL had gone bankrupt with more than Rs 90,000 crore in debt to various lenders, including banks, mutual funds and individual investors who kept fixed deposits with the company.

Rupee rises by 19 paise to 72.77 against US \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

The rupee strengthened by 19 paise to end at 72.77 against the US dollar today, tracking weakness in the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.85 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.75 and a low of 72.87.

It finally ended at 72.77 against the American currency, registering a rise of 19 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee had settled at 72.96.

"The Indian rupee appreciated on the back of weakness in dollar. Dollar slipped amid decline in US treasury yields, rise in risk appetite in the global markets and expectation of poor economic data from the US.



BPCL may sell some stake in Indraprastha Gas, Petronet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) may sell a part of its stake in Petronet LNG and Indraprastha Gas (IGL) to shed its promoter status to obviate the need for its new owner to make open offers for the two gas companies, sources said.

BPCL holds 12.5 per cent of shareholding in India's largest liquefied natural gas importer, Petronet, and a 22.5 per cent stake in city gas retailer, IGL. It is a promoter of both the listed companies and holds board positions.

As per the legal position evaluated by department of investment and public asset management (Dipam) ~ the department running the

process for sale of government's entire 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL ~ the acquirer of BPCL will have to make an open offer to the minority shareholders of Petronet and IGL for acquisition of 26 per cent shares, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

This is because BPCL is a promoter of the two companies and since there is a change in ownership of the promoter firm, an open offer is triggered under Sebi (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011.

A way-out could be for BPCL to sell a part of its shareholding in the two firms and shed promoter status,

thereby obviating the need for open offers, sources said.

BPCL, however, is not in favour of selling the stake and

giving up promoter status and directorships will result in substantial value erosion for the company.

But the thinking in the government is that the open offers for Petronet and IGL may deter bidders who are mostly eyeing BPCL's oil refining assets and 22 per cent share of the fuel marketing business it commands, sources said.

BPCL spokesperson refused comments for the story.

The government's 52.98 percent stake in BPCL is valued at about Rs 54,000 crore at the current share trading price.

The requirement for making an open offer for additional 26 per cent to minority shareholders of the company will cost an additional Rs 26,700 crore.

Petrol price rises by 23 paise, diesel by 25 paise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Petrol price inched towards the Rs 100-mark in Mumbai today after fuel rates were hiked again. Petrol price was increased by 23 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike ~ 13th this month ~ pushed petrol and diesel prices to record-high levels across the country. Petrol price in Delhi rose to Rs 93.44 a litre and diesel to Rs 84.32 a litre.

In Mumbai, petrol price climbed to Rs 99.71 a litre and diesel price to Rs 95.57 per litre.

Rates had already crossed the Rs 100-mark in several

cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, the price in Mumbai too was inching towards that level.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Oil companies revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on average price of benchmark fuel in the international market in the preceding 15 days, and foreign exchange rates.

This is the 13th increase in prices since 4 May.

India, Israel sign pact to boost agriculture

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 25 MAY

government officials.

India's agriculture and farmers' welfare ministry and "Mashav" ~ Israel's nodal agency for sharing technology with developing countries ~ have 29 operational centres of excellence across India in 12 states, using advanced Israeli agro-technology for intensive farming customised to local conditions.

Then Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir had established Mashav in 1958 after her country was excluded from the Bandung (Indonesia) Conference of 1955, following Arab countries threatening to boycott the Asia-Africa conference if Israel was invited.

The centres of excellence (CoEs) established under these Israeli-based technology action plans are playing an important role in improving productivity, quality of horticulture and doubling farmers' income.

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

Mediterranean coast, Mashav shares its latest technologies to boost economies of developing countries and works with 16 international agencies, including the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, World Meteorological Organization, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Bonn, Germany.

The latest three-year Indo-

Cut GST on Covid essentials: Punjab FM to Sitharaman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

cil, which sets a "dangerous" precedent.

The GST Council is to meet for the first time in nearly eight months on Friday (28 May).

Badal said many goods, including protective garments, digital thermometer, laboratory sanitiser/disinfectants and paper bed sheets, which are needed to fight the pandemic, attract a basic customs duty of 20 per cent and a goods and services tax (GST) of up to 18 per cent. On top of that, a 10 per cent social welfare surcharge is levied on such items.

"As IGST is charged on taxable value, that includes import duties, the effective burden exceeds by another 2-3 per cent," Badal said.

"It is baffling that despite the crisis our country currently finds itself in... taxes this high continue to apply on basic essentials without to overcome this life-threatening disease..." Badal wrote.

He also suggested review and harmonisation of tax rates and exemptions to eliminate evasion and simplify tax credit chain.

Pete thanked minister Goyal for extending the deadline, he reiterated persisting industry problems of inadequate infrastructure, particularly in small towns, to hallmark jewellery within a short time. His association represents about three lakh industry stakeholders.

Gem and Jewellery Council vice-chairman Saifyam Mehra pointed to Covid-19 related travel restrictions that have worsened hallmarking logistics.

While recognising problems, the government is pushing ahead to ensure transparency. "Customers must get hallmark-certified gold at the earliest all across the country without any further delay, to ensure India having the world's best standards in gold jewellery," said consumer affairs minister Piyush Goyal during an industry webinar on Monday to review the hallmarking process.

Emami reports 3-fold jump in Q4 net profit

PRESS TRUST OF IND



We have not seen any significant outflow of capital, the securities markets are doing very well and generally, life goes on

HONG KONG LEADER CARRIE LAM
IN A MEETING

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2021

09

Iran approves seven for Presidential vote

State TV puts judiciary chief Raisi, linked to mass executions, in dominant position

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, 25 MAY

Iran named the hard-line cleric running its judiciary and six others Tuesday as approved candidates in its June 18 presidential election, barring prominent candidates allied to its current president amid tensions with the West over its tattered nuclear deal.

The announcement carried by state television puts judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is linked to mass executions in 1988, in the dominant position for the upcoming vote. He's the most-known candidate of the seven hopefuls, with opinion polling previously showing his anti-corruption campaign drew Iranian support. He's also believed to be a favorite of Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But perhaps most notable was who Iran's Guardian Council barred from running.

Chief among them was former parliament speaker Ali Larjani, a conservative who allied with Rouhani in recent years. Larjani had been positioning himself as a pragmatic candidate who would back Rouhani's signature 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

That accord is now in tatters as diplomats in Vienna try to negotiate a return of both Iran and the U.S. to the agreement. Larjani seemingly signaled he wouldn't fight the decision. I have done my duty before God and the dear nation, and I am satisfied, Lar-



jani wrote on Twitter. Thank you to all those who expressed their gratitude and I hope you will participate in the elections for the promotion of an Islamic Iran.

Also barred was former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, a reformist. Ahmadinejad ignored a warning from Khamenei in 2017 and registered, only to be rejected then as well by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel under Khamenei.

During an earlier session of parliament on Tuesday, lawmaker Ahmad Alireza Beigi described Ahmadinejad's home as being under siege by security forces since the day before. He also warned that the decision would suppress turnout. Iran's theocracy since its 1979 Islamic Revolution has based its legitimacy in part on turnout in elections.

State TV earlier quoted Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman of the Guardian Council, as saying only seven had been approved out of some 590 who registered by

the panel of clerics and jurists overseen by Khamenei. In 2017, 1,630 hopefuls registered to run. Raisi wrote on Twitter a service technically banned by Iran since the 2009 unrest that surrounded Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election that he wanted authorities to reconsider the decision to bar some of the candidates. I have made contacts and I am holding consultations to make the election scene more competitive and participatory, he wrote.

