



WILL SCOTLAND BE THE
PRICE FOR BREXIT?

P7



CONG SHOULD HAVE
ALLIED WITH
TRINAMUL: MOILY

P5



'DROPPING SHAILAJA A
POLITICAL DECISION'

P4



'SMART WORDS
BUT NOT THE
WHOLE TRUTH'

P12

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky with very light rain/thundershowers. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 30 and 20 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 1.8 Mm

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100%	Min: 78%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 23.8°C (-16)	Min: 21.4°C (-5)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:28 hrs	19:08 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
12:34 hrs	01:57 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Delhi saw day-long rains Wednesday, with its maximum temperature dipping to lowest in May since 1951. SUBRATA DUTTA (P2)

Israel-Hamas conflict: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday vowed to press ahead with a fierce military offensive in the Gaza Strip, pushing back against calls from the United States to wind down the operation that has left hundreds dead. Netanyahu's tough comments, coming after a telephone talk with US President Joe Biden, marked the first public rift between the two close allies since the fighting began last week and could complicate international efforts to reach a cease-fire.

P9

Fertiliser subsidy hiked: The Centre on Wednesday hiked the subsidy on DAP fertiliser by 140 per cent, costing the exchequer an additional Rs 14,775 crore, in a bid to ensure the soil nutrient is available to farmers at old rates despite a sharp rise in global prices. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a PMO statement. After urea, Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the most widely used fertiliser in the country.

The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

Record daily fatalities, case numbers stabilise

4,529 deaths highest daily toll for any nation; sub-3L new cases for 3rd day

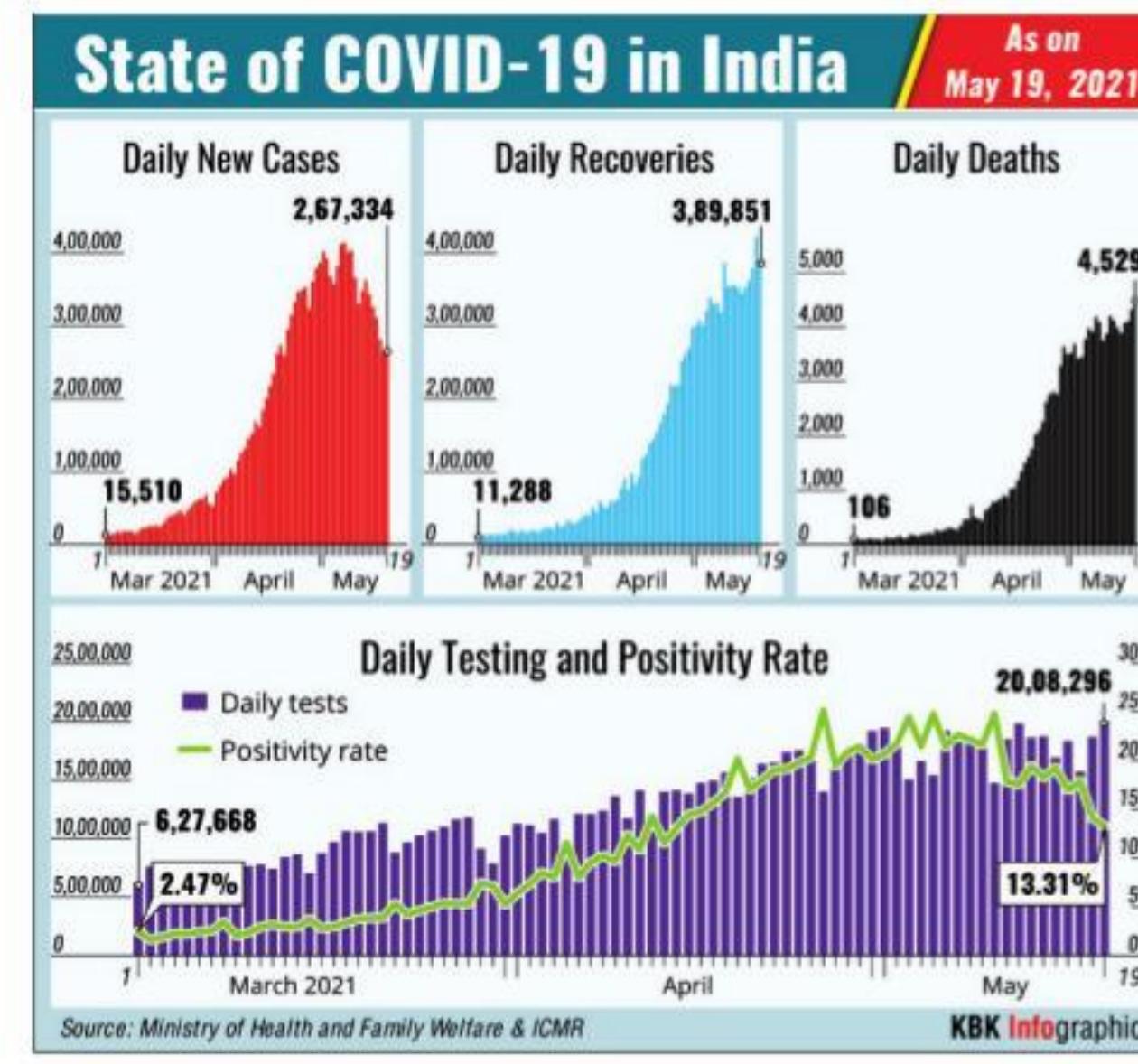
SNS & AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

India set another record for daily Covid-19 fatalities on Wednesday, even as infections and the test positivity rate dipped further. The Union health ministry reported 4,529 fatalities due to the coronavirus in a single day on Wednesday morning, pushing the Covid-19 death toll to 2,83,248. The figure is the highest single-day toll recorded in any country, surpassing the record of 4,468 deaths in the USA on January 12. Brazil, the third hardest-hit country, recorded 4,211 deaths on April 6.

At the same time, the number of new infections indicates a continuing stabilising trend, with less than 3 lakh new cases being recorded for three days in a row. The country recorded 2,67,334 fresh cases in the previous 24 hours, taking the tally of cases to 2,54,96,330. According to the ministry, the daily positivity rate has also declined to 13.31 percent, even as more than 20 lakh Covid-19 tests were done in a single day. The cumulative positivity rate stands at 7.96 percent. Active cases dipped to 32,26,719 comprising 12.66 percent of total infections, while Covid-19 recovery rate has improved to 86.23 percent, and the case fatality rate has increased to 1.11 per cent.

Delhi cases dip

Delhi today logged 3,846 coronavirus infections, lowest since 5 April, and 235 Covid deaths while the positivity rate dipped to 5.78 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (See P4)



5.86 cr vax doses to be given free to states till 15 Jun: Govt

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

ment by states and UTs, the ministry said.

According to the advance visibility provided by the Centre to states and UTs, a total of 5.86 crore Covid vaccine doses will be provided free of cost to them from May 1 to June 15, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

In addition, as per information received from vaccine manufacturers, a total of 4.87 crore doses will also be available till June end for direct procure-



KBK Infographics

Arrested TMC leaders stay in custody

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 19 MAY



Trinamul Congress MLA Madan Mitra, arrested by the CBI, at SSKM Hospital in Kolkata on Wednesday

supporters against the arrest of the party's leaders, the law minister was at Bankshali court housing the CBI court.

This (the chief minister walking into CBI office asking to be arrested and a crowd laying siege to it) is unprecedented in the history of the country, solicitor general, Tushar Mehta, representing the Central agency, submitted during today's hearings.

Many miscreants had gathered at Nizam Palace on that day to intimidate the CBI, it was submitted. Senior officers have been threatened, it was submitted to underscore the CBI plea of transferring the matter to another state.

Avishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the petitioners, contended that the chief minister and other leaders tried

to protest against political vendetta on that day and did not create any unrest.

The CBI, meanwhile, has decided to write afresh to the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla seeking sanction to start prosecution against three parliamentarians accused in the Narada case. The CBI has been criticised for acting in a partisan manner, leaving former MPs Suvenu Adhikari and Mukul Roy, both Trinamul turncoats and also accused in the Narada case, to unscathed till date.

A CBI source said that no action against MPs and former MPs Saugata Roy, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Prasun Banerjee, Suvenu Adhikari and Aparupa Poddar could be initiated since there has been no response to their request for permission from the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Covid vax to be deferred by three months after recovery: Govt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY



The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said that Covid vaccination should be deferred by three months after recovery from the illness and if infected after the first dose, the second dose should be deferred by three months after clinical recovery from illness.

The new guidelines are based on the recommendation of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEG-VAC), the Union Health Ministry said. The guidelines say that in individuals having lab tests proven Covid-19 illness, the vaccination must be deferred by three months

recovery from Covid-19 illness. Persons with any other serious general illness requiring hospitalisation or ICU care should also wait for four to eight weeks before getting the vaccine. An individual can donate blood after 14 days of either receipt of Covid vaccine or testing RT-PCR negative, if suffering from Covid-19 disease.

Covid vaccination is recommended for all lactating women and there is no requirement for screening of the vaccine recipients by rapid antigen test (RAT) prior to Covid vaccination. "Regarding Covid vaccination of pregnant women, the matter is under discussion and further deliberation," the Ministry said.

Unending Covid battle



Coronavirus patients who are getting free treatment at the Covid care centre of Gurudwara Rakab Ganj, in the capital on Wednesday.

K'taka announces Rs 1250 cr package

The Karnataka government has announced financial assistance of Rs 1250 crore for those impacted by the lockdown in the state following the Covid-19 pandemic, while adding that the decision to extend the present slowdown which ends on 24 May, will be taken a day earlier. In addition, it proposes to vaccinate citizens between 18 and 45 for free while placing orders worth Rs 1000 crore for three crore doses. This would be in addition to appointing 2150 doctors within three days to facilitate Covid treatment. During the first and second wave of the pandemic, the state government provided free treatment to over two lakh infected people, at an estimated cost of Rs 956 crore.

Buddhadeb stable
The health condition of former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, who tested positive for Covid-19, is "stable", health department sources said on Wednesday. His wife Mira Bhattacharya, who also contracted the virus and is undergoing treatment at a city hospital, is also doing fine. P4

Govt directs WhatsApp to withdraw new privacy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 19



The government said the changes undermine the sacrosanct values of privacy, data security and harms rights and interests of Indian citizens.

The government has ordered WhatsApp to withdraw its controversial new privacy policy, saying the changes undermine the sacrosanct values of privacy, data security and harms rights and interests of Indian citizens.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT shot-off a letter to WhatsApp on May 18 on the issue, sources said and warned that necessary steps in accordance with law will be taken if a satisfactory response was not received within seven days.

When contacted, a WhatsApp spokesperson said the company continues to engage with the government. "... we reaffirm what we said before that this update does not impact the privacy of personal messages for anyone... we'll take every opportunity to explain how we protect people's personal messages and private information," the spokesperson added.

The ministry has taken a strong position on the matter, and made it clear that it is not just problematic but also "irresponsible" for the messaging platform to leverage its position to impose "unfair" terms and conditions on Indian users, when many depend on WhatsApp to communicate in everyday life. The ministry has drawn attention of WhatsApp to how its new privacy policy is a violation of several provisions of the existing Indian laws and rules.

Arguing debate had ensued after WhatsApp had said it will update its terms of service and privacy policy around how it processes user data and partners with Facebook to offer integrations across the social media giant's products.

Kejriwal does not speak for India, Govt tells Singapore after variant comments

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY



EAM S Jaishankar said comments like Kejriwal's could harm long-standing relations.

ants or civil aviation policy of India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted. Kejriwal had yesterday requested the central government to suspend flights to and from Singapore with immediate effect as he warned of a possible new strain of the novel Coronavirus detected in

the city-state. In a Twitter post, he had hinted that the alleged new strain could mark the advent of the third wave of Covid-19 in India.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar chided Kejriwal, saying comments like those made by the Delhi CM could harm long-standing relations. "Singapore and India have been solid partners in the fight against Covid-19. Appreciate Singapore's role as a logistics hub and oxygen supplier. Their gesture of deploying military aircraft to help us speaks of our exceptional relationship," Jaishankar tweeted. "However, irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships," he added. (See also P2)



Why is the state government not setting up oxygen plants without depending on the Centre?

ON ALLEGATIONS THAT THE CENTRE HAD NOT APPROVED A PSA OXYGEN PLANT FOR THE NBMCH

Modi govt worried about image, we concerned for kids: Sisodia

AAP, BJP spar over Kejriwal's tweet on corona strain in Singapore; BJP hurls 'toolkit of anarchy' slur at Delhi CM

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The AAP today charged that the BJP and its Narendra Modi-led central government were more concerned about their image abroad than about the children in India, even as the saffron party accused Delhi chief minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal of allegedly violating constitutional propriety with his remarks on coronavirus strain in Singapore.

The two parties sparred after Singapore called the Indian envoy and conveyed to him its strong objections to the "unfounded assertions" by Kejriwal. India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar also ticked off the Delhi CM, saying he does not speak for India and that "irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships".

In his tweet posted yesterday, Kejriwal had urged the Narendra Modi government to cancel all air services with Singapore with immediate effect, saying "a new strain" of coronavirus found there could reach Delhi and was "very dangerous" for children.

"Meddling in foreign policy matters which is as per the Constitution of India is not a state subject amounts to serious violation of constitutional propriety," BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged.

He charged Kejriwal with seeking political mileage at the cost of India's image with his "irresponsible" tweet and said the Delhi CM keeps making "hue and cry" over one issue or another so that nobody speaks him on his "all-



round failure" in dealing with the Covid wave in the national capital.

Kejriwal has presented his toolkit of spreading confusion and anarchy and seems to be competing with the Congress in propagating lies and destabilizing the country, Bhatia alleged.

The AAP targeted Delhi's deputy CM Manish Sisodia and health minister Satyendar Jain to defend Kejriwal.

Slamming the BJP and the Modi government for doing "cheap politics" on the issue, Sisodia said the statements and reactions of the BJP and the Centre showed that they were "concerned" about their "image" in Singapore and not about the children in

India. "Kejriwal talked of Singapore strain and the children. The issue is not Singapore but our children," he told a press conference.

"Vaccines would be available for the adults as well as children in the country, had our foreign ministry shown same swiftness in procuring vaccines from other countries, with which it has reacted to Kejriwal's statement," Sisodia said. He said the BJP-led government needs to prioritise children, instead of playing politics and "fixing its image" abroad.

Jain claimed there was a "different strain" of coronavirus spreading in Singapore.

"There are many strains of coronavirus in India at present...

Their presence is ascertained through genome sequencing. It is a different strain (in Singapore) indeed. Whether it is from Singapore, Delhi, America or London, what's important is that the strains are different," he told reporters.

"It is wrong to say it is not a different variant... The picture will be clear in some time. We will inform you about it," Jain said.

He said the Delhi government had also called for cancelling flights from the UK last year. "Then also, it was considered an unwarranted demand. I think we should do whatever possible to protect the country."

Sisodia said, "Kejriwal

talked of Singapore strain and the children. The issue is not Singapore but safety of our children."

The deputy CM charged that the Centre had failed to act when scientists and doctors alerted about the "London strain" of Covid, which has now led to large number of deaths in India.

"Kejriwal rightly notified two facts to the public -- firstly, the development of new strain in Singapore and secondly how this strain might affect children and India needed to be careful," Sisodia said.

"However, instead of preparing or taking any action on this important input, the Central government has shown condemnable behaviour by playing cheap politics of blame and lies," he alleged.

The Delhi BJP hit out at Sisodia, saying he was indulging in "melodrama" to save Kejriwal from "embarrassment".

"The denial by Singapore government has left CM Arvind Kejriwal shamed before the world and Manish Sisodia today tried to give the issue a melodramatic turn to save him from further embarrassment in Delhi," Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Kapoor said.

Sisodia, however, lashed out at the BJP for "ridiculing" Kejriwal. "It only indicates that BJP and its central government are more worried about Singapore and how Singapore views us. They will not bring vaccines for children but worry about Singapore," he said. Bhatia alleged the AAP government believes in the PPP model of "publicity, cheap politics and panic" as Kejriwal did not even try to verify before posting his controversial tweet.