As the head of the judiciary, Raisi oversees a justice system in Iran that remains one of the world's top executioners.

United Nations experts and others have criticized Iran for detaining dual nationals and those with ties abroad to be used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West. Then there's the 1988 mass executions that came at the end of Iran's long war with the Islamic Republic.

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017.

After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019. Others named as candidates on Tuesday include Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator; Mohsen Rezaei, a former Revolutionary Guard commander; Ali Reza Zakanji, a former lawmaker; Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a current lawmaker; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former provincial governor; and Abdolnasser Hemmati, the current head of Iran's Central Bank.

Iran ultimately blunted their assault, but the attack set the stage for the sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as death commissions. Some who appeared were asked to identify themselves. Those who responded mujahedeen were sent to their deaths, while others

were questioned about their willingness to clear minefields for the army of the Islamic Republic, according to a 1990 Amnesty International report. International rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed, while the Mujahedin-e-Khalq puts the number at 30,000.

Raisi has never fully acknowledged the executions, apparently carried out on Khamenei's orders, though some argue that other top officials were effectively in charge in the months before his 1989 death. Raisi, then a deputy prosecutor in Tehran, took part in some of the panels at Evin and Hardarshad prisons.

A tape of a meeting of Raisi and his boss meeting prominent Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri leaked out in 2016, with Montazeri describing the executions as the biggest crime in the history of the Islamic Republic.

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017.

After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019. Others named as candidates on Tuesday include Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator; Mohsen Rezaei, a former Revolutionary Guard commander; Ali Reza Zakanji, a former lawmaker; Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a current lawmaker; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former provincial governor; and Abdolnasser Hemmati, the current head of Iran's Central Bank.

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017.

After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019. Others named as candidates on Tuesday include Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator; Mohsen Rezaei, a former Revolutionary Guard commander; Ali Reza Zakanji, a former lawmaker; Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a current lawmaker; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former provincial governor; and Abdolnasser Hemmati, the current head of Iran's Central Bank.

Raisi never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions while campaigning for president in 2017.

After his loss, Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019. Others named as candidates on Tuesday include Saeed Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator; Mohsen Rezaei, a former Revolutionary Guard commander; Ali Reza Zakanji, a former lawmaker; Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a current lawmaker; Mohsen Mehralizadeh, a former provincial governor; and Abdolnasser Hemmati, the current head of Iran's Central Bank.



Calm prevails in Gaza as ceasefire takes hold

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
GAZA, 25 MAY

The Gaza Strip is witnessing relative calm as the ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas militants has held since it went into effect on 21 May after the 11-day conflict, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Routine life is being restored throughout Gaza, which is controlled by Hamas, Xinhua news agency quoted the OCHA as saying on Monday. Some of the main roads have been made passable, and the authorities are fixing damaged electrical lines, water

and wastewater networks, said OCHA. It is critical that all parties work to maintain the ceasefire, it said. Unimpeded humanitarian access is critical to ensure an effective response in Gaza. Humani-

tarian personnel must have freedom of movement to undertake their functions.

Humanitarian personnel and objects used for humanitarian relief operations must also be protected and respect-

ed, said OCHA. A flash appeal for Gaza will be launched on Thursday, it said.

Lynn Hastings, the UN humanitarian coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, spent two days this past weekend in Gaza, speaking with people who she said endured unimaginable suffering over the 11 days of hostilities.

At least 248 Palestinians were killed, including 66 children, 39 women, and 17 elderly people and 1,900 others were injured in the bloodshed.

On the Israeli side, there were 12 fatalities, including two children, with more than 300 injuries.

Bad dream stopped Everest guide from climbing peak 26th time

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KATHMANDU, 25 MAY

A record-holding Sherpa climber halted his attempt to scale Mount Everest for a 26th time because of a bad dream but plans to try again next year.

Kami Rita already reached the summit of the world's highest mountain for a record 25th time earlier this month but stopped his most recent climb more than halfway to the top.

I was making (the 26th) attempt and had reached up to Camp Three but the weather turned bad and I had a really bad dream, Rita said on return to Kathmandu on a helicopter from the mountain on Tuesday.

The gods were telling me not to go and because I really believe in God, I decided to



return, he said but would not elaborate on the dream.

Sherpas believe Everest to be a goddess and have a religious ceremony before stepping on the mountain to make their climbs. Rita said he would certainly return next year to try to scale the peak a 26th time.

His wife, a few of his friends and government officials greeted him at the Kathmandu airport, but there was no celebratory parade like in the past because the capital is under lockdown due to spiking cases

of coronavirus. Rita and 11 other Sherpa guides reached the summit on 7 May and fixed ropes that enabled hundreds of other climbers to use the icy route to the top. Rita did not comment about the current virus situation on Everest after an prominent Austrian outfitter over the weekend said at least 100 climbers and support staff on the mountain were infected.

Nepalese mountaineering officials have denied there were any active cases at the base camps for climbing the country's Himalayan mountains. Foreign guide Lukas Furtenbach halted his Everest expedition due to virus fears and said the outbreak was obvious because he could see sick people at base camp and hear them coughing in their tents.

A total of 408 foreign

climbers were issued permits to climb Everest this season, aided by several hundred Sherpas and support staff who've been stationed at base camp since April.

Rita, 51, first scaled Everest in 1994 and has been making the trip nearly every year since then. He is one of many Sherpa guides whose expertise and skills are vital to the safety and success of the foreign climbers who head to Nepal each year seeking to stand on top of the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) mountain.

His father was among the first Sherpa guides, and Rita followed in his footsteps and then some. In addition to his 25 times to the top of Everest, Rita has scaled several other peaks that are among the world's highest, including K-2, Cho-Oyu, Manaslu and Lhotse.

Mysterious air base being built on volcanic island off Yemen: Officials

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, 25 MAY

A mysterious air base is being built on a volcanic island off Yemen that sits in one of the world's crucial maritime chokepoints for both energy shipments and commercial cargo.

While no country has claimed the Mayun Island air base in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, shipping traffic associated with a prior attempt to build a massive runway across the 5.6-kilometer (3.5 mile)-long island years ago links back to the United Arab Emirates.

Emirati officials in Abu Dhabi and the UAE's Embassy in Washington did not respond to requests for comment.

The runway on Mayun Island allows whoever controls it to project power into the strait and easily launch airstrikes into mainland Yemen, convulsed by a years-long bloody war.

It also provides a base for any operations into the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and nearby East Africa.

Satellite images from Plan-

et Labs Inc. obtained by The Associated Press showed dump trucks and graders building a 1.85 kilometer (6,070-foot) runway on the island on 11 April. By 18 May, that work appeared complete, with three hangars constructed on a tarmac just south of the runway.

A runway of that length can accommodate attack, surveillance and transport aircraft. An earlier effort began toward the end of 2016 and later abandoned had workers try to build an even-larger runway over 3 kilometers (9,800 feet) long, which would allow for the heaviest bombers.

Military officials with Yemen's internationally recognized government, which the Saudi-led coalition has backed since 2015, say the UAE is building the runway. The officials, speaking to the AP on condition of anonymity as they didn't have authorization to brief

journalists, say Emirati ships transported military weapons, equipment and troops to Mayun Island in recent weeks.

The military officials said recent tension between the

Emirati officials have not acknowledged any disagreement. The initial, failed construction project came after Emirati and allied forces retook the island from Iranian-backed Houthi militants in 2015. By late 2016, satellite images showed construction underway there.

Tugboats associated with Dubai-based Echo Cargo & Shipping LLC and landing craft and carriers from Abu Dhabi-based Bin Nawi Marine Services LLC helped bring equipment to the island in that first attempt, according to tracking signals recorded by data firm ReFinetech.

Satellite photos at the time show they offloaded the gear and vehicles at a temporary beachside port. Echo Cargo & Shipping declined to comment, while Bin Nawi Marine Services did not respond to a request for comment. Recent shipping data shows no recorded vessels around Mayun, suggesting whoever provided the sealift for the latest construction

turned off their boats' Automatic Identification System tracking devices to avoid being identified.

Construction initially stopped in 2017, likely when engineers realized they couldn't dig through a portion of the volcanic island's craggy features to incorporate the site of the island's old runway.

The building restarted in earnest on the new runway site around 22 February, satellite photos show, several weeks after President Joe Biden announced he would end US support for the Saudi-led offensive against the Houthis.

The apparent decision by the Emiratis to resume building the air base comes after the UAE dismantled parts of a military base it ran in the East African nation of Eritrea as a staging ground for its Yemen campaign.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS	1. Gofer's cry (4)	2. Expenditure (6)	3. Bring to bear (5)	4. Amulet (8)	5. Every (4)	6. Novice (7)	7. Top-order batsman (6)	8. Rate over fences (12)	9. Make evident (6)	10. Conder (4)	11. Former school (4,5)	12. Brook (4)	13. Large prawns (6)	14. Throwing event (6)	15. Cut of beef (3-3)	16. Road safety feature (5,7)	17. Pig pen (3)	18. Deserve (5)	19. Golf shot (4)
DOWN	1. Golf peg (3)	2. Expenditure (6)	3. Bring to bear (5)	4. Amulet (8)	5. Every (4)	6. Novice (7)	7. Top-order batsman (6)	8. Rate over fences (12)	9. Make evident (6)	10. Conder (4)	11. Former school (4,5)	12. Brook (4)	13. Large prawns (6)	14. Throwing event (6)	15. Cut of beef (3-3)	16. Road safety feature (5,7)	17. Pig pen (3)	18. Deserve (5)	19. Golf shot (4)

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote
the number of letters in the words required

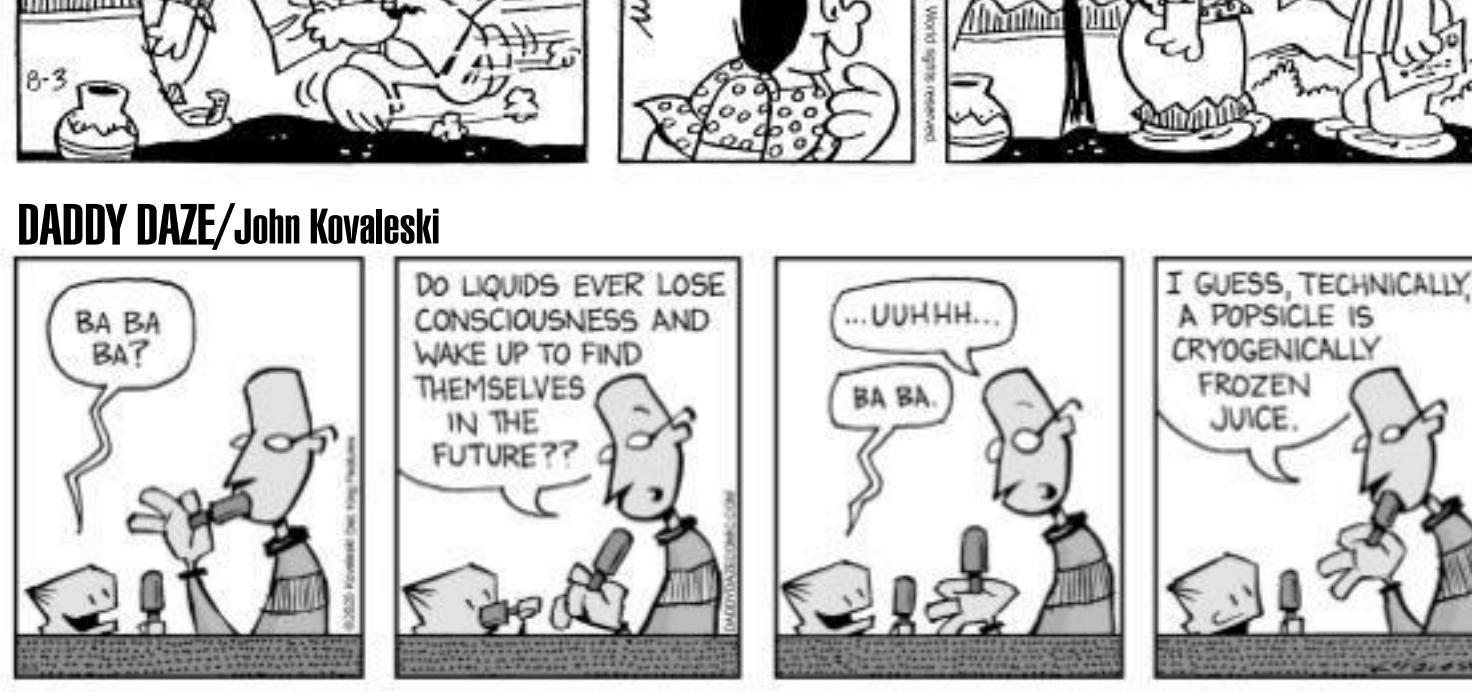
BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

& SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

& Deen Dayal Upadhyay

23496320, 25494403

& Guru Tegh Bahadur

AIRPORTS

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and

Reservation 00910383838,



The United States will continue to stand with the people of Belarus in their struggle

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

CONDAMNING THE FORCED DIVERSION OF A BELARUS COMMERCIAL PASSENGER JET TO ARREST A JOURNALIST

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	30°C	28°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	17°C	9°C H
DUBAI	31°C	27°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C C H
NEW YORK	16°C	08°C C H
MOSCOW	15°C	05°C H

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Rescue personnel help injured passengers at KLCC station after two light rail trains collided in a tunnel, injuring more than 200 people in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. AP

S. Florida synagogue harassment: Police have arrested a man who they say yelled anti-Semitic remarks at a rabbi and dumped a bag of human feces in front of a South Florida synagogue. Hallandale Beach police arrested Jeffrey Carl Fleming on Monday on charges of felony stalking with a hate crime enhancement and littering human waste. AP

Cocaine: Staff at a logistics company in Germany threw cocaine with a street value of up to 1 million euros (USD 1.2 million) in the trash, not realising that the packages they'd found inside banana crates were drugs, customs officials said on Tuesday. AP

US security assistance to Pak remains suspended

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD, 25 MAY

US President Joe Biden has continued his predecessor Donald Trump's policy on suspending security assistance to Pakistan and there is no clarity if the administration will change its stance in the future, the Pentagon has said.

Trump suspended all security assistance to Pakistan in January 2018, arguing that he was not satisfied with Islamabad's cooperation and role in the fight against terrorism.

"At this time, the US security assistance to Pakistan is still suspended. I will not get into speculating one way or another about if or whether that will change going forward," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby told reporters. He was responding to a question on if the new Biden administration has reviewed the policy of the previous Trump administration and if there are any changes in it.

Earlier in the day, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa to discuss shared regional interests and objectives, Kirby said.

"During the call, the secretary reiterated his appreciation for Pakistan's support to Afghanistan peace negotiations and expressed his desire to continue to build on US-Pakistan bilateral relationship," he said. PTI

Biden speaks with Egyptian Prez on Mideast conflict

The leaders discussed the peace process in the Middle East and the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 25 MAY

US President Joe Biden has spoken with his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and the two leaders discussed the peace process in the Middle East and the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza strip.

Biden thanked Egypt for its successful diplomacy and coordination with the United States to end the recent hostilities in Israel and Gaza and ensure violence does not reoccur, the White House said.