Delhi to form task force to protect kids from 3rd Corona wave: CM

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said his government will form a special task force comprising paediatricians and senior IAS officers to protect children from the third wave of Covid in the city.

A committee of officials will also be reportedly formed to supervise the availability of medicines, oxygen and beds in the national capital.

Kejriwal convened a meeting with officials to review the Covid situation in Delhi and deliberate on the measures to be taken to prevent the third wave of the pandemic, a Delhi government statement said.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who is also the nodal minister for Covid matters in Delhi, and health minister Satyendar Jain were present at the meeting.

"If the third wave of the



along with an enhanced oxygen allocation, according to the statement.

The CM directed the officials to work in advance to ensure a sufficient number of oxygen tankers and proper functioning of oxygen plants for an optimum supply of the life-saving gas to hospitals.

The third wave may require Delhi to be prepared with 40,000 oxygenated beds and the city government is making preparations to install 10,000 ICU beds, the statement said.

The management of medicines was also discussed at the meeting.

"Increased number of Covid beds also require an increased amount of oxygen allocation to hospitals. We need to keep enough oxygen tankers at hand so that we do not fall short of supply. We also need to ensure optimum oxygen storage and proper functioning of oxygen plants," Kejriwal told the officials.

Accused in cases punishable with death can't be considered for release: HC

PTI

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Delhi High Court Wednesday said persons accused in cases where maximum punishment is death penalty are not entitled to be released under any circumstances as the provision in the law allowing such relaxation is for other offences in which the maximum sentence is not gallows.

The high court was hearing various petitions concerning prisoners, including a PIL for releasing on bail those undertrial prisoners (UTPs) who have served more than half of the maximum sentence which would be awarded to them if convicted for the lesser of the multiple offences they are facing trial.

The high court said it is not for the Undertrial Review Committee (UTRC) to evaluate or appreciate the merits of a case and it is the preserve of the court and all such cases which involve punishment for death cannot be placed before the committee to review and there is no question of considering it.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh rejected the submission that it should be left for the UTRC to decide case wise.

UTRC was ordered to be set up by the Supreme Court in 2015 and 2016 to consider cases of UTPs who were entitled to benefit of section 436A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) which provides the maximum period for which a UTP can be detained.

Senior advocate Mohit Mathur, representing India Undertrial Prisoner Support Forum, placed reliance on a Supreme Court judgement and submitted that all cases including those where punishment of death is prescribed should be considered by UTRC for the relief.

The high court, however,



with petitioner advocate Kanhaiya Singh that an accused cannot be told that the referral hospital is a 100 per cent COVID facility, so he cannot be treated for his ailment.

It can never be that the accused would be left unattended. We agree with the submission that the accused can't be told that the referral hospital is a 100 per cent

COVID facility. We direct the State to ensure that whatever treatment or investigation is required by any accused, same be provided to him by approaching another hospital which is not a 100 per cent COVID facility, the bench said.

Singhal pointed out that there were specific instances where non-COVID-19 patients in jail were not provided with proper treatment as the hospital attached to the prison dispensary was converted into COVID facility.

On being told by Delhi government standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi that 350 undertrials were granted bail but they could not be released due to want of surety, the bench said the High-Powered Committee (HPC) has already decided that there is no need for surety and they should be released on personal bonds. Various pleas were filed seeking direction to release prisoners on interim bail or parole to decongest jails here in the wake of the prevalent COVID-19 situation in the national capital.

Classified

IN MEMORIAM

KUTU DASGUPTA
Born: 18.05.1999
Died: 20.05.1999

Wherever you are stay in peace
Your Baba & Ma

COLLECTION: 110, B.C. RD., Barabazar (Near C.M.S. School) Burdwan, Ph.: 0342-2560069 / 8926434614. **NEW COMPUTER INDIA:** New Market, Benachity, Durgapur-713213. Ph.: 9883934508. M-973230270. **NARANJAN DASGUPTA:** Mahakali Paper Centre, B-9/16 (CA), Kalyani-741235, Nadia. Ph.: 9833171377 / 2582-7177 (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.). **STANLEY PAPER:** Stanley Paper Mills, 2nd Floor, 1st Trunk Rd, (South) Howrah Maidan, Howrah-711101. Ph.: 2641-4114 / 2474-8856. **RINKU AD:** AGENCY: Chanchal Bhattacharya, 74, Santiniketan Rasta, Bally, Howrah-711201. Mobile: 831833485. **RAYCOPEN:** Arghya Commercial Plaza, Upper Ground Floor, Room No. 8, Bungalow No. 3, Sector 4-B, Batala, Ph.: 033 3104777. Fax: 933 2253099. **NEE VERDAN:** New Verdan Khudiram Mitra, 21/22, Sector 10, Paschim Medinipur, 721101. Ph.: 9434702650, 9434259909. **S. TRIVEDI:** Pathakpara, Bankura, (0324) 232065, 973801256-57. **TYPE CORNER:** Collectry More (opposite SP Bunglow), Krishnanagar-741101, Dist.: Nadia, 947334978, (03472) 257432. **KRISHNA DEB:** C/o Balurghat Barta, Balurghat-73101, Dist.: Dakshin Dinajpur (W.B.), Ph.: (0522) 249230. Mobile: 8759169158 / 09434247137.

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The Statesman

KOLKATA

Statesman House,
4, Chowringhee Square
Kolkata-700 001

Tel: (033) 22127070-76,

(033) 41071700

Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780

Email: thestatesman@vsnl.com

statesmandclassified@gmail.com

DELHI

Statesman House,
148, Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi-110 001

Tel: (011) 2331 5911

Ishan House (2nd floor)

A-90, Sector II, NOIDA,
UP 201 301

Tel: (010) 4171421

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

delhistatesman@gmail.com

HYDERABAD

The Statesman Limited, 2nd Floor, UNI Building,
A.C. Guards, Hyderabad-500004,

Ph.: 040-2339 1739

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

hyderabad@thestatesmangroup.com

BANGALORE

No. 68, First Floor, Gold Tower,
50 Residency Road, Bangalore-560025.

Tel.: 080-22229129, 080-22234813

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

bangalore@thestatesmangroup.com

CHENNAI

5, Kasturi Buildings, Jamshedji Tata Road, Mumbai-400 020

Tel: (022) 2202 1045,

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

mumbai@thestatesmangroup.com

manuelfrancis@thestatesman.com

CHENNAI

Fagan Mansion (4th floor), 26, Ethiraj Road, Chennai-600 008, Tel: (044)

28278037, 28224800

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

chennai@thestatesmangroup.com

LUCKNOW

2/2, Butler Palace (Near Jopling Road), Lucknow-226 001,

Ph.: (0522) 2206705

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

lucknow@thestatesmangroup.com

RANCHI

11/C, Road#1, Ashoknagar, Ranchi - 834 002

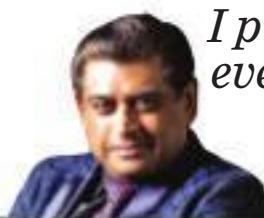
Fax: (0651) 2247054

Email:

delhistatesman@gmail.com

ranchi@thestatesmangroup.com

AIR-SURCHARGE: Kathmandu - Re. 2, Eastern Region



I planned to choose my own songs from the requests that everyone wants to listen to and re-recorded some of those songs.

PLAYBACK SINGER AND MUSIC COMPOSER AMIT KUMAR

AFTER RELEASING A SERIES OF RE-RECORDED DIGITAL COVER VERSION OF HIS SONGS

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 20 MAY 2021

03

HC asks govt to explain black fungus drug crisis

Delhi HC asks Centre, Delhi govt to apprise it today on shortage of medicine for black fungus

PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Delhi High Court Wednesday asked the Centre and Delhi Government to apprise on the issue of shortage of medicine used for treating black fungus, which is primarily affecting people recovering from COVID-19.

The high court said the government will have to elaborate what is the bottleneck and how the medicine can suddenly be in short supply when it is locally manufactured.

"Tomorrow you tell us about your stock, your supply and how you are distributing it and what is the rationale behind it," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said.

The issue of shortage of medicine Amphotericin B, for treating Mucormycosis (black fungus) was raised by advocate Rakesh Malhotra



who also referred to a recent order passed by the Delhi government concerning requisitioning of the drug for the ailment.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, said there is a shortage of the medicine and it is worse than the condition of Remdesivir and the State has requisitioned the drug from the Centre.

He said committee has been formed which meets twice a day but when there is no stock, they can't give buffer

stock.

He added that not only Delhi but all other states are facing this shortage and the Centre supplies these medicines to the states by rationing them.

The court asked both the Centre and Delhi government to take instructions on the issue and apprise it on Thursday. It also asked Malhotra to share the documents with the Centre and Delhi government counsel.

"You will have to elaborate what is the bottleneck. We

must address this. How can it be suddenly in short supply when it is locally manufactured. This should not be the case of artificial shortage as it was being manufactured earlier," it said and added, "nobody had anticipated that we will be hit so badly by the second wave".

Mehra clarified that the demand for the medicine has suddenly increased and earlier it was not being prescribed in the numbers that is being prescribed now for last four days and everyone has been caught unaware.

According to the Union Health Ministry, mucormycosis or black fungus is a complication caused by a fungal infection. People catch mucormycosis by coming in contact with the fungal spores in the environment. It can also develop on the skin after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, scrape, burn, or other type of skin trauma.

The disease is being detected among patients who are recovering or have recovered from COVID-19. Moreover, anyone who is diabetic and whose immune system is not functioning well needs to be on the guard against this, said the ministry.

When Malhotra claimed that as per his information more than 1000 vials of the medicines are with the Delhi government, Mehra refuted the claim and said everything can't be said at the last moment and he will get back with instructions.

The high court, on its own, has revived a disposed of petition filed by advocate Rakesh Malhotra related to COVID-19 testings and infrastructure, noting that the virus has raised its ugly head once again and the pandemic is raging with much greater intensity and "it is evident that the healthcare infrastructure is at the stage of imminent collapse".

Delhi LG asks officials to ensure availability of black fungus drugs

PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

Lt Governor Anil Baijal on Wednesday directed authorities to take immediate steps to ensure the availability of drugs related to black fungus and the newly launched D-2G for people in genuine and medically prescribed need, according to sources.

The LG also directed authorities to ensure that distributors and retailers of drugs and equipment related to COVID, mandatorily display their stocks and prices.

The directives were issued at a review meeting on management of COVID-19 situation in the national capital chaired by Baijal. The meeting was attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia, the chief secretary, MCD commissioners and senior officials of Delhi Police.

"The LG said immediate steps need to be undertaken to ensure the availability of drugs related to black fungus and the newly launched D-2G for people in genuine and



in need," the source added.

The LG stressed during the meeting that testing, especially RT-PCR, should not go down, since owing to the lockdown the antigen tests had naturally gone down.

Regarding hospital infrastructure to deal with future eventualities, the LG instructed that preparedness thereof should take into account the worst case, best case and the likely scenarios in consultation with experts.

"It was stressed that the guard cannot be lowered and the measures and preparedness to deal with any eventuality should be fully undertaken. The LG asked for ensuring that distributors and retailers of drugs and equipment related to COVID are made to mandatorily display their stocks and prices," the source said.

The national capital reported 4,482 cases, the lowest since April 5, and 265 fatalities on Tuesday, while the positivity rate dropped to 6.89 per cent, according to the health bulletin released by the city government.

India has own corona variants, doesn't need other nations for next wave: HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Delhi High Court Wednesday cautioned the Delhi Government from stretching any further the issue that a third wave of COVID-19 could be coming from Singapore or some other country, saying India already has its own variants of the virus and does not need any other nation for it.

Let's be clear, there is no wave from Singapore and we don't need any other country, we have our own variants, said a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh which interjected when Delhi government's counsel was making submissions that the next wave could be coming from Singapore or some other country. After the remarks

by the bench, senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, replied from wherever the second variant is from India only.

Stressing on the need for vaccination, he also said Until and unless everyone is safe, none is safe.

The court was hearing the plea over the condition of subordinate judiciary's judicial officers who are at risk of contracting COVID-19 owing to the nature of duties.

On Tuesday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had called for cancelling all air services with Singapore with immediate effect, saying a strain of coronavirus found in that country could reach Delhi in the form of a third wave. He had said the new form of coronavirus in Sin-

gapore is said to be very dangerous for children.

However, the statement drew criticism even as the Singapore government conveyed to the Indian High Commissioner its strong objection.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the Delhi chief minister does not speak for India.

Earlier in the day, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the Indian High Commissioner conveyed to the Singapore government that the Delhi chief minister has no competence to comment on COVID variants. PTI SKV

concerns over the condition of subordinate judiciary's judicial officers who are at risk of contracting COVID-19 owing to the nature of duties.

HP CM asks officials to ensure prompt hosp transfer of serious Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday gave directions to officials to ensure that serious Covid patients who are in home isolation be shifted to health institutions immediately for proper medical care and to reduce fatalities.

After reviewing Covid-19 situation in Kangra district at Dharmsala, he expressed concern over the increase in the number of Covid related deaths in the district and felt the need for ensuring that serious patients were shifted to hospitals for proper medical treatment.

Thakur said the state government had increased the bed capacity from existing 1,500 to about 5,000 to cater to the demands of Covid patients in the state.

In addition, the Central government had increased the quota of oxygen from 15 MT to 30 MT and the state government had now urged the Union government to further enhance the oxygen quota for Himachal by 10 MT, he stated. Thakur further stated that keeping in view the gravity of the situation, the state government was also increasing ICU beds in the health institutions.

Besides, 20 additional ventilators had been provided for Tanda medical college and 25 additional ventilators for IGMC, Shimla.

In addition, arrangements had been made to ensure adequate supply of oxygen in Civil Hospital, Nurpur, the CM said.

The Chief Minister stated that in order to ensure adequate staff in the health institutions, the government had recruited about 3,000 employees on outsource basis to

cater to the health requirements of the people and efforts were also on to make fresh appointments in health institutions.

Apart from this, the state government had also issued SOPs for cremation of dead bodies of Covid patients and financial assistance will be provided to next of kin of the deceased to carry the dead body to their native places if they wish to do so, he said. "Efforts must be made to strengthen the home isolation mechanism as about 90 percent of the total Covid patients were in home isolation.

The elected representatives such as MLAs, pradhans, BDC members, Zila Parishad members and ward members must actively participate in strengthening the home isolation mechanism by keeping in touch with Covid patients' family members.

Cong to give Covid kits to needy in HP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 MAY

Himachal Pradesh Congress in-charge and former Union minister Rajeev Shukla will launch a mass campaign to help the needy persons in Covid pandemic on 21 May, on the occasion of 30th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Stating this, HP Congress general secretary in-charge (organization) Rajneesh Kima said Congress will distribute Covid security kits in all the districts, blocks and panchayats of the state so that people can get timely facilities near their homes.

"On 21 May, Rajeev Shukla will start the distribution of the Covid security kit as a service to humanity at 3 pm via video conferencing," he said, adding HP Congress chief Kuldip Singh Rathore and GS Bali, in-charge of Corona relief work in Himachal, will jointly send the Covid security kits to all areas of the state.

Kima asked all Congress MLAs, former MLAs, all district heads, block presidents, all members of frontal organizations to join virtual webinar conferencing on 21 May.

In the meeting, the Congress high command will also issue necessary guidelines to party leaders and workers pertaining to supporting the people amid Covid pandemic, he added.

Kendriya Vidyalaya AGCR Colony, Delhi-110092

Registration of Firms

Registered and reputed firms having TIN/ VAT/ GST/ S.Tax etc. are invited to register themselves for all Vidyalaya work in KV AGCR Colony for the Session 2021-22 through Registered Post upto 26.5.2021

PRINCIPAL

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 MAY

Even as Covid pandemic has made it tough for students to continue regular studies and adjust to the new normal of online classes, students in Gravag panchayat of Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh are facing the issue of poor connectivity.

The children along with their parents in 8-10 villages of Gravag panchayat in Kotkhai sub division are walking 3-4 km daily from their residences in search of hilltops with better mobile network connectivity to continue online studies.

In addition to finding hilltops with better mobile connectivity, the children have to

look up to the sky to attend online classes as inclement weather conditions from the last few weeks are adding to their woes.

"Our children are lagging behind in studies owing to poor network connectivity issues since the last one year and we have raised the issue with local authorities.