The two leaders consulted on the urgent need to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need in Gaza and to support rebuilding efforts in a manner that benefits the people there and

not Hamas.

Biden's top diplomat Blinken is in Middle East to meet Israeli and Palestinian leaders, among other regional leaders, and advance the peace process, amid a ceasefire between the two sides.

Blinken will travel to Jerusalem, Ramallah, Cairo and Amman through on Thursday and meet with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah, the State Department said.

His trip comes days after the announcement of Egypt-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian factions in Gaza Strip.

During their phone call, Biden and Al-Sisi also discussed their commitment to upholding Libyan plans for

national elections in December and the removal of all foreign military and irregular forces from Libya. They also affirmed their support for the Iraqi government's efforts to strengthen the country's full sovereignty and independence.

"Biden underscored the importance of a constructive dialogue on human rights in Egypt. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a strong and productive US-Egypt partnership, said the readout of the call.

"Regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, President Biden acknowledged Egypt's concerns about access to Nile River waters and underscored the US interest in achieving a diplomatic resolution that meets the legitimate needs of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, the White House said.

The 11-day Gaza war killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused

widespread destruction. The truce that came into effect last Friday has so far held, but it did not address any of the underlying issues.

On his tour of the region, Blinken will face the same obstacles that have stifled a wider peace process for more than a decade, including a hawkish Israeli leadership, Palestinian divisions and deeply rooted tensions surrounding Jerusalem and its holy sites.

Blinken, who landed at Ben Gurion International Airport today, is the highest-ranking US official to visit the region since US President Joe Biden assumed office. He was welcomed on the tarmac by Israeli foreign minister Gabi

Ashkenazi.

The administration hoped to extricate US from the region's intractable conflicts and focus on competition with China and climate change. But like so many of its predecessors, it was pulled back into the Middle East by another outbreak of violence.

He will begin his visit in Israel, where PM Benjamin Netanyahu is fighting for his political life after a fourth inconclusive election in two years.

Blinken will also visit neighboring Egypt and Jordan, which made peace with Israel decades ago and have acted as mediators in the conflict. Egypt succeeded in brokering the Gaza truce after the Biden administration pressed Israel to wind down its offensive.

UK under scanner for reintroducing virus restrictions on the sly

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 25 MAY

The British government faced criticism on Tuesday that it was introducing local lockdowns by stealth after it published new guidelines for eight areas of England that it says are hotspots for the coronavirus variant first identified in India.

Lawmakers and local public health officials have said they had not been made aware of the changes that the Conservative government published online last Friday. In that updated guidance, it recommended that people within the eight localities, which includes Hounslow in west London, the central city of Leicester and the northwest towns of Blackburn and Bolton, should not meet up indoors or travel outside their areas.

Blackburn's director of public health Professor Dominic Harrison said in a tweet that local authority areas affected were "not consulted with, warned of, notified about, or alerted" to the instruction changes.

Reintroducing local restrictions goes against the grain of the government's stated strategy. It has said it wants to lift restrictions on a national basis, without directly ruling out local measures to quash outbreaks.

Cabinet minister Therese Coffey said the updated guidance should not be a surprise to anyone as it just formalised "on the record" the outlines

of what Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been saying over the past couple of weeks when warning about the so-called Indian variant.

Restrictions across England and the rest of the UK have been lifted over the past few weeks as the number of coronavirus infections has fallen sharply in the wake of a strict lockdown and the rapid rollout of vaccines. Among many changes, the most recent easing has seen pubs and restaurants reopen to customers indoors and the number of people allowed to meet up outdoors increased to 30.

The next easing is planned for 21 June and is intended to involve the lifting of all social restrictions. However, Johnson has warned that it could be pushed back if the new variant spreads widely. A decision on that date is set to be announced on 14 June.

Though new cases in the UK remain low at around 2,500 a day, against nearly 70,000 at one point in January during the peak of the second wave, they have been inching up slightly in recent weeks.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the main Opposition Labour Party, accused the government of behaving in an "utterly shameful" fashion by not informing people in areas affected by the new guidelines. "Local lockdowns are the wrong approach for both public health and local economies," he said.

VENTED IT OUT



Lava gushes from the southern side crater of Mt. Etna, Europe's largest active volcano, near Catania, southern Italy Sicily, on Tuesday. AP

Report says UK Conservatives seen as insensitive to Muslims

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 25 MAY

Prime Minister Boris Johnson helped create an impression that his Conservative Party is "insensitive" to Muslims with a newspaper column comparing veil-wearing women to "letter boxes," a report into prejudice in Britain's governing party said on Tuesday.

The inquiry, set up by the party in 2019 to investigate all forms of discrimination, said "anti-Muslim sentiment remains a problem" within the Conservative Party at local and individual levels. But it did

n't conclude that the party was institutionally racist or failed to take complaints seriously.

"While the party leadership claims a 'zero tolerance' approach to all forms of discrimination, our findings show that discriminatory behaviors occur, especially in relation to people of Islamic faith," said the committee, led by Sir Ranjan Singh, an academic and former member of Britain's equality commission. But it said it didn't find evidence of a party which "systematically discriminated against any particular group."

Johnson has a long history of making provocative and offensive comments in a career that has combined politics and journalism. He has called Papua New Guineans cannibals, claimed that "part-Kenyan" Barack Obama had an ancestral dislike of Britain and, in a 2018 newspaper column, compared Muslim women who wear face-covering veils to "letter boxes" and "bank robbers."

The committee cleared Johnson of breaking the party's code of conduct, but said Conservative leaders "ought to set a good example for appropriate behaviors and language."

EU leaders agree to donate 100 mn doses of vaccines

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 25 MAY

EU leaders agreed Tuesday to donate at least 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to poorer nations by the end of the year as supplies steadily rise across Europe.

Gathered in Brussels for a two-day summit, the 27 leaders backed a text in which they pledge to continue efforts "to increase global vaccine production capacities in order to meet global needs."

Leaders also called "for work to be stepped up to ensure global equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines" and reiterated their support for the UN-backed COVAX program.

COVAX aims to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 shots for low-and middle-income countries.



acquire supplies. During a health summit in Rome last week, Italian Premier Mario Draghi said that nearly 1.5 billion vaccine doses have been administered in over 180 countries worldwide. Yet only 0.3 per cent were in low-income countries, while richer countries administered around 85 per cent.

It was unclear which vaccines from the EU's portfolio would be donated. Coronavirus vaccines authorised

by the European Medicines Agency, the bloc's drug regulator, include Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

The agreement came after the US said earlier this month it will share an additional 20 million doses of vaccines with the world. Leaders also welcomed the compromise found last week with European Union legislators for launching Covid-19 certificates before the height of the summer holiday season, a move aimed at boosting travel and tourism following the restrictions of the pandemic.

The EU plans to have the trans-border passes up and running by July. They will be delivered to EU residents who can prove they have been vaccinated, as well as those who tested negative or have proof they recovered from Covid.

European planes skirt Belarus

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 25 MAY

European airlines were skirting Belarus on Tuesday after the European Union urged them to do so while imposing new sanctions against the ex-Soviet nation to punish it for the forced diversion of a passenger jet to arrest an opposition journalist.

The brazen move, apparently ordered by Belarus' authoritarian president, elicited widespread shock and fury, and EU leaders took unusually swift action in response at a summit on Monday. They agreed to ban Belarusian airlines from using the airspace and airports of the 27-nation bloc, imposed sanctions on officials linked to Sunday's flight diversion,

and urged the International Civil Aviation Organisation to start an investigation.

They also demanded immediate release of the journalist, Raman Pratasevich, a top foe of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for over a quarter-century.

Pratasevich was detained on Sunday after Belarusian flight controllers told the crew of a Ryanair jetliner he was aboard that there was a bomb threat against the flight and ordered it to land. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was

scrambled to escort the plane.

Belarus has defended its actions and its Transport Ministry said on Tuesday that it has invited representatives of the international aviation organisation and US and EU authorities to investigate it.

Polish carrier LOT and Baltic airlines have begun bypassing Belarus. Air France, KLM, Finnair, Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines have all said they will also avoid flights over the country. The UK, which is no longer part of the EU, also recommended that carriers don't fly over Belarus, and British Airways flights were avoiding the country.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg described the Ryanair flight's diversion as "dangerous and unacceptable".

Families separated at Mexico border build new American life

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PHILADELPHIA (US), 25 MAY

In a cramped house with mice in the kitchen and music booming outside from passing cars, Keldy Mabel Gonzales Brebe lays bare her three-year journey from Honduras to the United States and all that lies ahead to adapt to life as an immigrant.

She fled the Central American nation with her family and a price on her head to seek asylum at the U.S. border. Instead, U.S. officials separated her from her children, jailed and deport-

ed her under President Trump's zero-tolerance policy to prosecute adults entering the country illegally.

While the boys were allowed to live with relatives in Philadelphia, their mother made her way back to Mexico, where she fought to join them.

Keldy missed celebrating birthdays and holidays together. She watched from afar as her teenagers filled out and grew facial hair. There were times I thought I would never see them again, she said. Three years later, America has jettisoned many of Trump's hard-

line immigration policies.

Keldy was one of four parents who returned to the United States during the first week of May with temporary legal status to join their children. Her family's ups and downs illustrate what many parents and children may encounter as they try to make up for lost time.

Keldy and her family fled to Mexico in 2013 but were deported by the Mexican government right away. Back in Honduras, they fled to a rural mountainous area called El Naranjo in attempt to hide from the gang. But in 2017, neighbours told her there were people asking about her, and the family left for the US.

She crossed the border with her youngest son Erick, now 17, and her middle child Mino, now 19, in the fall of 2017.

Keldy flagged down a Border Patrol cruiser, and she and her sons were taken together to a

cell in a detention center in Deming, New Mexico, 35 miles north of the border. Less than two days after the family had arrived in the US, Keldy was handcuffed and separated from the boys.

The children were both soon released, and family members paid for their flight to Philadelphia. Their older brother, Alex, now 21, eventually became the legal guardian of his brothers and cared for them while they went to school, working construction.

But Keldy was kept in an

immigration and customs enforcement detention facility in El Paso, Texas, for a year and a half and then deported to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in January 2019.

She traveled back north and settled in Tapachula, Ascension and their Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, waiting for a chance to enter the United States. She got by with money sent to her by her kids, her sisters and her husband.

She video messaged with her boys, and remembers with pain of missing graduations and other big moments. Final-

ly, last month, Linda Corchado, director of legal services at the non-profit Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, contacted her. Biden's task force was working to reunite families separated at the border. Keldy needed to get passport photos.

Keldy entered on 4 May, in a car with Corchado, through the Bridge of The Americas, then flew to Philadelphia.

We are to blame

S ANANTHANARAYANAN

Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat are limping back after Cyclone *Tauktae*. Estimates of the cost of the damage and restoration are yet to come. And then, there is Cyclone *Yaas*, striking the eastern states of Bengal and Odisha. In the same month of May, last year, Cyclone *Amphan*, had struck Odisha and Bengal (and Bangladesh) and caused damage priced at \$ (US) 14 billion. There is no telling what it would be this time, but a study published in the journal, *Nature Communications*, says the damage resulting from extreme climate events increases with the rise in sea level.

There is ample documentation to show that there has been an 18 cm (over seven inches) rise in the average sea level since 1900. With the globe warming much faster in the last few decades, we can expect an even greater rise within a much shorter time. Warming itself has been linked to more frequent and intense weather events. That sea level rise would multiply the damage caused by the events is ominous.

Benjamin H Strauss, Philip M Orton, Klaus Bittermann, Maya K Buchanan, Daniel M Gilford, Robert E Kopp, Scott Kulp, Chris Massey, Hans de Moel and Sergey Vinogradov, from Climate Central, a group of scientists in Princeton, Stevens Institute of Technology and Rutgers University in New Jersey, Tufts University, Boston, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, DC and Binera, Inc. in Maryland look into the role of human activity in Hurricane *Sandy*, which struck the East Coast of the US in 2012. The cost of the damage was \$ 60 billion. The group writing in *Nature Communications* used simulation with different sea levels and found that 13.5 per cent of the damage was a result of sea level rise due to human activity.

Hurricane *Sandy*, which wreaked havoc all along the east coast of the US, caused 300-year record high flood levels in the New York Metropolitan Area, "flooding streets, tunnels and subway lines and cutting power in and around the city." The *Nature Communications* paper concedes that the hurricane was worsened by having struck right when it was high tide and again by having come in at almost right angles with respect to the New Jersey coastline. Despite these factors, the paper says, the mean sea level had a direct connection with the flood levels experienced. And modelling establishes the extent of damage due to sea level rise arising from human activity.

The factual basis of the simulation is the observation that sea level is rising, and rising faster, with the ice sheet and glacier melt being the major contributors. Data from tide gauges and satellite ranging shows that the sea level rose by 1.4 mm each year, between 1900 and 1990, but by 2.1 mm a year between 1970 and 2015, by 3.2 mm a year between 1993 and 2015 and by 3.6 mm a year between 2006 and 2016. We can see that the rate of rise has increased by 150 per cent since 1970.

And then, in the context of 95 per cent of global temperature rise, which leads to ice sheet melting, being due to human activity, the team assesses the contribution of human activity to sea level rise, globally and in the New York region. The method of assessment was to con-



struct a table where the sea level rise, over a period, was correlated with the change in the mean temperature during the period. There is a fraction of sea level rise that is due to other reasons. This is factored out and the contribution of human activity is calculated.

Accordingly, the sea level rise was computed, based on (a) the elements that contribute to the rise and (b) empirical data relating sea level rise with temperature rise. For the first computation, referred to as a "budget-based" estimate, the main contributors were seen to be the melting of land-bound ice sheets and glaciers, the rise due to expansion of seawater with rising temperature, and changes in water stored in inland reservoirs (like dams). And those are affected by the changes in the shape of the Earth itself, mainly due to changes in the ice-loading at the poles. And from this analysis, the team works out that 9.8 cm out of the 18 cm rise in sea level from 1900 to 2012 was on account of the warming that arose from human activity.

The second approach was to estimate the sea level, over the centuries, based on different geological sources, and records, like tide-gauge readings kept for mercantile shipping, the world over. The record shows that the sea level rose a tenth of a millimetre every year for the first eight centuries CE and fell by two tenths of a millimetre during the 2°C cooling of the mini ice age in the 11th to the 15th centuries. But it picked up during the 19th and 20th centuries, faster than anything during the previous 27 centuries. Modelling sea level rise shows that but for human activity, the sea level rise in the 20th century would have been

less than 51 per cent of what is seen.

Damage due to sea level rise

Having thus found that at least 49 per cent of the rise in the sea level is on account of human activity, the paper looks at what part of the damage caused by Hurricane *Sandy* should be pinned on human activity. With only small damage due to winds, 98 per cent of the damage and loss came from coastal flooding, the paper says.