But still, the students are facing difficulties in continuing online studies," Mukesh Chauhan, a resident of Jauni village said.

Another parent said the panchayat's location (covered by hills from both sides and at base) makes it a shadow region and they had written to mobile companies for improving connectivity several times but no action had

been taken till date to resolve the issue.

Shimla deputy director, education, Ashok Sharma said online classes had been started in the district for the last one year and he hadn't received any complaint on mobile connectivity.

"I will seek a report from the concerned block official and will raise the issue with higher authorities if the students are facing any such issue," he told The Statesman.

Meanwhile, Thoeg SDM Saurabh Jassal while talking to media assured the residents of resolving the issue as soon as possible and said he will ask BSNL officials to improve connectivity in Gravag panchayat.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Wednesday demanded that the Central government provide fertilisers diammonium phosphate (DAP) and nitrogen phosphorus potash (NPK) at subsidised rates to farmers.

The SAD's farmers wing president Sikander Singh Maluka said 50 to 60 percent hike in the rates of both fertilisers would break the back of farmers and force them into a debt trap.

Farming is already becoming unremunerative. The unprecedented hike in the rates of fertilisers will put an unbearable burden on the farmers of Punjab who will face a cumulative loss of Rs 1100 crore due to the increase in fertiliser rates alone. It will also have a long term effect on the agricul-

tural economy and could prove to be devastating for the peasantry", Maluka said in a statement.

Demanding that the government should take back the hefty increase of Rs 700 from Rs 1200 per bag to Rs 1900 per bag in the case of DAP and an increase of around Rs 400 to Rs 800 per bag in the case of NPK, Maluka said this would not only reduce the income of wheat, paddy and maize farmers but would also severely affect potato and sugarcane farmers who used large quantities of DAP.

He said potato farmers used as much as four bags of DAP per acre while sugar cane farmers used three bags of DAP per acre. He said the Punjab government should also offer DAP at the old rates to farmers from cooperative societies.

Stating that there was a growing feeling amongst the

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - I DELHI

4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

O.S.No. Bank of India (Applicant) Versus

Ajay Kumar and Ors. (Defendants)

To (D-1) Mr. Ajay Kumar S/o Mr. Anil Kumar Tripathi, 1706, Azure Tower, Supertech Pavilion, sector-34, Near Logix City Centre, Noida 201301, Uttar Pradesh

Also at : (ii) Mr. Ajay Kumar S/o Mr. Anil Kumar Tripathi, C-9, Block-C, Shashi Garden, Patparganj, Delhi-110092

To (D-2) Mr. Laxmi Narayan S/o Sh. Vishnu Dutt Sharma, C-270/2, Chankya Marg, Super Star Chowk, Chhajju Pur, Shahdara, Delhi-110032

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 41,10,676.32 (Rupees forty one lac ten thousand six hundred seventy six and thirty two paisa only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before this Tribunal on 27.05.2021 at 10:30 am (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.tribunal.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473)

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before the Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose :- (1) All the advocates/litigants shall download the Cisco Webex application/software; (2) Meeting ID and password for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-1/and recovery officer-2 shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT official portal i.e. drt.gov.in under the public notice head. (3) In any exigency qua that, the advocates/litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473. Given under are my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 25th day of March, 2021.

By order of the Tribunal

For Registrar, DRT-1, New Delhi
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry. Mr. Amit K. Dar, Lt. Registrar, DRT-1, New Delhi Phone No. 011-23748473 E-mail : drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

76 held for black-marketing of O2 cylinders, Covid drugs in Haryana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 19 MAY

Haryana Police has arrested 76 accused engaged in black-marketing of oxygen, oxygen cylinders and Remdesivir injections.

The Director General of Police (DGP), Haryana, Manoj Yadava, on Wednesday said 132 Remdesivir injections and 411 oxygen cylinders were recovered by lodging 37 first information reports (FIRs) across the state. Instead of making the recovered cylinders and injection a case property, these are being given to civil administration for treatment of infected patients.

The DGP said amid the ongoing crackdown on black marketers, police are actively engaged in serving the home isolated infected patients by ensuring home delivery of oxygen cylinders



The BJP government is creating a 'world record of big lies'.

SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV

India

THUMBNAILS



A poultry farmer shifts his brood of ducks to a safe place from a flooded farm due to cyclone Tauktae, in Thiruvananthapuram, on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

Kerala NCP unit chief: P C Chacko has been appointed as the new Kerala unit chief of the NCP, party general secretary Praful Patel announced on Wednesday. Chacko, a former Congress leader, had joined the NCP in March this year.

PTI

BJP MLA dies of Covid-19: BJP MLA Gotam Lal Meena died of COVID-19 at a hospital in Udaipur on Wednesday. Leader of Opposition Gulabchand Kataria said, Meena was admitted to the MB government hospital in Udaipur for the last few days.

PTI

Kerala Cabinet formed, portfolios allocated

Veena George to be new Kerala health minister, KN Balagopal to get finance



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 19 MAY

The allocation of portfolios in the second Pinarayi Vijayan Cabinet has been completed. The CPI-M state secretariat meeting held here on Wednesday is learnt to have approved the portfolio for the new ministers.

CM Pinarayi Vijayan will continue to hold home, vigilance, IT and environment portfolios as in the first term. K N Balagopal, will most likely be the new finance minister, while P Rajeev, who was the editor of CPI-M mouthpiece *Desabhimani*, will handle the industries portfolio.

Journalist-turned CPI-M leader Veena George (*in photo*) will replace KK Shailaja as minister of health and family welfare. M V Govindan, second in seniority in the

HC allows physical swearing-in

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOCHI, 19 MAY

Kerala High Court on Wednesday declined to set aside the decision to hold a physical oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected LDF government headed by Pinarayi Vijayan at Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram on 20 May, with 500 people in attendance.

However, a division bench of Chief Justice S Manikumar and Justice Shaji P Chaly urged the Kerala government to reduce the number

Cabinet, is likely to get local self-government and excise portfolios. K Radhakrishnan, a former minister and speaker, is tipped for devaswom.

V Sivankutty will handle the general education portfolio. Saji Cherian is the minister for fisheries and cultural affairs while V N Vasavan will handle cooperation and registration. V Abdurahman who won from Tanur will reportedly head the minorities affairs

of participants for the physical function slated to be conducted on Thursday.

"Though states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, with more number of Legislators in the Assembly have performed the swearing-in ceremony, given the Covid-19 situation in the state. The ceremony is scheduled to be held at 3.30 PM on Thursday."

The order came in a petition moved by NGO Chikitsa Seethi against the physical swearing-in ceremony,

given the Covid-19 situation in the state. The ceremony is scheduled to be held at 3.30 PM on Thursday.

In his resignation letter uploaded on his Twitter handle, Muruganandam alleged that in the past few days there was "no democracy" in the organisation.

Haasan had joined hands with IJK and actor R Sarath Kumar-led AISMK.

Muruganandam also charged some persons with "misleading" Haasan and interfering in party affairs and alleged that "unilateralism" and "autocracy" had crept into the party.

Post its electoral drubbing, MNM suffered a jolt when its then vice president Mahendran quit the party, alleging lack of democracy even as

Haasan said that his former deputy was about to be sacked but expressed joy that "awed" has weeded itself out from the MNM.

should restrict the number to avoid the widespread Covid-19," the court said.

It suggested that the government should consider measures to bring down the strength of persons present at the ceremony, and drop the relatives and spouses of the newly-elected MLAs from the list of invitees.

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Yogi Adityanath govt of paying more attention to publicity rather than working on tackling pandemic in the state

LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN UP ASSEMBLY RAM GOVIND CHAUDHARY
ALLEGING THE STATE GOVERNMENT LACKED A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, SENSITIVITY

THUMBNAILS



A shopkeeper looks from his closed shop at Azadpur Mandi, during the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown, in New Delhi, on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

Tarun Tejpal case: A session court in Goa on Wednesday said it will pronounce the verdict in the Tarun Tejpal case on 21 May. The former Tehelka editor-in-chief is accused of sexually assaulting a woman colleague inside the elevator of a Goa hotel in 2013. PTI

Sunanda Pushkar case: A Delhi court on Wednesday adjourned for a month the order on framing of charges against Congress leader Shashi Tharoor in a case related to his wife, Sunanda Pushkar's death in a hotel in Panaji. PTI

Cows inside J&K hospital: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district have registered a case against miscreants after an inquiry revealed that cows inside a hospital were deliberately huddled inside to malign the image of the administration, officials said on Wednesday. PTI

'quake hits J&K's Doda: An earthquake of magnitude 3.2 on the Richter scale hit Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Wednesday afternoon, officials said. However, there were no reports of any damage, they said. PTI

Tejashwi Yadav converts official residence into Covid care centre

Places dozens of beds, oxygen cylinders, medicines & food for patients to be admitted at this centre



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PATNA, 19 MAY

Rashtriya Janata Dal legislator and Bihar Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav has turned his official residence into a Covid care centre and appealed to the government to take over the centre for people's use.

He placed dozens of beds and arranged oxygen cylinders, medicines and foods for the patients to be admitted at this centre, set up at 1, Polo Road bungalow in Patna. It was allotted to Tejashwi in his capacity as leader of the Opposition in Bihar Assembly.

"I have arranged all the necessary items at the covid care centre but can't run this centre myself since this is a government bungalow. I appeal to the state government to take over this centre and let me know if it needs any help from us. I'm ready to fully cooperate," Tejashwi said in his video message. He said he would make further expansion of the health facilities if the situation warranted so.

The development comes after the ruling Janata Dal United (JD-U) headed by chief minister Nitish Kumar mounted attacks on the Opposition leader for doing nothing for the people of Bihar at the critical time and accused him of disappearing from the scene during the time of disaster.

Tejashwi said the coronavirus infection had now spread to villages in a virulent form but the people are compelled to admit themselves to the private hospitals since the government health centres lack basic infrastructure, beds, medicines and oxygen cylinders. What is shocking, however, is that those unable to meet high treatment costs in private hospitals are dying for want of medicare.

There have been many incidents where Covid patients who died at the gate Nalanda Medical College and Hospital (NMCH) and Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS), both in Patna, for want of beds and medical help. His initiative, thus, could be of much help to the humanity in distress, he said.

The move has drawn huge applause from various quarters. Twitterati asked other leaders to follow suit. "This is the need of the hour. Politicians should offer help, not issue threats or lie to mislead people. Excellent initiative by Tejashwi Yadav," reacted Twitterati Sanjay K Jha.

Not only Tejashwi but several of his party colleagues, too, have set up medical camps in their respective constituencies and are distributing medicines or providing medical help to the affected people.

They began rushing help soon after JD leader Lalu Prasad while interacting with party leaders through video-conferencing last week appealed to them to help people in crisis. Prasad got bail from the Jharkhand HC only a fortnight back. He is now in Delhi.



A view of heavy rush of traffic at TRC near Zero bridge in Srinagar on Wednesday during a curfew following Jammu and Kashmir witnessing an increase in Covid positive cases.

SNS

Vaccination for 18-45 age group in TN from today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, 19 MAY

Intensifying its war against Covid-19, Tamil Nadu government is all set to begin the vaccination drive for those between 18 and 45 years on 20 May, as nine lakh doses of vaccines have been received from the Centre.

Tamil Nadu is one of the frontline states where vaccine hesitancy is more in the country, but the new government under MK Stalin is taking all steps to intensify it and take all other measures against coronavirus.

State health minister Ma Subramanian said apart from Covishield and Covaxin other vaccines that are approved by the Centre will also be administered. Also, global tenders have been placed for the 3.5-crore doses of vaccines.

Subramanian said so far around 70 lakh people have received their first dose of vaccine in the state.

Chief minister Stalin will inaugurate the vaccination programme to be opened in a phased manner for industrial workers, people with disabilities and auto drivers.

Till now, Tamil Nadu has received 9.62 lakh doses of the order placed for 13.85 lakh doses of vaccines from Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech.

The state government on 16 May received 7,95,470 Covishield doses and 1,66,530 Covaxin doses for inoculating the people between 18 and 44 years of age. The state is yet to receive 4,23,080 vaccines from the firms.

It is learnt the CM will review corona prevention works at Salem, Erode and Coimbatore districts tomorrow.

T'gana floats global e-tender for 1 cr doses

HYDERABAD, 19 MAY

Telangana government has floated a global e-tender to procure one crore doses of Covid-19 vaccine in the next six months.

While the state has already vaccinated some 50 lakh people out of its population of 4 crore in the above 45 age category, Telangana is looking at procuring more vaccines for those between 18 and 44 years of age.

Chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has announced the state's entire vaccination programme will be fast. Rao, also handling the health portfolio, today went on his maiden visit to Gandhi Hospital.

Though the state has extended the lockdown till 30 May, its plan to vaccinate faster to stop virus spread has hit a roadblock after it ran out of supplies.

CORONA BLUES



Young beneficiaries wait in a queue to receive Covid-19 vaccine dose, at a vaccination centre in Bhopal, on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

Oxygen langer in Guwahati: With many Covid-19 patients in Guwahati facing problem in getting oxygen cylinders at home, the Khalsa Centre North East (KCNE) is providing free oxygen concentrators for four days, KCNE chairman Capt P P Singh said on Wednesday. The 'Free Oxygen Langer' was launched on Monday. The oxygen concentrators are given to people for a maximum of seven days by keeping a security deposit of Rs 11,000 which is refunded after the safe return of the machine that cost almost Rs 90,000.

Rajasthan declares black fungus an epidemic: Mucormycosis (black fungus), primarily affecting people recovering from Covid, has been declared an epidemic in Rajasthan, officials said on Wednesday. At present, the state has around 100 black fungus patients and a separate ward has been made at Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital in Jaipur for their treatment. Mucormycosis has been notified as an epidemic and a notifiable disease in the state under the Rajasthan Epidemic Act 2020, according to a notification issued by state's principal health secretary Akhil Arora.

BSF enhances Covid-19 care facilities: The BSF has bolstered its Covid-19 medical set up for its serving and retired personnel with the creation of oxygenated beds in its hospitals, even as it is 'in the process' of setting up two small plants for producing the life-giving gas, officials said on Wednesday. Ten oxygen beds each at two BSF Covid care centres in Chawla (Southwest Delhi) and Tigri (south Delhi) areas of the national capital have been created recently.

Sterile Copper plant in TN resumes oxygen production: Vedanta Ltd-owned Sterlite Copper resumed production of medical oxygen at its unit in Tamil Nadu, days after it faced a technical snag, leading to a halt in operation, the company said on Wednesday. The company had roped in ISRO experts to rectify the glitch. The Tuticorin facility began producing medical oxygen, on 13 May to meet the demand for the life-saving gas following a surge in Covid cases in the state.

Jai Ram directs shifting serious Covid patients to hospitals: Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday gave directions to ensure that serious Covid patients in home isolation be shifted to health institutions immediately for proper medical care and to reduce fatalities in Kangra district. The state government had increased the bed capacity from existing 1,500 to about 5,000 to cater to the demands of Covid patients in the state.

SNS

PM announces ₹1,000 cr to Guj as cyclone relief

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, 19 MAY



and the quantum of relief required for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

in the Gir National Park are unharmed in the cyclone.

As reports of damages due to cyclone trickle in from remote areas, it is estimated that over 73,000 electric poles have been damaged causing power failures in more than 9,000 villages. Power supplies have been restored in more than 4,900 villages by Wednesday morning. An initial estimate said that nearly 90 per cent of the standing crops in Saurashtra region have been destroyed by cyclone Tauktae.

Meanwhile, Gujarat Forest Department officials have clarified that all the Asiatic lions

Raut takes dig at PM

The NCP - one of the constituents of the Mahavikas Aghadi (MVA) - on Wednesday wondered if the PM's aerial survey of the cyclone-hit areas in Gujarat and Diu amounted to discrimination against Maharashtra which, too, was affected by the cyclonic storm, adds PTI.

Taking a dig, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the PM was not conducting an aerial survey of the cyclone-hit areas in Maharashtra because he knew the state is led by a strong CM unlike in his home state Gujarat.

Death toll climbs to 45

As many as 45 people have been killed due to Tauktae across 12 districts of Gujarat, officials said Wednesday.

Fifteen deaths were reported from Amreli district in Saurashtra region, the worst-hit in the cyclone that crossed the state coast as an extremely severe cyclonic storm on Monday night and completed landfall around 1.30 am on Tuesday.

Stay home, follow lockdown rules: Jr NTR's appeal to fans ahead of B'day

HYDERABAD, 19 MAY

BSY announces ₹1,250-cr relief package for Covid-hit in K'taka

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, 19 MAY



The Karnataka government today announced financial assistance of Rs 1,250 crore for those impacted by lockdown in the state following the pandemic and that the decision to extend the present lockdown which ends on 24 May will be taken a day earlier.

In addition, it proposes to vaccinate citizens between 18 and 45 for free while placing orders worth Rs 1,000 crore for three crore doses. This would be in addition to appointing 2,150 doctors within three days to facilitate Covid treatment. In fact, during the first and second wave of the pandemic, the state government provided free treatment to over two lakh infected people, at an estimated cost of Rs 956 crore.

According to chief minister B S Yeddyurappa, floriculturists, fruits and vegetable growers, auto-taxi and maxi-cabs drivers, for one, will be among the beneficiaries.

Likewise, construction workers, registered with state building and the construction workers welfare boards, would get Rs 3,000 each, from a Rs 494-crore package, covering five lakh beneficiaries.

In the same way, barbers, dhobis, rag-pickers, potters, goldsmiths domestic workers, and cobblers, along with street vendors, would get Rs 2,000 each, as part of their package of Rs 104 crore. In the same vein BPL card applicants, would be provided 10 kg food grains for May and June.

The government will help farmers and SHGs by extending their date of instalment repayments of term loans, taken from development banks, from 1 May to 31 July.

Should have aligned with TMC in WB polls: Cong's Veerappa Moily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BENGALURU, 19 MAY



make them accountable?", Moily asked.

He was also unsparing in criticism of his party over election strategy, made a strong pitch for developing regional leadership and indicated that failure to project chief ministerial candidates in Assembly elections in Assam and Kerala cost the Congress dearly.

Making no secret of his displeasure, Moily said the Congress tends to make the same mistakes in selection of candidates in elections.

"We select our leaders in various States depending on their ability to raise cash (resources) and capable of mobilising their respective caste. I don't think the Congress can win elections like this," he said.

"... Even our own voters shifted away to Mamata in our strongholds where traditionally Congress used to get elected," he said.

Moily was of the view that people no longer vote for a party looking at its central leadership; they want to know their chief ministerial candidate.

Army finds way to convert liquid O₂ into low pressure O₂

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

trial Research and the Defence Research and Development Organisation, put together a working solution using vaporisers, PRVs and liquid oxygen cylinders, according to a Defence Ministry Press release.

To ensure continuous conversion of liquid oxygen into oxygen gas at the requisite pressure and temperature at the Covid bed, the team used a self pressurising liquid oxygen cylinder of small capacity (250 litres) and processed it through a specially designed vaporizer and directly useable outlet pressure (4 Bar) with requisite leak proof pipeline and pressure valves.

A prototype with two liquid cylinders capable of feeding oxygen gas for 40 days for a period of two to three days has been made functional at Base Hospital, Delhi Cantt.

The team has also tested a mobile version to cater for typical shifting requirements in hospitals.

SHORT TERMINATION/ SHORT ORIGINATION OF TRAINS

The Izzatnagar Division of North Eastern Railway will undertake a traffic block on Rawatpur-Kannauj section for up-gradation work from 20.05.2021 to 14.06.2021. During this period following trains will be Short Terminating/Short Originating as under:-

SHORT TERMINATION/ORIGINATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Train to Short Terminate/ Originate at/from station	Train to Partially cancelled between Stations	Date of Cancellation (From Originating Station)
04724 Bhiwani - Kanpur Central Kalindi Express Special	at Farrukhabad Jn. - Kanpur Central		20.05.2021 to 14.06.2021
04723 Kanpur Central - Bhiwani Kalindi Express Special	from Farrukhabad Jn.	Kanpur Central - Farrukhabad Jn.	21.05.2021 to 15.06.2021

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of Information such as detailed Time-Table and Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad app.



Asian-Americans

In the aftermath of the murderous assaults on Asian-Americans in America in recent weeks, there is a scintilla of hope with the Vice-President, Kamala Harris, the first Asian American to hold the position, to headline a virtual summit this week, to be hosted by the leading Asian American Democratic political action committee. Ms Harris' presence at the AAPI Victory Fund's first-ever "Unity Summit," will buttress the group's effort to harness an unprecedented surge of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) voters. In addition to the Vice-President, the former Secretary of State and Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, will speak at the event, which has been co-hosted by the AAPI Victory Alliance, a non-profit entity of the fund. Several Democratic Senators including Cory Booker of New Jersey and Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, are also expected to appear.

The event is part of a broader effort to ensure that AAPI voters, long overlooked, are recognized as a crucial political force. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States and discharged a major role in President Joe Biden's victorious coalition in the election last November. "The AAPI community does now have the loudest voice we've ever had," said Varun Nikore, the executive director of the AAPI Victory Fund. "One of the reasons the voice is so loud is because we're asking ~ and in certain cases demanding ~ much more from our government." The Asian-Americans had done not a little to effect a psephological swing. Amidst a wave of anti-Asian hate crimes, the Asian-American voter turnout increased by more than 45 per cent from the 2016 presidential election to 2020, according to the voting analysis conducted by TargetSmart. This is nearly four times the increase among all other voters. Almost two-thirds of the voters supported Democrat Joe Biden, according to the Reuters/Ipsos election day poll. The group named Stop AAPI Hate, which tracks anti-Asian incidents, released a national report last week, revealing 6,603 instances between March 2020 and March 2021. Two other ethnic political groups ~ Collective PAC, which supports Black candidates, and the Latino Victory Fund ~ will also participate in the summit. The voice of the Asian-American, on this occasion to be primarily articulated by the Vice-President, will hopefully resonate in the echo chambers of the White House and the American government. Helmed by a person holding the No. 2 position in the seat of governance, the summit will be expected to achieve a critical measure of forward movement. Above all, the Asian-American segment of the populace must feel safe.

Foreign element

Elections are rarely if ever won on foreign policy issues so it is anyone's guess if German voters will pay heed to views of the main political parties contesting the forthcoming national election, the first of the post-Angela Merkel era. But the foreign policy stands of the contestants are beginning to worry both Germany's neighbours and its allies. That this situation has come to pass at a time when Germany is ideally placed to bring to bear its heft as Europe's most prosperous nation-state and its reputation as a fair-minded interlocutor to help dampen down conflict is even more galling. First, there is US President Joe Biden whose priority is repairing the American relationship with Europe damaged by the Trump presidency. Then there's Russia which is intransigent as ever and has shown no signs of course correction despite EU-US sanctions over the jailing of Alexei Navalny. China seems unconcerned by Western pressure over its mistreatment of Uighurs. In fact, both Moscow and Beijing are pushing back with countersanctions, and issuing thinly-veiled threats to Europe. In Brussels, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is busy arguing with the European Council President Charles Michel over charges of sexism and a Turkish sofa while British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is in trouble over costly wallpaper. French President Emmanuel Macron is up for re-election early next year even as military officers are publicly warning of a civil war in France.

In this environment, Germany ought to have been in pole position to take a leadership role. But that now looks increasingly unlikely as none of the six parties in the fray are likely to be able to form the next government without at least three of them coming together in what promises to be an unwieldy coalition. Latest polling shows the Greens fighting for first place with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), each getting about 25 per cent of the popular vote, followed by the Social Democrats at 15 per cent. The liberal Free Democrats and the Left party are at around 11 per cent each. The far-right Alternative for Germany ~ a party so radical that Germany's domestic intelligence agency wants to place it under observation ~ is estimated to win one-tenth of the national vote but no other party is willing to work with it. In terms of foreign and security policy, none of the five main contenders bring any certainty or calm to Europe or the wider world. The Left party has seen its pragmatic leadership replaced by a top duo which opposes military engagement abroad. The Free Democrats are heavy on experts but their leader Christian Lindner is seen as a liability abroad as he is still perceived as being racist and insensitive after his infamous speech to the party congress in May 2018. The Social Democrats have been dragged towards the doctrinaire left with their militant anti-nuclear slogans reminding many in Europe of the worst excesses of the 1980s. Armin Laschet, the CDU candidate, sounds soft on Syria, Russia, and China. Annalena Baerbock of the Greens with her sharp criticism of China and Russia wins some favour with German allies but is low on reliability thanks to the party's naïve stand on defence spending and nuclear deterrence. Ms Merkel will be missed.

Lessons from Pandemic

Heeding the Prime Minister's exhortation to turn adversity into opportunity, post-pandemic the Government should aim to rebuild India as a better, more responsive, resilient, and equal country



It would be an understatement to say that the Covid-19 pandemic overwhelmed us; the first wave of the pandemic left us gasping, and the second wave has totally submerged us. Looking for silver linings is futile, there are none. Rather, our weaknesses in governance, planning, healthcare, civic amenities and civic sense stand cruelly exposed by the pandemic.

Once the pandemic exits our shores, if like the British, the Government of India constitutes a high-powered commission to study the ravages of the pandemic, our fractured polity would ensure that from day one, there would be controversies regarding the composition and terms of reference of the commission. Later on, there would be long delays in providing funds, space and staff to the commission, and after interminable hearings, the commission would tender a report in several volumes which, even if not kept secret, would not be acted upon.

In the proceedings before the commission, public minded citizens would accuse the Government of criminal delay, in not preparing for the second wave of Covid-19 infections, in not releasing relief material speedily from Customs warehouses, and inordinately delaying distribution of relief materials; all these charges would be answered by quoting from Government circulars and instructions, the substance of the Government's arguments being that due procedure was scrupulously followed by all its officers. Resultantly, no one would be found blameworthy and things would soon revert to normal. This visualisation is not idle speculation, but is based on the outcome of various enquiries that were initiated in similar circumstances.

Our administration prides itself for being rule-based, but over the years, multiple instructions, often contrary to each other, have resulted in a regime where bureaucrats hesitate to do anything beyond their routine work. The essence of Government regulations is to take action only when, on paper, certain conditions are satisfied or certain people agree, which may not happen in the short time available in an emergency. Therefore, it is pointless to expect proactive action, or a quick reaction from bureaucrats, for whom procedure is sacrosanct.

Rules of procedure are such that, at the time when the pandemic was advancing and a vaccine shortage was staring us in the face, on 21 April 2021, an

advance of Rs 4,500 crore could be sanctioned to vaccine makers only after relaxing the General Financial Rules at the highest level ~ for the first time in more than 25 years. Notably, other countries had advanced humongous amounts to their vaccine makers, much earlier, even before the first dose had rolled out; Serum Institute of India itself had received substantial grants, not from the Government of India, but from Gates Foundation and GAVI, for development of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine.

Now, when there is a clamour for cheaper vaccines, the Government continues to charge GST on vaccines and also deducts TDS on payments to vaccine makers. Essential supplies for the pandemic continue to attract Customs Duty and other Central taxes. According to newspaper reports, the Finance Minister wrote to the Prime Minister, as late as May 9, to exempt persons supplying equipment and drugs for the Covid-19 pandemic, from these levies. Probably, the PMO would take a decision on this request after testing it on the touchstone of Government rules and procedure.

Civil servants managing the pandemic are afraid of showing undue initiative because once the pandemic gets over, with the benefit of hindsight, the notorious 4Cs (Courts, CBI, CVC and CAG) would put their role under the scanner. One can safely say that our inadequate response to the pandemic is partly due to the arcane procedures followed by our Government. In the interest of better administration and timely response to emergencies, perhaps, the Government could amend its rule book to curtail the applicability of such rules and procedures in emergent situations.

The National Disaster Management Authority is the apex body, headed by the PM, that lays down policies on disaster management, and also plans, coordinates and implements measures, to combat all kinds of disasters.

The NDMA had prepared guidelines for various kinds of calamities but no SOP had been designed for a pandemic. The existence of an SOP would, however,

have made little difference in managing the current pandemic, because NDMA could not have created the required health infra-

structure instantaneously.

According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation of the Washington University, as on 13 May 2021, India needed more than 22.90 lakh hospital beds and 4.67 lakh ICU beds to treat Covid patients; but with an availability of around 2,60,000 hospital beds and 20,000 ICU beds, resources were woefully short of requirements. Obviously, with a huge shortage of physical infrastructure, trained manpower, and equipment in our healthcare system, an SOP could not have made much difference in the handling of the pandemic.

The requirement, therefore, is to create a robust health infrastructure that would not be overwhelmed by any kind of calamity;

such an asset would ensure the well-being of our countrymen in normal times. We can begin by creating well-equipped Government health centres at the taluka and district level. After laying down proper standards, sufficient budgetary support could be provided to both public and Government hospitals, so that good quality healthcare is available all over the country.

The next priority could be decongestion of our over-populated cities. Poor administration and concentration of population in a small number of cities has stretched their civic facilities to breaking point and has created a host of social problems. The civic infrastructure of most metropolises is so poor that even a small trigger brings a metropolis of millions to a halt; for Delhi the trigger is pollution, for Chennai it is alternately water shortage and flooding, for Mumbai and Kolkata the triggers are random fire accidents and collapsing overbridges and buildings. During the Covid-19 pandemic, overcrowding and the deficient infrastructure of metropolises helped the virus multiply unhindered, endangering the lives of millions. Population pressure on the infrastructure of metropolises can be relieved only by providing proper civic amenities in smaller cities, so that people from the hinterland do not unnecessarily migrate to metropolises.

The Government is alive to this challenge; the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), a massive city-modernisation scheme, with

an investment of \$20 billion, was launched by the Government of India in 2005, to improve the quality of life and infrastructure in cities. However, JNNURM failed to achieve its objectives. Thereafter, NDA-I launched the Smart Cities Mission in 2015, with a similar objective. An investment of Rs 2,01,981 crore was earmarked to develop 99 cities under the Smart City Mission. However, till date only the cities that would be developed as Smart Cities have been identified. Perhaps, to decongest overcrowded metropolises, the Government could speed up implementation of the Smart Cities Mission. Presently, the Government offers a host of subsidies and incentives to entrepreneurs to start manufacturing activities in backward areas but most industrialists claim incentives by building sheds in the designated areas, where the goods manufactured elsewhere are packed, thereby complying with the Government's policy in letter but not in spirit. Better monitoring is required to achieve the Government's purpose of dispersal of industries.

Migrant labour, that provides the manpower for industries, had to relocate twice in the last twelve months, in the most pitiable conditions, when the pandemic forced factories to close down. Probably, for a change, the Government should concentrate on promoting agriculture-based industries in smaller cities, which would ensure better returns to farmers and provide jobs to labour nearer to their hometowns. Decentralisation of Government offices from capital cities could also help job creation in small cities. The pandemic has brought unbearable misery to the poor. President Franklin D Roosevelt of the US had launched the 'New Deal' in 1933, to mitigate the effects of the Great Depression. To ameliorate the effect of the pandemic on the livelihoods of the poor, the Government would be well-advised to start a relief programme similar to the New Deal. Such a programme would not just hire the unemployed but also prepare a task force that would fight soil alkalinity, desertification, menace of weeds like lantana, parthenium and water hyacinth, build much-needed schools, municipal buildings, waterworks, sewers, streets, and parks, giving a boost to both agriculture and civic amenities of smaller cities. Heeding the PM's exhortation to turn adversity into opportunity, post-pandemic the Government should aim to rebuild India as a better, more responsive, resilient, and equal country.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Xi Jinping's Main Campaign in 2021

Xi Jinping visiting the Memorial Hall of the First Congress of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai. Source: Chinese government Web site. Chinese media in these weeks are dominated by "Party History Study," which is required homework for all Chinese in the year 2021, which marks the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party. The whole country is mobilized to learn the history of the CCP. Not only in schools, but in offices, factories, and pretty much everywhere there will be exams testing the proficiency citizens have achieved in learning CCP's history.

The March 31/April 1 issue of Qiushi, the official ideological magazine of the CCP, has published the full text of a speech Xi Jinping delivered at a "Mobilization Conference on Party History Study and Education," held on February 20, 2021. "Party history is the most vivid, the most persuasive textbook," Xi said. This may sound very poetic, but it is important to understand what he means with "history." Marxist history, Xi explained, should not be confused with bourgeois history. "We must persist in using historical materialism" when presenting history. As "the largest Marxist party in the world," when the CCP deals with history, it should do it in a Marxist way. "History has created the CCP," Xi said, and it is now time for the CCP to create its own history.