This exercise was carried out using a procedure for modelling the near shore hydrodynamics of events like storms, developed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The topography and water depth data, and the wind and atmospheric pressure during Hurricane *Sandy* were used to develop the model, and the flood levels in the simulation were found to match the actual flooding. The model was then applied to discover flooding with lower levels of the mean sea surface. With the help of a "damage model" based on the actual flooding, it was then possible to work out what the damage would have been with lower mean sea levels, to start with.

Flood maps were created using data of land elevation and water elevations from the model, after applying due corrections. Census data was used to assess the land, housing and population that was exposed, and damage was calculated using a system developed by the US Federal Emergency Management Agency. The method is based on records of payments by insurance companies and even if the method is not accurate for the determination of losses, it provides reliable comparative costs of floods simulated

from different baseline sea levels. The method, the paper says, yields the fraction of the damage that can be attributed to sea level rise due to human action.

Preparing for the storm

Flood-proofing is the way forward for coastal settlements. Structures need to be strengthened and new structures compulsorily built to withstand floods. The machinery to evacuate people, render first aid and restore utilities must be built up and kept ticking over. The cost of not doing so is rising.

from different baseline sea levels. The method, the paper says, yields the fraction of the damage that can be attributed to sea level rise due to human action.

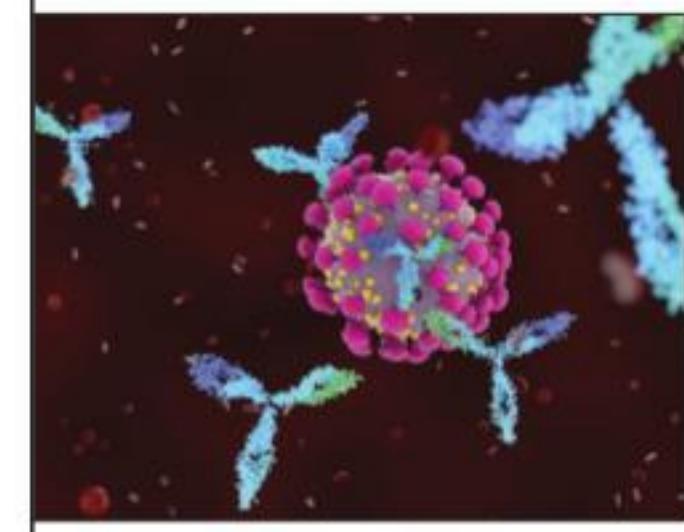
The result of the computation is that \$ 8.1 billion, or 13.5 per cent of the losses caused by Hurricane *Sandy* was driven by sea level rise associated with anthropogenic, or human-caused climate change. "The same general approach demonstrated here may be applied to other past and future coastal storms to estimate sea-level-linked anthropogenic climate damages from those events," the paper says. But the message is that with sea levels set to rise in the coming decades, the losses due to extreme climate events are also set to rise.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

This page went to press before Cyclone *Yaas* made landfall in West Bengal and Odisha.

PLUS POINTS

Covid antibodies



Antibodies against coronavirus remained in the blood of patients with Covid-19 for at least eight months after they were infected, Italian researchers said recently. They were present "regardless of the severity of the illness, the age of the patients or the presence of other pathologies," according to a statement from the San Raffaele hospital in Milan.

The researchers, working with Italy's ISS National Health Institute, studied 162 patients with symptomatic coronavirus who turned up at the emergency room during the country's first wave of infections last year.

Blood samples were taken in March and April and again at the end of November from those who survived. Some 29 patients died.

"The presence of neutralising antibodies, while reducing over time, was very persistent – eight months after diagnosis, there were only three patients who no longer showed positivity to the test," said the statement, issued jointly with the ISS.

The study, published in the *Nature Communications* scientific journal, also emphasised the importance of the development of antibodies in recovering from coronavirus. "Those who failed to produce them within the first 15 days of infection are at greater risk of developing severe forms of Covid-19," it said.

Two thirds of the patients surveyed were men, and the average age was 63. Some 57 per cent of them had a pre-existing pathology, notably hypertension and diabetes.

— THE STRAITS TIMES/AGENCIES

Booze & brain



Even moderate consumption of alcohol is associated with adverse effects on the brain, according to a new study of over 25,000 participants which calls for existing "low-risk" drinking guidelines to be revised.

While binge drinkers and individuals with high blood pressure and body mass index may be more susceptible, the study, which is yet to be peer-reviewed, found "no safe dose of alcohol for the brain." Scientists, including Anya Topiwala from the University of Oxford, assessed the health profiles of 25,378 individuals from the UK Biobank – a database designed to help researchers understand the link diseases have with genetic and environmental factors.

They assessed each participant's data, including their age, sex, BMI, blood pressure, self-reported alcohol consumption, and brain health from magnetic resonance imaging scans. The results revealed that a higher quantity of weekly alcohol consumption was associated with lower brain grey matter density even after accounting for individual differences in biological and behavioural traits among the participants.

"Alcohol consumption was linearly and negatively associated with indices of brain health across most of the brain. Additive harmful effects of alcohol volume and frequent binging were observed," the scientists wrote in the study, posted in the preprint platform *medRxiv*.

Scientists believe the large sample size of the study enabled a deeper exploration of the association between alcohol consumption and brain structures such as the cortex and cerebellum which was previously uncharacterised. According to the researchers, higher volume of alcohol consumption per week as well as binge drinking could have additive effects throughout the brain irrespective of the type of beverage consumed.

Citing the limitations of the study, the scientists said the invitations for participants yielded only a five per cent response rate from the UK Biobank, adding that the sample was less ethnically diverse, healthier and better educated. The researchers also added that the study was observational, and did not find any causal relationship between alcohol drinking and brain health.

While an official guideline issued by UK's department of health in 2016 urges people to not consume more than 14 units of alcohol a week – which is close to five pints of beer at five per cent alcohol by volume strength – the scientists behind the current study say this measure needs to be revised, incorporating the recent findings.

— THE INDEPENDENT

CITIZENS OF THE GALAXY

When will the first baby be born beyond the confines of Earth?



CHRIS IMPEY

When the first baby is born off-Earth, it will be a milestone as momentous as humanity's first steps out of Africa. Such a birth would mark the beginning of a multi-planet civilisation for the human species.

For the first half century of the Space Age, only governments launched satellites and people into Earth orbit. No longer. Hundreds of private space companies are building a new industry that already has (\$ US) 300 billion in annual revenue.

I'm a professor of astronomy who has written a book and several articles about humans' future in space. Today, all activity in space is tethered to the Earth. But I predict that in around 30 years people will start living in space – and soon after, the first off-Earth baby will be born.

The players in space

Space started as a duopoly as the United

States and the Soviet Union vied for supremacy in a geopolitical contest with loud military overtones. But while the National Aeronautics and Space Administration achieved the Moon landings in 1969, its budget has since shrunk by a factor of three. Russia is no longer an economic superpower, and its presence in space is a pale shadow of the programme that launched the first satellite and the first person into orbit.

The new kid on the block is China. After a late start, the Chinese space programme is surging, fuelled by a budget that has recently grown faster than their economy. China is building a space station, the country has landed probes on the Moon and Mars, and it is planning a Moon base. On its current trajectory, China will soon be the dominant space power.

But the most exciting progress is being made by private space companies that are marketing space for tourism and recreation. Elon Musk's goal for SpaceX is to carry 100 people at a time to the Moon, Mars and beyond, although in public presentations he is coy about giving a timeline. Jeff Bezos' company, Blue Origins, also

aims to colonise the solar system. Such grandiose plans have sceptics but remember that these are the two richest people in the world.

Governments will continue to launch rockets, but it would be safe to say that the future of private space flight arrived in 2016 when, for the first time, commercial launches outnumbered launches by all the world's countries combined.