"During its 100-year struggle, our Party has always analyzed and grasped the general historical trend with the basic principles of Marxism," and it

CHINADAILY
should continue to do so, Xi insisted. What is historical materialism? It is Marx's grand theory of history, interpreting everything through the lenses of relations of production and class struggle. It is ideological history, in the sense that first, the ideology is presented as absolutely true, then facts are ordered and made to fit the Procrustean bed of the ideological scheme. It is also teleological history, since there is no uncertainty, and we know exactly what the denouement will be. Communism will win, and capitalism will lose. Xi Jinping reminded the Chinese that Marx's scheme should be rigidly followed. The Party History Study campaign is not about some bourgeois investigation of documents and archives, as a western academic historian would do. Its aim is to

"comprehend the power of ideology and increase the political consciousness" of the Chinese. "Marxism, Xi said, is a powerful ideological weapon for us to understand the world, grasp the laws, pursue the truth, and transform the world. It is the guiding ideology that our party and country must always follow." Making and studying history "cannot be for a moment without theoretical thinking, or without ideological guidance." The campaign should be guided by party executives, who will be above the academics. Also, Marx has already revealed the direction of world history. It is not something historians can further discuss or argue about. "The law and general trend of historical development" have already been established. Xi assured us that "Marx and Engels scientifically revealed the historical law that socialism will inevitably replace capitalism."

Adhering to this perspective is not a question of seeking empirical evidence. Bourgeois history leads to "historical nihilism." It is, first, a question of obedience, as Xi makes abundantly clear that those who would use a different historical methodology would be punished, and second, a question of faith.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

It's dawn in Tamil Nadu

SIR, This refers to the classy editorial 'Daybreak in Tamil Nadu' (16 May). The victory of the DMK in TN polls was a foregone conclusion. People voted them to power to restore secular Dravidian interests over penetration of 'outside interests' witnessed during AIADMK's E. Palaniswami regime. However, the ex-CM did some works dictated by modern needs and this spared him and his party from total rout. Had the party come to power for the third time, the BJP would have left no stone unturned to devalue and decimate remnants of the great Dravidian culture and ethos, memories of Periyar, Annadurai, Karunanidhi and even Jayalalithaa.

The new CM from his swearing-in on May 7, along with 33 Ministers, has shown enough good intent, notables being some items

in the party manifesto such as free rides for women in government buses and reduction in milk price. In addition, he has announced provision of Rs 4000 to every family card holder, and treatment costs for Covid patients in private hospitals. The government also proposes to open up closed oxygen plants to step up oxygen supply besides providing O2 to needy states. Now five crore doses of vac-

cine have been sought from outside and tenders floated for vaccination of people in the 18-44 group. Services of a dynamic personality, Gagandeep Singh Bedi are being taken for upkeep of Chennai during natural disasters and to transform the metropolis.

Stalin has done a good thing by not inducting his son Udayaneedhi in the Cabinet; his services can be profitably used elsewhere.

The CM must respect the Opposition and forge a workable unity for betterment of the state, improve people's lives, livelihoods and security. Stalin has an onerous responsibility and must fulfill expectations.

Yours, etc., Parthasarathy Sen, 16 May, New Delhi.

GOOD BEGINNING

SIR, Apropos your editorial 'Daybreak in TN' (May 16),

a little over a week has passed since Mr Stalin became the chief minister of Tamil Nadu for the first time. His swift actions on various issues, particularly accelerating the tempo in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, have received praise from one and all. Be it for taking quick and stern action against his party workers who vandalized his 'Amma' (Jayalalithaa) can-tean in Chennai or extend-

ing cordial and warm relations to the rival AIADMK party members, Mr Stalin has been showing exemplary political maturity.

As a legislator, he is a model representative of the Kolathur constituency, meeting his constituents regularly and tending to their needs. With the impressive victory in the 2019 Parliamentary elections, the DMK leader made people sit up and take notice of him. Mr Stalin has come a long way since his teen years.

As a gawky adolescent, in 1968, he had insisted that the party founder and Chief Minister CN Annadurai attend his birthday function without fail. An ailing Annadurai yielded to the schoolboy's persistence, but not before commenting, "Gosh! You are as stubborn as your father!"

Yours, etc., Ranganathan Sivamumar, Chennai, 17 May.



TOLSTOY'S LIFE

SIR, In his article 'A tormented life' (11 April), Abhik Roy offers a glimpse of Leo Tolstoy's spiritual life that might remain hidden from the eye of even an avid reader of his novels and other writings. His deeply introspective "A confession" reveals that Tolstoy was constantly troubled with the pricks of his conscience over his former life style that left him depressed and dejected.

This led him to ask of himself the meaning of his own life and the purpose of living it. Penitence dominated his thought and action. He acquired ascetic habits and developed an eagerness to help others in their sufferings and distress.

Yours, etc., Sunir Deb, Kolkata, 26 April.

GOOD BEGINNING

SIR, Apropos your editorial 'Daybreak in TN' (May 16),

ATANU BISWAS

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has described Scotland's parliamentary election held in early May as the most important one in history. Perhaps it is one of the most important elections in the world as well in recent times.

The biggest implication of the Scottish election is that it could pave the way to the break-up of the United Kingdom. For the looming shadow of another Scottish independence referendum dominated the campaigns and discussions in the backdrop of the election. The ruling Scottish National Party (SNP) led by Sturgeon bagged a whisker less than absolute majority, which is of course a great achievement in any proportional representation system, and would stimulate a bitter clash between the Scottish government in Edinburgh and the Boris Johnson-led British government in Westminster, with Scotland's 314-year union with England and Wales at stake.

With pro-independence leaders claiming democratic authority on their side, and Boris Johnson and his government claiming the law is with them, the issue of the possibility of a second Scottish referendum may very well be settled in the courts. And not to forget that Scotland's union with England in 1707 was voluntary.

It is very difficult to get a majority in a proportional representation voting system that Scotland has. Still the SNP could manage a majority in 2011, and hence could successfully pressure David Cameron, Britain's then Prime Minister, for a referendum on Scottish Independence. About 55 per cent Scots, however, voted to remain in the UK, while 45 per cent favoured quitting the Union in the 2014 referendum. It's not a secret that Sturgeon was looking for an opportune time to strike. "Scotland's future must, and will, be decided by the people of Scotland," she believes.

The support for another Scottish Independence referendum gained momentum after the 2016 Brexit referendum, in which 62 per cent of Scottish voters opposed leaving the European Union. However, their choice was overruled by the rest of the UK. Sturgeon's argument was simple – the United Kingdom the Scots had chosen in 2014 to stay in didn't remain the same after the all-important 2016 Brexit referendum leading to UK's divorce with Brussels. So, the Scots must get another chance to reassess their choice of staying with the United Kingdom.

Prime Minister Johnson is no fan of another Scottish independence referendum at the moment. Johnson thinks that the 2014 referendum was meant to be a once in a generation occurrence and thus should not be repeated for another 40 years. More-

Will Scotland be the price for Brexit?



over, the pandemic is ravaging the UK along with the rest of the world. "I think a referendum in the current context is irresponsible and reckless," Johnson recently told the Daily Telegraph newspaper.

If Scotland tears the knot with the British Union, Britain would lose 8 per cent of its population, one-third of its landmass, and, most importantly, significant amounts of international prestige, for sure. In a recent The New York Times article, Stephen Castle, their London correspondent, commented:

"Some say the loss of Scotland would be the biggest blow to a British prime minister since Lord North lost the colonies in America in the 18th century." Castle possibly forgot about Britain's loss of a colony in India during the tenure of Clement Attlee. In any case, understandably, Johnson would not like to be a part of history in that way, and there is every sign that he would resist a Scottish independence demand. He is reluctant to grant a 'Section 30' order for such a legally valid referendum. Under the Scotland Act of 1998, Scotland needs the consent of London for staging such a legally binding, internationally recognised referendum.

The pro-independence leaders

such as Sturgeon as well as the leaders in Westminster know that the Scottish Independence referendum, if any, would have to be endorsed by Britain and EU and it should be legally binding like the one conducted in 2014. For without such a prior endorsement it would be difficult to get international recognition, as happened to the 2017 Catalonian movement.

Sturgeon said her immediate priority would be steering Scotland through the coronavirus pandemic.

She has told Johnson that a second referendum is "a matter of when, not if".

Now, with the support of the Scottish Greens who got eight seats in the election this time around, Sturgeon has enough numbers to push for a second referendum, and she is eager to have the legal right to a referendum by the end of 2023.

In an opinion piece in 'The Guardian' published just 10 days before the Scottish election, Sturgeon wrote:

"For the UK government to seek to block it (Scottish Independence referendum) would be unsustainable. For it to try to take legal action, as has been suggested, would be asking a court to effectively overturn the result of a free and fair democratic election. That would be an

appalling look for any prime minister. More to the point, it didn't work for Donald Trump and it wouldn't work for Boris Johnson." Strong words, no doubt.

There are multiple arguments favouring and opposing the Scottish independence. And not all Scots are too enthusiastic about leaving, for sure. Former prime minister and Labour Party leader Gordon Brown thinks:

"[Middle Scotland] don't want to be forced to make the choice between being Scottish and British." In a recent opinion piece in 'The Guardian', Brown wrote: "While middle Scotland wants cooperation, it doesn't think Boris Johnson and Nicola Sturgeon share that aspiration." In an attempt to blunt Sturgeon's attack, Johnson urged her and the leaders of Wales and Northern Ireland to join a UK-wide Covid recovery summit. Sturgeon, however, agreed to attend.

Will Johnson succeed in resisting a second Scottish independence referendum? Sturgeon knows that support for independence will only grow if Scots see the popular will being blocked by a government in England. "If the Tories make such an attempt it will demonstrate conclusively that the UK is not a partnership of equals

and that – astonishingly – Westminster no longer sees the UK as a voluntary union of nations. That in itself would be a most powerful argument for Scotland becoming an independent country," Sturgeon said.

Thus, a prolonged bitter battle might be brewing which has potential to change the map and dynamics of the UK and Europe. The desire to get out of the British Union was deeply rooted among a large section of Scots, as is clear from the 2014 referendum. However, the Brexit referendum certainly played the catalyst's role in the Scottish independence movement. While Britons are still puzzled why and how they could vote for Brexit in 2016, Brexit is bound to dominate the lives and lifestyles of British society for the next few decades, at least. Although the loss due to the ongoing pandemic is confounding some of the adverse economic effects of Brexit at the moment, calculating the long-term price and impact of Brexit is never easy. Scottish independence, if that happens, might be the biggest price that Britain would have to pay for Brexit.

The writer is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

An unrelenting dance of death

MAHIR ALI

Well before he plucked up the courage to timorously call for a ceasefire, Joe Biden has been echoing the mantra recited by a long line of his predecessors: Israel has the right to defend itself. That discredited framework glosses over pertinent questions, such as: does that entail the right to slaughter children, including infants? Ignoring the scale of the carnage in Gaza, the predictable riposte would be: well, Israeli children have also been killed, and remain at risk. Besides, Hamas invited the retaliation.

That's not an absurd argument. Hamas could not possibly have been unaware that its largely ineffective rockets would elicit a brutal response. And Israeli kids obviously have as much right to safety as Palestinian children.

But that is not how the moral calculus operates in that part of the world. Much of the mainstream Western media has no qualms about implying some kind of equivalence between the supposed combatants. Notwithstanding the extreme imbalance of military power, there's a kind of unacknowledged truth in there: if Hamas can be framed as a terrorist organisation, the Israeli state qualifies for that accolade many times over.

That is borne out by its behaviour both historically and in the pre-



sent instance, where the ratio of casualties is already roughly 1:20, and destined to grow even more disproportionate. All too often, the crude missiles lobbed by Hamas and its allies land in the desert. Sometimes they pose a hazard for Palestinians. Israel claims that 90 per cent of the rest are intercepted by its Iron Dome defences. That's worth bearing in mind when reading about thousands of Hamas rockets heading into Israel.

Yes, they are 'indiscriminate'. The Israel Defence Forces, on the other

hand, are extremely discriminating in aiming their attacks. Hospitals, schools and towers housing media offices all fall in the category of military targets. If entire families are slaughtered in the process, that's always 'inadvertent'.

As a senator in 1988, Biden declared that if Israel did not exist, America would have been obliged to invent it as a means of defending US interests in the Middle East. For 'interests', read 'oil'. The significance of that fossil fuel has been diminishing in

recent years, but the ardency of the fossilised fools remains intact.

Biden faces a somewhat tougher task in this context than most of his Democratic predecessors. The Democratic establishment's hitherto more or less unconditional allegiance to Israel is no longer going unquestioned. Most Democratic senators, including several prominent Jews, were calling for a ceasefire long before the president chimed in, after his administration resisted efforts to produce a UN Security Council statement. Of course, Israel is in no way obliged to heed such requests, regardless of their source, because it knows there will be no price to pay. Key UNSC resolutions have remained unheeded.

It's unlikely the UN could make much difference, but the US can. Apart from the dogged moral support it proffers, the nearly \$4 billion it unconditionally provides every year offers substantial scope for leverage. That subsidy feeds directly into the client state's fascist tendencies.

That grotesque US-Israel love affair now faces a threat, with a growing number of American Jews wearying of the Zionist project, particularly its manifestations under Benjamin Netanyahu's reign. Netanyahu, though, is merely a symptom of the problem which has been writ large since the days of David Ben-Gurion. The Zionist project wasn't incompatible with 19th-century European imperialism, but something of an anachronism in the post-war 20th

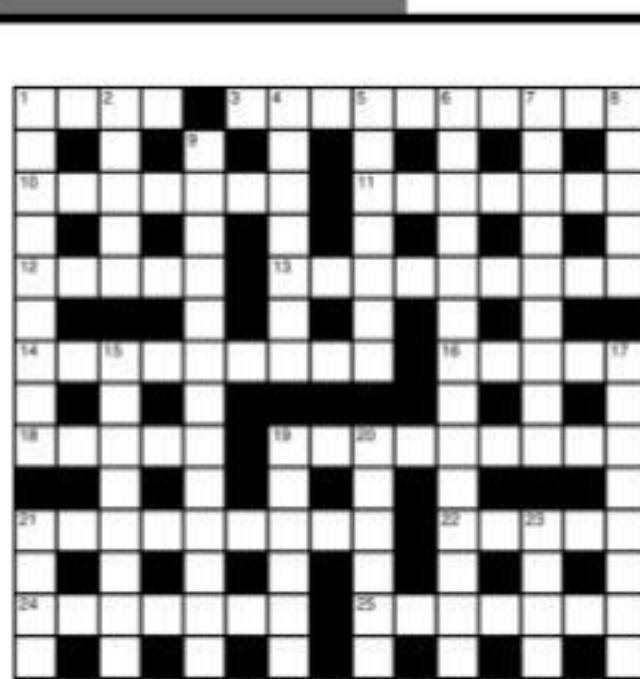
century, when the broad trend was towards liberation rather than colonialism.

In the wake of the horrendous Holocaust, the biggest global powers found Israeli exceptionalism acceptable. The consequences for the land's indigenous inhabitants were barely taken into consideration. The plethora of potential risks involved in implanting a mainly European-run entity in the Arab world were mainly ignored. The ethnic cleansing of 1948 elicited no Western opposition: there was no alarm over certain Nazi tendencies being echoed by their victims.

The Arab world too has frequently faltered in its (often foolish) response to Israeli power. Lately, much of it has abandoned the pretence of caring for the plight of dispossessed Palestinians. Last weekend, the hashtag "Palestine is not my cause" reportedly circulated in the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait. It never was, frankly, but one must be grateful to the over-privileged Gulf Arabs for admitting as much. Israel, on the other hand, will never admit that it encouraged the Muslim Brotherhood precursors of Hamas and Islamic Jihad to set up shop in the occupied territories as a counterweight to the broadly secular Fatah. The project was a success: where would Netanyahu and his ilk be today without Hamas? As for how long this dance of death can be sustained, the answer is still blowing in the wind.

Dawn/ANN.

NO 28917



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

BOWLING GREEN
V E I E C I B
CRESCENTS LAMER
O R T E T A B A
MARKED TUNISIAN
P E R R R D
LEARNT HELSINKI
J C S D E N
MATURITY TURING
E E R P G I
NEURITIS ARCHER
T N N B I B O
EXAMS GOING DOWN
D R I U L H U
MAINIPULATORY

ACROSS

- Alison's associate? (4)
- Needs a slap when drunk walks by the sea (10)
- Tell till you drop? That's said to be soon! (2,3,2)
- Nameless dog at home – one who kept escaping (7)
- Ruin everything! (5)
- Untouched as plant in midwinter? (9)
- 14/27 Mammals he or she so cryptically represented? (9,4)
- See 19 Down
- Spiced rice, alluring eastern

Cuisine: just having seconds? (5)

- Persevere over each period before play starts (3-6)
- Long drink containing peel from plump fruit (9)
- Tips to help all dodging fifty per cent in tax (5)
- This sly manoeuvring becomes elegant (7)
- Energy movement generates strong feeling (7)
- Scene changed with sailor getting vacancy (7)
- Blown away – and so is the organisation? (10)
- See 14

DOWN

- Clerical office and shop at Biba endlessly rebuilt (9)
- Smallest stone under meadow (5)
- This sly manoeuvring becomes elegant (7)
- What did you say in loo about French port? (2,5)
- See instruction confused medical expert (14)
- Dear old American keeping one quiet, like Mary? (9)
- Nick made in beginning to scissor cloth (5)
- What can be included

repeatedly at OU? (5,9)

- Dismissing complaint after learner involved in smash (6,3)
- ... without feeling foolish? (9)
- Close song out when music starts to die (3,4,5)
- Raise tax within European sheltered zone (7)
- Religious portrait from two Athenian characters? (5)
- Two-wheeler parked in Clifton Gardens (5)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Mr. Walter Long's acceptance of the dignity of Viscount removes from the House of Commons a member who entered that assembly in 1880 when Mr. Gladstone was First Lord of the Treasury and before Parnell and Biggar had invented the policy of obstruction. Politicians such as Mr. Long are always a great puzzle to foreign observers. A humorous writer once described him as the "rosy-faced squire" who slumbers gracefully on "the Front Opposition Bench." Mr. Long never produced an original idea. No one has ever suspected him of being clever. Yet he has filled many important posts. He has been President of the Board of Agriculture and twice President of the Local Government Board. He was for a time Chief Secretary for Ireland, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and First Lord of the Admiralty. How comes it that a Wiltshire squire is appointed to all these offices while men ten times more able never occupy even minor posts? It is difficult to give a full explanation. One does not carry the matter much further by saying that Prime Ministers like to have men such as Mr. Walter Long in their Cabinets. In the case of Mr. Walter Long, however, there was another reason. He is a very honest man of the highest character, and he could and can always be relied upon to do his duty.

NEWS ITEMS

STRANDED COOLIES AT CHANDPUR

Chandpur, May 19
The Divisional Commissioner, the District Magistrate, and the Superintendent of Police arrived here this morning in connection with tea garden coolie congestion here and held a conference. Mr. J. McPherson, representative of the Tea District Labour Association, asked the Sub-Divisional Officer to decide the steps to be taken. The Commissioner's suggestion to give shelter to the coolies in the two local high school buildings in the town was not approved by those present as cholera had broken out among the coolies and several deaths had occurred and the health of the town was at stake. The Commissioner wired to the Chief Secretary and the Chairman of the Municipality describing the seriousness of the situation. No arrangements have yet been made for conveying them to Goalundo.

FOREST FIRES ROUND NAINITAL

Allahabad, May 19
A fire broke out in the stores of the Station Hospital and owing to the scarcity of water might have become very serious but for the timely assistance rendered by men of the Garhwali Regiment, the local police and the residents round the hospital. The Officer Commanding and the Superintendent of Police arrived early on the scene and as a result of their organised efforts the fire was checked. While the police were busy with this part of the town, word was received that the forest fire from the west had extended to the outskirts of the town and that a house in Kaladungi was in flames. The forest on three sides of the Nainital is still burning furiously, although every effort has been made to arrest the conflagrations.

INDIAN STUDENTS' COMMITTEE

The Committee on Indian Students has arranged a five months' programme, including a six weeks' tour of a dozen leading university centres in Britain, followed by inquiries into various aspects in London, concluding with the taking evidence from the Inns of Court. The Committee's inquiries will include the reasons at present inducing students to leave India for training, also the nature of Government responsibility for the provision of more adequate facilities in India in order to remove or reduce the necessity for study abroad and the making of necessary arrangements in the United Kingdom to provide facilities at present unprovidable in India. The Committee's inquiries will also include an investigation as to how far the experiment of sending Indian students to the United Kingdom has been justified.

DISASTROUS FIRE AT LAHORE

Lahore, May 19
A serious fire broke out in No. 8 godown of the new "B" Supply Depot at Lahore Cantonment East. All the reserve stock of British troops' rations consisting of hundreds of cases of jam, cases of cigarettes valued at Rs 1,00,000, emergency rations, hundreds of sacks of flour and coffee beans, the whole valued at ten lakhs of rupees were totally destroyed, due largely to the corrugated roofing having collapsed so that the sliding doors could not be opened and the contents of the depot could not be reached. In 45 minutes it is reckoned that the contents of the entire building were ablaze and it took three hours to get the fire under control. The Fire Brigade was hard at work and remained till midnight.



Public sector banks are advised to quickly implement the measures announced by the RBI recently in the right earnest.

SHAKTIKANTA DAS
RBI GOVERNOR

THUMBNAILS

Sebi imposes ₹5.25 cr fine on Cairn India: Sebi on Wednesday imposed a penalty of Rs 5.25 crore on Cairn India for making a misleading announcement regarding the buy-back of shares in 2014. In addition, the regulator levied a fine of Rs 15 lakh each on P Elango, who was the CEO and director of Cairn, Aman Mehta, who was the director on the company's board, and Neerja Sharma, who was director (risk assurance) and company secretary, Sebi said in an order. These three officials had signed the public advertisement regarding the buyback in January 2014 and facilitated the company in making the misleading announcement. PTI

NCLT to DHFL: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Wednesday directed the administrator of DHFL to present the settlement offer of the non-banking financial company's ousted promoter Kapil Wadhawan before the creditors for their consideration. The tribunal, in an oral order, has asked the RBI-appointed administrator of Dewan Housing Finance Ltd (DHFL) to present the settlement plan to the Committee of Creditors. The CoC has been given 10 days' time to consider the offer. PTI

Aditya Birla Sun Life: Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance on Wednesday announced the launch of a new plan "ABSIL Vision Life Income Plus Plan" that provides guaranteed regular income plus flexible bonus pay-outs. This non-linked participating individual plan has been designed to offer various plan options which can be tailor-made to perfectly suit customers' financial needs, said a Press release from the company. SNS

Exide Life: Exide Life Insurance Company Limited on Wednesday announced the launch of Exide Life Guaranteed Wealth Plus, a comprehensive life insurance plan that offers guaranteed returns, to help customers fulfil their financial needs comfortably, according to the company. It is a non-linked, non-participating individual life insurance savings plan that offers customers the option to choose between two variants, it said. SNS

Audi warranty: German luxury car maker Audi India, in a Press statement issued on Wednesday, said it has extended warranties and service plans for its customers in India till 30 June in the wake of the lockdown or restrictions imposed in several states to curb the spread of the pandemic. SNS

NSE tie-up: NSE Academy has joined hands with Bharathiar University in Tamil Nadu for creating a centre of excellence for capital markets. The two entities have signed a memorandum of understanding in this regard, NSE said in a statement. PTI

Adani Green buys SB Energy for \$3.5 billion

It is the largest ever acquisition in India's renewable energy sector

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Adani Green Energy Limited today announced signing of a share purchase agreement for acquiring SB Energy India for approximately \$3.5 billion (Rs 26,000 crore), making it the largest ever acquisition in India's renewable energy sector. The transaction involves Adani acquiring a 100 per cent interest in SB Energy India that is a joint venture between Japan-based SoftBank Group and Bharti Group. SB Energy has a renewable portfolio of 4,954 MW spread across four states in the country.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board was reported to be among rejected buyers interested in SoftBank's year-old plan to sell its entire 80 per cent stake in the New Delhi-based SB Energy.

This transformational acquisition will enable Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL) to achieve its targeted renewable portfolio of 25 GW four years ahead of the target time-

line," AGEL said in its announcement. The multi-billion dollar portfolio comprises "high-quality, large-scale utility renewable assets", according to AGEL. All projects are contracted to sell power in 25 year power purchase agreements with sovereign rated counterparties such as the Solar Energy Corporation of India, NTPC Limited and the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd.

"India is one of the few nations that has accelerated global commitment towards climate change and we intend to do our part. This acquisition is another step towards our January 2020 vision to become the world's largest solar player by 2025 and the world's largest renewable company by 2030."

GAUTAM ADANI
CHAIRMAN, ADANI GROUP

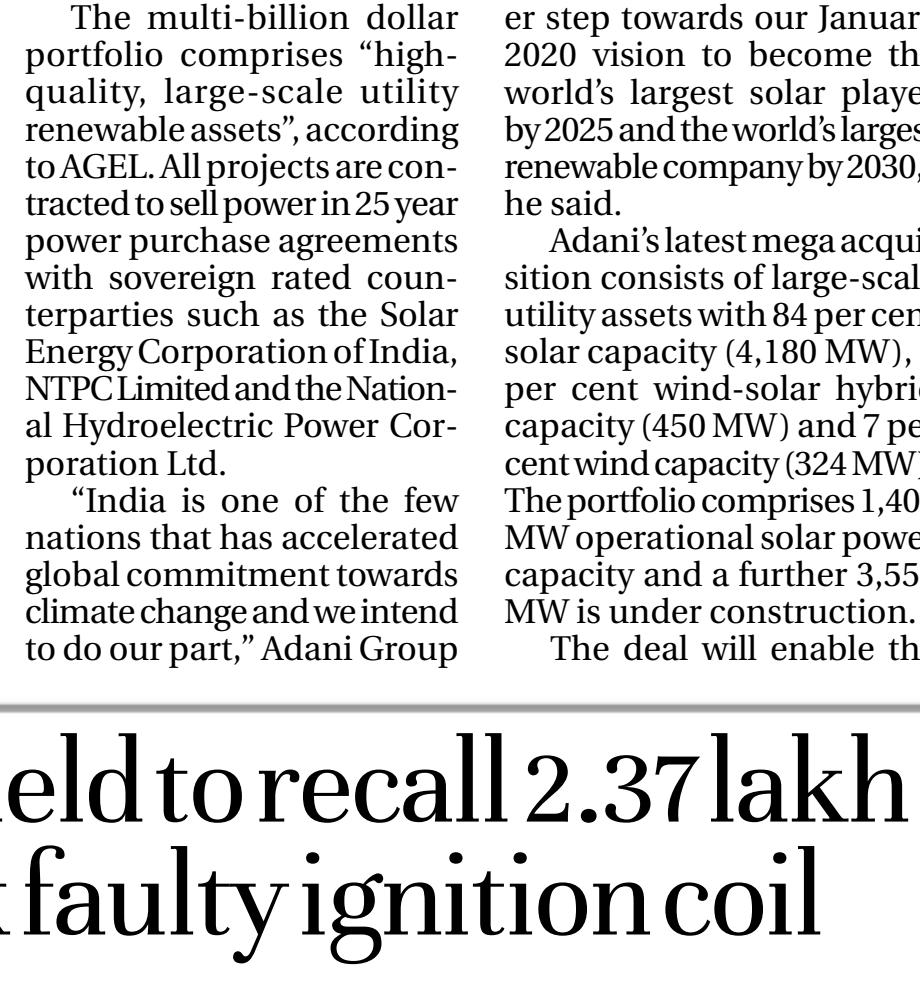
chairman Gautam Adani said. "This acquisition is another step towards our January 2020 vision to become the world's largest solar player by 2025 and the world's largest renewable company by 2030," he said. Adani's latest mega acquisition consists of large-scale utility assets with 84 per cent solar capacity (4,180 MW), 9 per cent wind-solar hybrid capacity (450 MW) and 7 per cent wind capacity (324 MW). The portfolio comprises 1,400 MW operational solar power capacity and a further 3,554 MW is under construction. The deal will enable the

Ahmedabad-headquartered AGEL to achieve a total renewable capacity of 24.3 GW and an operating renewable capacity of 4.9 GW, making the Adani Group a global behemoth in the renewable energy sector expected to reach \$1.5 trillion value by 2025.

Renewable energy focuses on generating electricity from non-polluting renewable sources such as solar energy, wind, ocean waves with hydrogen being one of the new candidates.

AGEL anticipated that its enhanced renewable energy platform "will lay the foundation for attracting several other global industries that are increasingly looking to reduce their carbon footprint", including new platforms such as hydrogen.

Soft Bank chairman Masayoshi Son and Bharti Enterprises chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal both expressed satisfaction that the new Adani Green deal will help the six-year-old SB Energy on its way to the next phase of growth as a leading renewable energy company.



Royal Enfield to recall 2.37 lakh units to fix faulty ignition coil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY



Mid-sized motorcycle maker Royal Enfield today said it is recalling around 2,36,966 units of Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models in India and various international markets to replace defective ignition coil.

The company has discovered a defect in one of the parts used across some of the motorcycle models it manufactures and sells, Royal Enfield said in a statement.

The defect is in the ignition coil that can cause misfiring, reduced vehicle performance, and in rare cases, an electric short circuit, it added.

The company will be calling in close to 2,36,966 motorcycles of the Classic, Bullet, and Meteor models, Royal Enfield noted.

Of these, the company will call in Meteor motorcycles manufactured and sold between December 2020 and April 2021, and the Classic and Bullet manufactured and sold between January and April 2021, it added.

These motorcycles will undergo inspection and replacement of the said defective part if required. We estimate that less than 10 per cent of these motorcycles will require replacement of the part, the company, which is a part

of Eicher Motors, noted.

The proactive recall action will be applicable to Meteor, Classic, and Bullet model motorcycles sold in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia between the respective time periods mentioned above, it added.

The company said the defect was discovered during routine internal testing and the issue has been clearly identified and isolated to specific batches of material sourced from its external supplier between December 2020 and April 2021.

Royal Enfield service teams, and/or local dealerships will reach out to consumers whose motorcycle vehicle identification number (VIN) falls within the manufacturing period mentioned above, it said.

es. Inventory gains are booked when raw material (crude) prices rise by the time a company processes oil into fuel. Losses are booked when the reverse happens.

Brent crude prices jumped about 23 per cent during the March quarter.

IOC earned \$10.6 on turning every barrel of crude oil into fuel as compared to a negative gross refining margin (GRM), or loss, of \$9.64 per barrel, he said.

Much of these margins are on account of inventory gains. Without inventory, GRM for the January-March quarter stood at \$2.51 per barrel.

Vaidya said the company earned a record net profit of Rs 21,836 crore in the fiscal year ended 31 March 2021.

The second wave of coronavirus infections has disrupted fuel demand but not to the extent seen in April-June

In her Budget speech, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said strategic disinvestment of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, among others, and IPO of LIC would be completed in 2021-22.



March 2022. They said Air India privatisation is on track despite Cairn Energy's lawsuit to get Air India recognised as the alter ego of India and that "it should be held jointly and severally responsible for India's debts, including from any judgment resulting from recognition of the award".

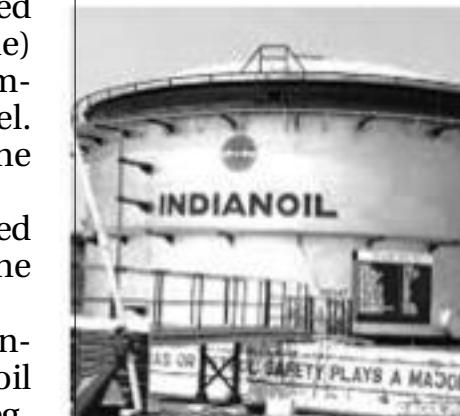
Once a court recognises Air India as the alter ego of the Indian government, Cairn can seek attachment or seizure of its assets in the US such as airplanes, immovable assets and bank accounts to recover the amount it was awarded by the arbitration tribunal.