Living on the Moon or Mars

For a spacecraft, the trip to Mars is about 1,000 times farther than a trip to the Moon, so the Moon will be humanity's first home away from home.

China is partnering with Russia to build a long-term facility at the Moon's South Pole sometime between 2036 and 2045. Nasa plans to put "boots on the Moon" in 2024 and establish a permanent settlement called the Artemis Base Camp within another decade. As part of the Artemis mission, Nasa is also planning to launch a lunar space station in 2024 called Gateway. Nasa is teaming up with SpaceX for this and future lunar projects, and the lunar station will make it easier for SpaceX to resupply the future lunar colony.

After the Moon, comes Mars, and the collaboration between SpaceX and Nasa is accelerating the timeline for getting there. Nasa's plans are purposeful, but the organisation hasn't given a timeline. Musk, on the other hand, has loudly proclaimed that he intends to have a colony on Mars by 2050. Humanity's attempt to colonise the Moon will give us a good sense of the challenges we might face on Mars.

Sex and babies in space

For a civilisation to be free from Earth, the population needs to grow, and that means babies. Living on the Moon or Mars will be arduous and stressful, so the first inhabitants will probably spend only a few years there at a time and are unlikely to start a family.

But once people do take up permanent residency off-Earth, there are still many unknowns. First, little research has been done on the biology

of pregnancy and reproductive health in a space or low-gravity environment like the Moon or Mars. Is possible there will be unexpected hazards to the foetus or mother. Second, babies are fragile, and raising them is not easy. The infrastructure of these bases would have to be sophisticated to make some version of normal family life possible, a process that will take decades.

With these uncertainties in mind, it seems likely that the first off-Earth baby will be born much closer to home. A Dutch start-up called SpaceLife Origin wants to send a heavily pregnant woman 250 miles up just long enough to give birth. They talk a good story, but the legal, medical and ethical obstacles are formidable.

Another company, called Orbital Assembly Corporation, plans to open a luxury hotel in orbit in 2027 called the Voyager Station. Current plans show that it would hold 280 guests and 112 crew members, with its spinning-wheel design providing artificial gravity. But the breathless news reports omit any discussion of the difficulty and cost of such a project.

On 12 April this year, however, Nasa announced that it is considering allowing a reality TV show to send a civilian to the International Space Station and film them for 10 days. It's plausible that this idea could be extended, with a wealthy couple booking a long-term stay for the entire process from conception to birth in orbit. Now, there's no evidence anyone has had sex in space. But with about 600 people having been in Earth orbit – including one NASA couple who kept their marriage a secret – one space historian was able to gather plenty of Space Age salacious moments.

My guess is that sometime around 2040, a unique individual will be born. They may carry the citizenship of their parents, or they may be born in a facility operated by a corporation and end up stateless. But I prefer to think of this future person as the first true citizen of the galaxy.

The writer is a university distinguished professor of astronomy, University of Arizona, United States. This article first appeared on www.theconversation.com





'ZIDANE TO STAY'

Real Madrid star Karim Benzema does not believe head coach Zinedine Zidane (photo, left) will leave Santiago Bernabeu amid growing doubts. Zidane is widely expected to leave Madrid after a second spell in charge of La Liga giants, with former club and Serie A powerhouse Juventus a possible destination.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

IPL will tentatively start in 3rd week of September

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The postponed Indian Premier League will resume tentatively on September 18 or 19 in the UAE with as many as 10 double-headers expected to be played during a three-week window, a senior BCCI official told PTI on Tuesday.

The final might be held on October 9 or 10. The three-week window will be enough for the league to complete its remaining 31 games for the season, a win-win scenario for all the primary stakeholders including the BCCI, franchises and broadcasters.

The IPL was postponed on May 4 after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble came to light.

"The BCCI has spoken to all the stakeholders and the likely start could be between September 18th to 20th. Since September 18 is a Saturday and 19 a Sunday, it is more likely that you would want to



re-start it on a weekend date," the official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Similarly, October 9th or 10th will be the final as it's a weekend. We are finalising the itinerary and there will be 10 double headers and seven evening matches along with four main games (two qualifiers, one eliminator and the final), which completes the list of 31 matches," the official added.

The Indian team's last Test match against England is set to finish on September 14 at Manchester and on the next day, the whole team (save Hanuma Vihari and Abhimanyu Easwaran) will be flown to UAE in a chartered flight for a "bubble to bubble" transfer.

The Indian team and the English players who will be available will fly in the same charter flight from Man-

chester to Dubai. Similarly, the West Indies players will also fly in after completing the Caribbean Premier League engagements. There will be three-day quarantining for players arriving from UK and the Caribbean," the source said.

A franchise official confirmed that a communication from BCCI has come on the matter. "We have been told by the BCCI to be ready for the tournament. We have been given a September 15 to 20 window," a team official said.

India's white ball series against South Africa cancelled

The BCCI has decided to cancel India's T20 series against South Africa scheduled in September, which was a build-up to the side's World T20 preparations.

"The series can't be held and in any case there can't be any better preparation for the T20 World Cup than playing a high intensity tourna-

ment like IPL. Since the T20 World Cup will start within a week or 10 days after completion of the IPL, the SA series can only be held at a later date.

"There is a chance that India might play extra games when they tour South Africa early next year," the source said.

The two-Test home series against NZ could also be shifted

The India home season also had a two-Test series against New Zealand in November and the dates of which could be shifted depending upon when the T20 World Cup ends.

While BCCI, as of now, will not give up its hosting rights and wait how the COVID-19 situation in India pans out, there is very little chance that countries will want to travel to India which is facing its worst health emergency since independence.

Felt good inside IPL bio-bubble, it was safe: COVID-recovered Seifert

AGENCIES

AUCKLAND, 25 MAY

New Zealand cricketer Tim Seifert's world stopped for a moment and heart sank when he tested positive for COVID-19 during the now suspended IPL but the wicket-keeper said he never felt vulnerable inside the tournament's bio-bubble.

Seifert, however, insisted that his COVID-19 ordeal will not deter him from travelling to India again for future assignments, including the T20 World Cup to be held later this year.

"I got pulled aside and told I'd tested positive and my heart sank straight away when everyone left. I was the only overseas player basically still left in India out of the whole tournament. That's when things got a little bit real," an emotional Seifert told the 'New Zealand Herald'.

"The world stops a little bit, I just couldn't really think what was next and that's the scary part of it - you hear about things, and I thought that was going to happen to me."

Seifert was all praise for the IPL bubble though.

and Stephen Fleming as well as KKR and Chennai Super Kings franchises for making life easier for him during his recovery period in Chennai.

"It definitely was hard and I couldn't thank Brendan (McCullum) and (Stephen) Fleming enough, they made everything a lot easier."

"Making sure things would be put in place and KKR, CSK support staff, management - they made life easy for me to know that everything would be alright and when that time was to come home, they would do everything to get me home safely and on time," he said.

Seifert, who has so far

played 3 ODIs and 35 T20Is,

said having a positive frame

of mind was key to recovery from COVID-19.

"Once a few days had gone by, everything had kind of died down a little bit. I knew it was a time of getting through it, looking at the positives. I'm getting married in two months so that's exciting. My fiance Morgia she's quite happy that I'm back a bit earlier so I can help plan for that."

Bumrah vulnerable to injuries due to unorthodox action, says Hadlee

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

AUCKLAND, 25 MAY

Jasprit Bumrah is prone and vulnerable to injuries due to his unorthodox bowling action but India fast bowler's technique has proved highly effective in helping him catch batsmen off guard, said former New Zealand all-rounder Richard Hadlee.