"India is defending itself in the tax case. The Air India privatisation is on track and will not be impacted," a source said.

IOC profit rises to ₹8,781 cr in Q4

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY



Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, today reported a better-than-expected net profit of Rs 8,781.30 crore in the March quarter, helped by a surge in refining margins as higher crude prices boosted the inventory value.

Standalone net profit in January-March was at Rs 8,781.30 crore, or Rs 9.56 a share, compared with a loss of Rs 5,185.32 crore in the same period a year back, IOC chairman S M Vaidya said.

The rise in profitability was due to higher inventory gain and higher petrochemical margin in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 (April to March) fiscal, he said at a conference call with reporters.

The company had reported a loss in January-March 2020 owing to inventory losses

last year, he said.

"Demand hasn't dropped to that extent," he said referring to fuel demand falling by a record 49 per cent in April 2020 and by a fifth in the next month.

The nation was under complete and stringent lockdown during April-June last year. This year, there is no nationwide lockdown and states have imposed less stringent curbs to check the spread of Covid-19.

"Demand destruction is not to that extent. It is very much there but not to that extent," he said, adding petrol and diesel sales have fallen by 15-20 per cent while jet fuel (ATF) demand continues to be half of the pre-Covid levels.

The fall in demand has led to companies cutting refinery run-rate.

IOC ran its refineries at 49 per cent capacity in April last year and at 67 per cent in the following month before hitting a 90 per cent run-rate in June 2020, he said.

The average run for April-June was 69 per cent of the capacity and the throughput had hit 94 per cent in January-March.

In April, it was 96.1 per cent and 84 per cent in May so far, he said.

"We hope it continues at this level for some time," he said. "When demand will return to normal levels is difficult to state."

NBCC, Suraksha submit revised bids for acquiring Jaypee Infra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

inter-alia the final resolution plan(s), JIL said in a regulatory filing today.

The bids have been submitted by the parties under the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

The sources said NBCC has offered an additional 200 acres, especially for assenting creditors, apart from Yamuna Expressway with itself, NBCC will transfer over 80 per cent of stake in the road projects to banks and financial institutions.

Suraksha Group has offered to complete pending works of around 20,000 housing units in 42 months. It has proposed a line of credit of Rs 3,000 crore as working capital for construction of projects.

Suraksha Group has given an undertaking that any shortfall to the dissenting creditors will be met by the company by way of more funds or assets. It is estimated that around

Rs 6,000 crore will be required to complete all stalled projects. The receivables from customers against sales are estimated at around Rs 3,500 crore, sources had said.

This is the fourth round of the bidding process in the matter of JIL bankruptcy case.

In March this year, the Supreme Court ordered that bids can be sought only from NBCC and Suraksha Group.

The apex court had also directed completion of the resolution process in 45 days, which lapsed on 8 May. An application has been filed to extend the timeline for finding the buyer for JIL.

JIL went into the insolvency process in August 2017 after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admitted an application by an IDBI Bank-led consortium.

It is estimated that around

pen once a typical driver owner sees the three-wheeler EVs as the preferred option over conventional fuel alternatives, said Deepak MV, co-founder and CEO, Etrio.

With the battle for total cost of ownership in the three-wheeler space being won by the EVs, it's time to build a formidable presence on the ground, create awareness and bring the real customer in this space into the EV fold. For this to happen, the most important role shall be played by our dealers, he said.

We at Etrio are in for the long haul and are focused on building a national footprint in a phased manner. Over this financial year, we are going to expand in select states and focus on tier-II cities besides the prominent

metros, he added.

It said the primary product line will be the electric three-wheeler range of Touro across both cargo and passenger segments, adding that dealership viability is Etrio's primary focus and it enables them to the shortest path to profitability.

This is possible by creating a mix of healthy dealer margin, optimal inventory levels and overheads, strong incentives structures and an exclusive right over a large geography to scale up, it said.

Etrio currently has tie-ups with two leading NBFCs and it is looking at adding more to this list. The company is also planning to open Etrio experience centres at select cities across the country, the EV maker said.

Sensex gives up 50K level, down 291 pts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Kotak Bank and HDFC Bank. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Nestle India, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Auto and Axis Bank were among the gainers, spurring up to 1.82 per cent.

"Optimism gained from declining Covid cases resisted a sharp correction in domestic market," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sector-wise, BSE telecom, metal, finance, auto and bankex lost up to 1.16 per cent, while realty, power, healthcare and utilities indices closed higher.

In the broader markets, the BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices outperformed the benchmark, climbing up to 0.53 per cent. Meanwhile, halting its three-day winning run, the rupee declined by 13 paise to close at 73.18 against the US dollar.

I-T dept issues refunds worth ₹24,792 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The income tax department today said it has issued refunds of over Rs 24,792 crore to more than 15 lakh taxpayers between 1 April and 17 May 2021. Its income tax refunds of Rs 7,458 crore have been issued in 14,98,488 cases and corporate tax refunds of Rs 17,334 crore have been issued in 43,661 cases.

"CBDT issues refunds of over Rs 24,792 crore to more than 15 lakh taxpayers between 1 April, 2021 to 17 May, 2021. Income tax refunds of Rs 7,458 crore have been issued in 14,98,488 cases and corporate tax refunds of Rs 17,334 crore have been issued in 43,661 cases," reads the tweet of income tax department.

However, the income tax department didn't specify the financial year for which the refunds have been made. SNS

Etrio to enter electric 4-wheeler LCV category

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 19 MAY

Electric vehicles maker Etrio today said it is looking to enter the electric four-wheeler light commercial vehicle (LCV) category, and plans to launch new products in the three-wheeler category.

Towards meeting this demand, Etrio is working extensively on the ground with their dealers and stakeholders, including financiers, charging infrastructure players, among others, to build an electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem in the country, it said. Etrio plans to further strengthen its presence in the country by opening outlets in over 15 states by the end of this financial year.

The three-wheeler passenger market, which has been affected greatly by restricted movement owing to the pandemic and urban lockdowns, is expected to revive



Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and also enter Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal, thereby deepening its presence in existing states, the company said. The primary product line will be the electric three-wheeler range of Touro across both cargo and passenger

segments. Also, on the anvil are plans to launch new products in the three-wheeler category and enter the electric four-wheeler LCV segment with a one-ton offering, Etrio said.

This dealership presence is in line with our fundamental belief that the real EV adoption would only happen once there is a demand surge, Etrio said.



Israel is carrying out organized state terrorism and war crimes in Gaza that are punishable under international law.

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS
ON THE HAMAS-ISRAEL CONFLICT

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 20 MAY 2021

09

Israel: No 'timeframe' set to end Gaza conflict

Nearly 450 buildings in densely populated Gaza have been destroyed, including 6 hospitals & more than 52,000 Palestinians have been displaced, the UN said



A Palestinian walks by a building hit by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City on Wednesday.

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, 19 MAY

Isreal said on Wednesday it was not setting a timeframe for an end to hostilities with Gaza as its military pounded the Palestinian enclave with air strikes and Hamas militants unleashed new cross-border rocket attacks.

In a sign of diplomatic movement, however, an Egyptian security source said the two sides had agreed to a ceasefire in principle after help from mediators, but details were being negotiated in secret amid public denials of a deal to prevent it from collapsing.

Palestinian medical officials said 219 people had now been killed in 10 days of aerial bombardments which have destroyed roads, buildings and other infrastructure, and worsened the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Israeli authorities put the death toll at 12 in Israel, where

repeated rocket attacks have caused panic and sent people rushing into shelters. Regional and U.S.-led diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire have intensified but so far failed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made no mention of any halt to the fighting in public remarks at a briefing to foreign ambassadors to Israel, saying his country was engaged in "forceful deterrence" to prevent future conflict with Hamas.

In remarks reported by Israeli media from a closed question-and-answer session, he was quoted as saying: "We're not standing with a stop-watch. We want to achieve the goals of the operation. Previous operations lasted a long time so it is not possible to set a timeframe."

In a 25-minute attack overnight, Israel bombed targets including what its military said were tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip used by Hamas, the Islamist group

Biden tells Netanyahu he expects de-escalation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

President Joe Biden has called for "significant de-escalation" from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden's appeal on Wednesday comes after 10 days of heavy fighting between Israelis and Palestinians.

It was Biden's toughest public pressure so far on the U.S. ally, with the president asking Netanyahu in a telephone call to move toward "the path to a ceasefire," according to a White House statement on their conversation. Pressure has been mounting on Biden, too, to do more as the death toll in the conflict has topped 200.

Lebanese security officials said several rockets were fired Wednesday from south Lebanon toward Israel, the third such barrage in the

past week. The Israeli military said it identified four rockets fired from Lebanon into northern Israel. One landed in an open area, two landed in the sea, and one was intercepted by aerial defenses. Residents of the city of Shfaram, east of Haifa, said one rocket landed near the town. The Lebanese officials said the latest rockets were launched from the outskirts of the southern Lebanese village of Qlayleh, adding that four fell inside Lebanese territory. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

No side has claimed responsibility for the rockets launched from Lebanon Wednesday, or earlier in the week. Israeli airstrikes have killed at least six people overnight across the Gaza Strip and destroyed the home of an extended family.

that governs Gaza. Some 50 rockets were fired from the enclave, the Israeli military said, with sirens sounding in the coastal city of Ashdod, south of Tel Aviv, and in areas closer to the Gaza border. There were no reports of injuries or damage overnight but days of rocket fire have unsettled many Israelis. Nearly 450 buildings in densely populated

Gaza have been destroyed or badly damaged, including six hospitals and nine primary-care health centres, and more than 52,000 Palestinians have been displaced, the UN said. The damage has left large craters and piles of rubble across the coastal enclave, and deepened long-running concerns about living conditions in Gaza.

German top diplomat to visit Israel: German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas says he hopes to fly to Israel for talks Thursday with Israelis and Palestinians. Asked to confirm Israeli media reports about such a trip, Maas told media in Berlin that I can't tell you 100%, because of course we coordinate such a trip with those to whom we're travelling.

France urging US to accept UN resolution on Gaza: A French government spokesman says very intense discussions are underway with the US about a UNSC resolution that has been proposed by France in coordination with Egypt and Jordan. The US has blocked the U.N.'s most powerful body from issuing a press statement calling for a halt, insisting that it would not help diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

Israel accuses Chinese state TV of 'blatant anti-Semitism': Israel's Embassy in China is protesting what it describes as blatant anti-Semitism on a programme ran by the overseas channel of state broadcaster CCTV discussing the ongoing violence in Gaza and elsewhere. In a tweet, the embassy said we have hoped that the times of the Jew's controlling the world conspiracy theories were over, unfortunately anti-Semitism has shown its ugly face again.

No longer silent, Gulf Arab citizens express anger at Israel



An Israeli artillery unit fires toward targets in Gaza Strip.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, 19 MAY

The ongoing bloodshed in the Gaza Strip has unleashed a chorus of voices across Gulf Arab states that are fiercely critical of Israel and emphatically supportive of Palestinians.

The vocal opposition to Israel, expressed in street protests, on social media and in newspaper columns, comes just months after pacts were signed to establish ties with the Jewish state and complicates government efforts to rally Arab citizens around full-throttle acceptance of the deals.

Analysts said the conflict will also set back Israeli efforts to secure more normalisation deals with other Arab states, like Saudi Arabia.

The criticism has not only put Arab governments that signed the diplomatic accords with Israel in a difficult posi-

tion with their citizens, it also affirms that the Palestinian cause continues to resonate deeply with people across the Middle East.

No matter what your national priorities are at the moment or regional priorities are at the moment, when stuff like this happens, the Palestinian issue comes back and hits you, Emirati political analyst Abdulhaleq Abdulla said.

In Bahrain, civil society groups signed a letter urging the government to expel the Israeli ambassador.

In Kuwait, protesters held two rallies and are demanding permission to hold more. In Qatar, the government allowed hundreds to protest over the weekend as Hamas' top leader delivered a speech.

In the UAE, some have openly donned the black-and-white checkered Palestinian keffiyeh on Instagram while others have tweeted under hashtags supportive of Palestinians.

US warship sails through Taiwan Strait, China cries provocation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 19 MAY

China on Wednesday accused the US of resorting to provocative moves in the Taiwan Strait and undermining peace and stability in the region after an American naval ship sailed through the waterway to demonstrate Washington's commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific".

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said that the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur had conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" on Tuesday in accordance with international law.

The Taiwan Strait is a 180-kilometer wide channel separating China and Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its mainland. The ship's transit through Taiwan Strait demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, the Navy said in a statement. "The US military will continue to fly, sail

and operate anywhere international law allows, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted the US Navy statement as saying.

The US military planes and warships periodically fly and sail through the Taiwan Strait and the disputed South China Sea to assert freedom of navigation in areas claimed by China. The Philippines, Viet-

nam, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims over the South China Sea. As the US destroyer sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese Navy rushed its ships and closely monitored and followed it, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here on Wednesday.

"The US vessels recently have come to Taiwan Strait to flex their muscles in provocation and a deliberate move to disrupt and undermine the regional situation and harm peace and stability across the Taiwan strait," Zhao said. "We firmly reject that and determined to safeguard our sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge the US to play a constructive role for regional peace and stability," he said. The PLA Eastern Theatre Command Spokesman Senior Colonel Zhang Chun-hui in a statement called the latest passage through the strait a "provocation".

UN expresses concern over arrest of B'desh scribe

DHAKA, 19 MAY

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' spokesman has said investigative Bangladeshi reporter Rozina Islam's arrest is obviously "something concerning as journalists and rights groups on Wednesday staged protests in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country against her detention.

"It (the arrest) is, obviously, something that we are looking at. It is something that's concerning," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN chief Guterres, said in response to a question during a regular media briefing at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday. Dujarric added that their position has been clear.

"Journalists need to be able to do their work free of any sort of harassment or physical threat anywhere or anywhere in the world," he said. AP

Xi, Putin witness launch of biggest China-Russia nuke energy project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 19 MAY

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Wednesday hailed the nuclear cooperation between the two neighbours as they virtually attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the biggest nuclear energy project to build four nuclear power plants in China costing about USD 3 billion.

The ceremony, which was attended by the two leaders via a video link, was held to mark the first day of construction of power units No. 7 and 8 of the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant, and No. 3 and 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant.

The Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant is located in the city of Liyangang in eastern Jiangsu province. The Xudapu Nuclear Power plant is located in Xingcheng in northeastern Liaoning province. "This has been the

biggest China-Russia nuclear energy cooperation project to date and represents the highest level of practical cooperation between the two sides," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Xi reiterated China's close attention to energy cooperation with Russia as it is a traditional cooperative area between the two countries.

He hailed the beginning of construction of the nuclear power plants, and noted that the energy projects set an example for bilateral cooperation in other sectors.

Stressing that the bilateral cooperation on nuclear energy is meaningful for the high-level development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, Xi said he hopes the two sides will follow the sound momentum and conduct more effective cooperation in other sectors.

China and Russia signed a strategic package of agreements on nuclear energy in June 2018 to jointly construct four nuclear power units, the biggest of such between the two countries so far, with a total contract value of over about \$ 3 billion, state-run CGTN-TV reported.

Quake rattles Nepal, injuries reported

KATHMANDU, 19 MAY

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal's western Lamjung district on Wednesday, injuring at least six persons and damaging dozens of houses, officials said.

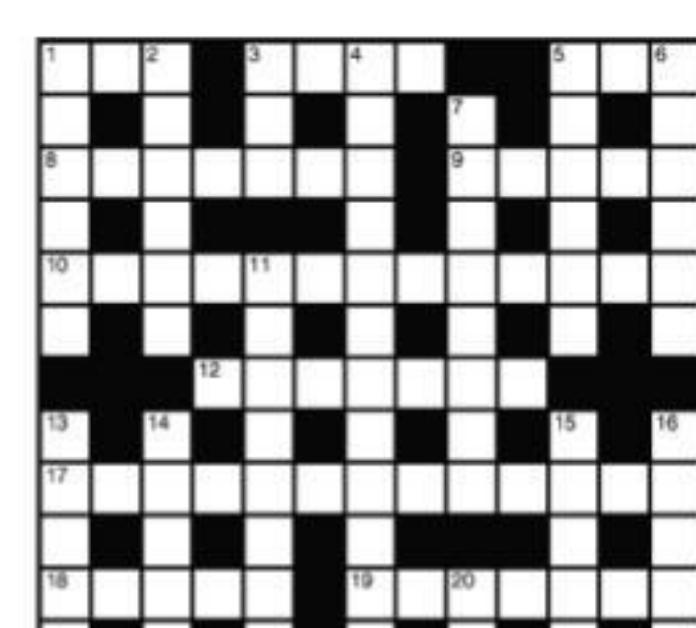
The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 5:42 AM (05:27 IST), was located at Marshyangdi Rural Municipality of the district.