"Jasprit fits into the unorthodox bowling category with virtually no run up to the crease. His technique, in some ways, defies belief but has proved to be a highly effective one. He is what call a shoulder or strength bowler with all his power and pace coming from the final part of his action as he releases the ball," said Hadlee in an interview with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The Kiwi, a former pace bowler himself, said he is unsure about Bumrah's longevity in cricket.

"Jasprit's longevity in the game is yet to be determined. I suspect he could be more vulnerable to injury problems than those fast bowlers with more classical and pure actions or techniques."

Hadlee, who himself was known to have a perfect and smooth bowling action, said that Bumrah's injuries could be career-threatening but he causes problems to batsmen due to his unconventional action.

"Some of his potential



injuries could be severe because of the stresses and strains he places on his body. I hope any injuries he may incur will not be potentially career ending because he is a delight to watch, and he causes batsmen all sorts of problems with his unsuspecting pace, bounce, and ball movement in the air and off the pitch," added Hadlee.

"It would be very difficult to coach his technique to an aspiring fast bowler and I think a coach would refrain from doing that because biomechanically it could cause problems with injury. However, I suspect some youngsters may try to imitate him. I believe you let aspiring young fast bowlers do their way but help them to fine tune some the skill sets and finer subtleties of bowling," he said further.

The 69-year-old, who formed a legendary quartet with

all-rounders with Imran Khan, Ian Botham and Kapil Dev during the late 1970s and 1980s also said cricket needs India due to the revenue it generates and also strides it has made in Test cricket that has kept longest format of the game alive.

"There is no doubt India produces a lot of revenue for cricket. Without India, the face of world cricket would be very different, therefore cricket needs India," said Hadlee.

"But India has also made an outstanding contribution to Test cricket -- like in all formats. Their Test performances in Australia were outstanding despite that 36 all out blip. They bounced back superbly, and Test cricket came alive again. So many youngsters came into the team and performed. It showed the great depth of talented players India have in all formats," Hadlee added.

I see the next 3-4 years as my prime, hope my time comes: Unadkat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Left-arm pacer Jaydev Unadkat (in photo) sees himself in his prime for the next 3-4 years and repeated snubs from the Indian team selectors will not deter him from pushing his limits".

The 29-year-old, whose only Test appearance came in 2010 and last played for India in 2018, had led Saurashtra to their maiden Ranji Trophy title in 2020 with a record-breaking 67 wickets in the season.

With no red ball cricket possible in the country since then due to the pandemic, Unadkat has been left disappointed by non-selection for the Australia tour, the home series against England and now the UK tour.

He doesn't even figure in the standbys for the UK tour, something which surprised even former selector Sarandeep Singh, whose tenure ended with the Australian tour earlier this year.

"I will be biased if I talk about my selection (non-selection in this case). I genuinely believe that I am in a phase of my career where in the next three, four years I will be at my prime," Unadkat told PTI.

"I've been taking those wickets as well, it actually

proves the fact that I am in a good space and I'm finding ways to get people out on different tracks in different conditions. And because of that, I do believe that my time will come."

"The selection again is a tricky thing and normally you would have performance of India A tours to consider besides domestic cricket but that hasn't happened in pandemic."

A chunk of those 67 wickets in 2019-2020 Ranji Trophy came on the flat Rajkot track, both with the new and old ball. It remains to be seen if Unadkat finds a place in India's second-string squad for Sri Lanka limited overs tour in July.

"I know the life of a fast bowler is quite limited, but I still have that much time and all I can do now is, prepare for the next season, or whatever is coming up, even if anything comes up before the

next season, I will be more than ready to take it."

"I just feel more motivated than ever to keep doing what I am doing to keep taking wickets, keep pushing my own limits and pushing those standards higher and higher."

"It was exceptional. We had toured for about two years (before the 2018 under-19 World Cup) with Rahul sir. He knew that he was different from us but he never forced us to be like him. Temperament is important but he never asked me to change anything, he used to tell me to play my natural game because he knew that if I play the powerplay overs, it becomes difficult to dismiss me," Shaw said on Cricbuzz.

Dravid was also head coach of India team that won the under-19 World Cup in 2018 with Shaw as captain.

The right-handed opener said that while Dravid ran a tight ship and insisted on discipline, he was also friendly.

"When there was Rahul sir, you had to be disciplined. There was a bit of a fear of him as well but off the field he was very friendly with us," said Shaw.

"He used to come with us for dinners and sitting with another legend and having dinner with him was a dream come true. Every youngster

Dravid never asked me to curb my natural game: Shaw

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Rahul Dravid advised Prithiv Shaw to stick to his natural style of batting, which is aggressive, and not copy the former India captain's manner which included restraint.

"It was exceptional. We had

toured for about two years

(before the 2018 under-19 World Cup) with Rahul sir. He knew that he was different from us but he never forced us to be like him. Temperament is important but he never asked me to change anything, he used to tell me to play my natural game because he knew that if I play the powerplay overs, it becomes difficult to dismiss me," Shaw said on Cricbuzz.

Dravid

knew exactly what

to get from each player, said Shaw.

"I am sure he also went through that phase, the under-19s and Ranji Trophy. He knew exactly what to get from us during tours," said the Delhi Capitals' opening batsman who had a stellar season with the bat in the Vijay Hazare one-dayers as well as the Indian Premier League.

"He used to talk to every guy specifically about what he wants him to do, which was really interesting. For me, he just used to say, play your natural game but if the situation demands, you need to be there for the team. If the situation is asking you to do something different from your game, you have to do it for the team. I really found Rahul sir interesting in that way, great human being as well," he said.

Here's how we build our castles in the air

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY



Yutube, if you have

cared to notice, is

replete with videos of

how East Bengal have

been clashing verbally with

their investors, having realised

how tough it is to get off a

a lion's back.

Footballers making a bee-line for Mohun Bagan - some

what overshadowed by ATK -

from everywhere except

they are yet another narrative

presented - variably.

Mohammedan Sporting Club

too could be congratulating

themselves, having got hold

of a Russian coach in the rent past.

Any idea where football, the

good old game, is to be found

in all this? A fortuitously

received clip from Bangladesh,

shows Faisal Mahmud scor-

ing off a corner kick - the ball

curling up then dipping before

eluding the goalie to float in

at the far post - seemed to show

that the sub-continent had not

really forgotten about the

game. Not in its entirety any-

way. And Mahmud's tutor

Even at home, when hosting global tournaments. And, as Mahmud says, those high-price tutors from football's glamour world will never deign to work on the rudimentary skills no footballer can make a mark without.

"They'll come in expecting things to be in apple-pie order and fly away when seen duly off, blaming everything on the players," he says.

Football thus comes to be saddled with ever-rising numbers of exponents with dwindling skills. Nayeem stresses patriotism, saying: "We can't let our country down."

Not that his country shows any inclination to listen to him. Mahmud says that only indigenous coaches can better technical standards at the elementary stage. But that may not be music to the ears of officials as they hire foreigners so no one faults them - the officials and not the coaches - for things gone wrong. When everything has gone haywire, yesterday's messiah can quite easily be reduced to today's cast-off, after all.

Nayeem adds: "It is an absolute absence of fit, fairness of any kind - that development is a utopian concept, a will-o'-the-wisp. The informal grooming at humble levels that once gave us a certain continental prominence is now unavailable because of the national federation's suicidally centralised approach. So boys rising through the ranks to get to respectable enough representative levels can be found out at a crunch as being deficient, if not wholly incorrect, in terms of the technique that is central to a good performance."

Reality stings there. The Indian sub-continent is so goshawfully short on so many essentials - fundamental facilities, management vision, or

an absolute absence of fit, fairness of any kind - that development is a ut