The 5.8-magnitude quake damaged around two dozen houses and left six people injured. The Kathmandu Post reported. According to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre, two tremors of magnitudes 4.0 and 5.3 were also recorded in the district later at 8:16 AM and 8:26 AM.

The report said that around 20 small tremors have been felt until 10 AM. Three people were injured after a wall of a house collapse the other three were injured while running away.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Mongrel (3)
3 Defeat (informal) (4)
5 Conifer (3)
8 Public sale (7)
9 Indian dish (5)
10 Painstaking (13)
12 Porch (7)
17 Kitchen appliance (4,9)
18 Pigs (5)
19 Jewellery item (7)
21 Attempt (3)
22 Song of praise (4)
23 Young child (3)

DOWN
1 Opportunity (6)
2 Of the immediate past
3 Hawaiian garland (3)
4 Sweets and chocolates (13)
5 Colour (6)
6 Flight of fancy (6)
7 Hindrance (8)
8 Census (6)
9 Compensate for (6)
14 Sermon (6)
15 Clever (informal) (6)
20 Manage (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Scarab, 14 Ingredient,
4 Dear (Commander),
7 Sanguine, 8 Poem,
9 Past master,
12 Horrid,
15 Dodo, 19 Dictator,
21 Nymphs, 22 Asperate,
23 Cynical.
DOWN
1 Champion, 16 Decry,
2 Iota, 20 Asp.

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

- ISBT 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidya Sagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 2325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Toll Free Nos. 18001801407
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 1800180388, 1800180388, Reservation 43513186, Indigo Airlines-Airport

FIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 41528181
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 1800180388, Reservation 23466262 (City)
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry and Reservation 2386421/25656431
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373



SCRABBLE® BRAND

PAR SCORE 145-155
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE® BRAND

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

RACK 1: A C Y L O M S I T R E Double Word Score
RACK 2: V R O O M S I C L E D
RACK 3: U N V L J A E 1st Letter Triple
RACK 4: T I P S T E

PAR SCORE 145-155
by JUDD

JUDD'S TOTAL: 230

Answer to previous puzzle



Sudoku

Conceptis Sudoku
By Dave Green

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

Answer to previous puzzle

Answer to previous puzzle

Answer to previous puzzle</p

I can tell the House we have increasing confidence that vaccines are effective against all variants, including the Indian variant



BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON
ON VACCINATION OF THE BRITISH POPULATION

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C
TOKYO	17°C	12°C
LONDON	15°C	9°C
DUBAI	34°C	29°C
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	9°C
NEW YORK	28°C	17°C
MOSCOW	24°C	19°C

S= Sunny, CL= Clear,
H= Hazy, R= Rainy

THUMBNAILS



A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket lifts off from Space Launch Complex 41 in Cape Canaveral. AP

Princess Beatrice pregnant: Buckingham Palace says Princess Beatrice is expecting a baby. The palace said Wednesday the 32-year-old granddaughter of Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi are due to have their first child in the autumn. AP

Steinem wins Spanish prize: A Spanish foundation-awarded one of the country's most prestigious awards to US writer and activist Gloria Steinem. The jury that decides the Princess of Asturias Awards announced that Steinem has won its annual prize for communication and humanities. AP

Russia gas pipeline row: Germany's foreign minister welcomed the Biden administration's decision to waive sanctions against entities and individuals involved in a controversial Russian pipeline, describing the move as constructive. The US has long opposed the project, which brings natural gas from Russia to Germany. AP

Angry French cops hold huge, emotional rally at parliament

PARIS, 19 MAY

French police officers held a huge demonstration outside parliament Wednesday to press for a law that protects the protectors who are feeling vulnerable to attacks, angry and useless.

The rally by security forces represented a bold and unusual move for members of an institution that stresses duty and discretion. The protest also morphed into what looked like a campaign stop for politicians ahead of regional elections next month and a presidential race next year, with security a top concern.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin showed up at the start, squeezing through a packed crowd of hundreds waving labor union flags. Representatives from the far-right National Rally and a multitude of other parties were expected to attend. The politicians clearly hope to send a message that security matters and police officers, a considerable voting pool, are their friends.

You must help us, Mister Minister, an officer said with emotion to Darmanin.

Every morning when I awake, every night when I sleep, I think of you, Darmanin said, adding that his presence at the protest was "normal" given his role as the top cop.

Police unions gave notice ahead of the rally that politicians would not be allowed to make speeches. No one will confiscate the words of police or citizens, said a statement by 10 unions holding the demonstration. With two officers killed in recent weeks - one in a terrorist attack and another by a suspected 19-year-old delinquent - and constant encounters with young people who throw objects and fireworks, police are angry. AP

EU to relax travel curbs for vaccinated visitors

Ambassadors also agreed to ease the criteria needed for nations to be considered Covid safe

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 19 MAY

The European Union took a step toward relaxing travel rules for tourists from outside the 27-nation bloc Wednesday when EU ambassadors agreed on measures to allow in fully vaccinated visitors. The ambassadors also agreed to ease the criteria needed for nations to be considered Covid safe and from which all tourists can travel, depending on their coronavirus and vaccination status. Under the existing criteria, the list includes only seven nations.

The EU imposed restrictions on nonessential travel last year to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The bloc's ambassadors say many of those restrictions should be eased, including to permit vacation travel by non-EU residents.

The European Council made up of EU nations, will now recommend that member states ease some of the current restrictions" for those who have been vaccinated, European Commission spokesperson Christian Wigand said. He didn't give a precise date for when the borders will reopen since EU countries have yet to formally approve the measures.

The council should also soon expand the list of non-EU countries with a good epidemiological situation from where travel is permitted, said Wigand. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is to give advice on the list.

The European Commission the EU's executive arm, proposed easing the rules for entering the bloc, saying entry should be granted to individuals fully vaccinated with EU-authorized shots. Coronavirus vaccines authorized by the European Medicines Agency, the bloc's drug regulator, include the ones made by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

The executive commission also proposed permitting EU member nations to decide individually whether to allow in travelers immunized with vaccines approved by the World Health Organization for emergency use, which include the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.



I can tell the House we have increasing confidence that vaccines are effective against all variants, including the Indian variant

US vaccines effective against Covid strain 1st found in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

The B.1.617 virus variant, first identified in India last year, has been classified as a 'variant of concern' at the global level by the WHO

US civil rights leader to urge Biden to release 60m vaccine doses to India

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

Eminent American civil rights leader Rev. Jesse L. Jackson is urging President Joe Biden to release 60 million doses of vaccines to India, which is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic in the world.

Rev. Jackson will be joined by a number of prominent Indian leaders in the national capital on Wednesday, to make a public appeal to Biden for more humanitarian aid, according to a community statement.

"The pandemic poses a threat to humanity, not to any one country. Our response must be as encompassing as the threat," Rev. Jackson said in a statement. He will urge Biden to give India 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, it said.

Dr Bharat Barai, chairman, US-India Friendship Council, urged the President to facilitate the supply of the "much-needed Remdesivir and Tocilizumab to India immediately."

In a statement, Dr Vijay Prabhakar, national chairman, American Association of Multietnic Physicians, USA, called on Biden to invoke the Federal International Emergency Production Act which would enable the manufacturers of the vaccine in the US to increase their production capacity.

"We need to protect India first only then can America and the rest of the world be protected," Dr. Prabhakar said. Thanking Biden for his international vaccination pledge by providing 80 million vaccines. AP

Cafe and bistro terraces reopen in France

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, 19 MAY

It's a grand day for the French. Cafe and restaurant terraces reopened Wednesday after a six-month coronavirus shutdown deprived residents of the essence of French life sipping coffee and wine with friends.

The French government is lifting restrictions incrementally to stave off a resurgence of Covid and to give citizens back some of their signature joie de vivre.

As part of the plan's first stage, France's 7 p.m. nightly curfew was pushed back to 9 p.m. and museums, theaters and cinemas reopened Monday in Britain's pubs.

Eateries in France have been closed since the end of October, the longest time of any European country except Poland, where bars and restaurants reopened Saturday for outdoor service after being closed for seven months.

Some French cafe and restaurant owners have spent days preparing for Wednesday's milestone, even though rain is forecast for large swaths of the country, including Paris.

Still, the government has put limits on how much fun can be had. Restaurants are can fill only 50 per cent of their outdoor seating areas and put

and other nations already have started allowing outdoor dining, while drinking and eating indoors began Monday in Britain's pubs.

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France has recorded more than 108,000 deaths due to Covid, among the highest tolls in Europe. But deaths, admissions to critical care units and the coronavirus infection rate are now on the decline.

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literary

Manoj Das & me

A heartfelt tribute to the author after his recent demise



MANOJ DAS (27 FEBRUARY 1934 – 27 APRIL 2021)

P RAJA

At a time when there was no compulsion from either universities or the government for any lecturer to obtain a PhD degree for promotion and the consequent salary benefits, I decided to go for a research degree as a self-imposed discipline. I plunged into the ocean of literature to come

up with pearls to ornament myself with that "prefix" of my dream. I chose to work on Indian authors writing in English.

In the reading room of the college library, where I began my teaching career, I spent several of my leisure hours reading *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Imprint*, *Mirror*, *Junior Statesman*, *The Statesman*, *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times*, *Times of India*, *Caravan*, *Woman's*

Era etc. I found two authors more fascinating than the rest – Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das.

I stopped merely reading those two and began studying them. My study revealed to me that Bond's stories, though interesting, did not offer much to probe into. Das's, on the other hand, unravelled to me different layers of meaning at different times. Although both authors are master storytellers in their own

ways, my choice was Das, a weaver of tales with a difference.

My search for Das's short story collections began. I ransacked the entire English literature section of the college library. To my great dismay, I found none, but was not willing to give up. As a first step, I entered the godown of the library and made a list of his stories available in magazines and newspapers. The list pleasantly grew longer, and I patted myself for collecting more than 25 of his short stories.

In the mid-70s of the last century, photocopying machines were unheard of. So, I was planning to copy the stories in a bulky foolscap-size notebook. But before I could venture into that massive exercise, I spoke to the librarian, who liked all those entering his domain and making use of the treasures he guarded.

"That's not a bad idea. But the good idea is, you can tear off those pages and file them, before the magazines and newspapers go into the hands of wastepaper merchants," said the librarian. I did the tearing clandestinely and saw my file bulge with stories by Das. But would it be enough to work for a research degree? That was my next doubt.

My hunt for more of his stories began. During one of my weekly dashes to my native town of Puducherry, I visited George Moses, former senior superintendent of police and thereafter, editor of an English monthly called *Youth Age*. When our discussion moved towards the topic of my research, I broke the news.

Moses beamed with joy as he said, "Manoj Das is a good friend."

I jumped for joy. "Can I have his address, Sir? I would like to write to him requesting more of his stories."

"Write to him? Where do you think he lives?"

"In Odisha, of course!"

"Huh! You have no idea of his whereabouts, eh?"

I blinked. "Let us go tomorrow to his house and I will introduce you to him."

I continued to blink. Perhaps Moses read my mind. He said, "Raja, believe me. He is a resident of the Ashram, teaching English at the International Centre of Education."

"You mean our Sri Aurobindo Ashram here?"

"Yes..."

Next day we reached Das's house on my scooter. He gave us a warm welcome. In those years, editors of magazines and newspapers gave more importance to stories than to their authors' faces. Therefore, I was happy to see Das for the first time... happier still to see him in flesh and blood.

Das didn't know the thrill I experienced when I shook the hand that wrote those unforgettable short stories. Moses then involved the eminent writer in a fruitful conversation. It started with literary issues and ended in spiritual exchange. When we were about to leave, Das presented a copy of *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* to Moses. "I think I had already given you my earlier book of short stories, *Crocodile's Lady*," he said.

A week or so later, I requested Moses to lend me the two books of short stories. Though finicky, he magnanimously obliged me with a headmasterly advice that they must be returned to their slots on his shelves.

A month later I called on Das in his study. I pulled out the two books from my shoulder bag. While he was wondering about my intention, I began to comment on his stories and told him of the different layers of meaning each story was trying to tell me.

Das guffawed and said, "I think you have more faith in me than I have in myself!" He listened with rapt attention to all my views and

reviews. And perhaps to stop me from proceeding further, he said, "Critics are a class by themselves. They think what a creative writer never even thought of. But I like your views. You could probably do a review of my recent book *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* in any magazine of your choice."

I jumped at the offer. I still treasure the copy he signed for me on that day. I wrote a review, different from run-of-the-mill ones, and when it was published in *Mother India*, it made several readers happy. It was the first piece of writing I had penned on Das.

It was time for me to gather secondary sources. I found little and so, wanted to create my own. I wrote to editors of newspapers and magazines to know if they were interested in publishing interviews with Das. Though every one of them readily agreed, my first choice was *The Times of India*. Perhaps it was the first major interview published on Das in English.

My publication register tells me that I had published seven interviews on various aspects of Das's writings in seven newspapers within a period of one year. I puff out my chest and say that I was the first to publish a review whenever a book of his was launched.

Nobody knew that I was doing my preliminary homework to join the PhD course. And it was this spadework that offered me a seat in Madras University. I became a PhD candidate with a research topic of my choice – *Probing the Psyche: Short Stories of Manoj Das*.

I must confess that it took nearly eight years before the good old University called me "Dr P Raja". The wait was long, of course, but I run short of words to express the inner joy I experience when researchers and would-be researchers call my book, *Many Worlds of Manoj Das* as their bible.

Why did I take eight years to submit my thesis, when any thesis ought to be completed within four years? I can say, "Oh, that's because of my laziness" but I do not fall in the category of lazybones. I put every second to proper use. Being a creative writer, a bilingual one at that, I was more interested in seeing my creative effusions in print than be a mere researcher and critic. This divided interest delayed my research project.

Das, having sparked the creativity in me, blew it into a conflagration. When people became envious at my popularity as an Indian writer in English, he was an eye-opener. Das made me see only the good in others. As I struggled to wade through the turbulent waters of the publishing world, he showed me the direction towards shore.

More than a brother, more than a friend, more than a guru... Das took my hand and guided me into the realms of gold. Blessed was I to enjoy his friendship and guidance for 43 years till he breathed his last on 27 April this year at 8.10 p.m. in the Ashram Nursing Home, where he was being cared for across several months. Puducherry was blessed to house such a great writer and true human.

To wind up, I would like to reproduce here the concluding remark I made on Das in an editorial (April-June 2014) when I was editor of *Transfire*, a quarterly devoted to translations from various languages into English. It was a tribute to him on his 80th birthday celebrations. "I have penned nearly 75 short stories in English so far. They are gathered between covers in four volumes. I doubt whether any of them would have come out of my pen, had I not discovered Manoj Das's works.

"May the Almighty give Manoj Das another eighty years of life and keep his auriferous pen as active as before, so that several P Rajas would sprout in his shade."

The writer is a bilingual author in Tamil and English and a translator

Replete with fascinating anecdotes

A book like Raju Mukherji's *Cricket India: Tales Untold* is happened upon once in a blue moon...A review

PULKESHW MUKHOPADHYAY

Easily the two finest portraits here are the ones of Rahul Dravid, categorised as a statesman, and Sachin Tendulkar, classified as a statesman. The author has known them closely enough since long. Vignettes serve to illustrate the relationships and, in the process, reveal facets of human character.

At an Indian Premier League match, Sanjay Manjrekar, on meticulous television duty, happened to ask Mukherji, match commissioner, how the Bengali surname was to be pronounced. Dravid, then Rajasthan Royals captain, would surely have taken everyone around by surprise, saying it was actually Mukhopadhyay and not what it was generally known to be.

Hidden depths are detectable there. Ahead of a Ranji Trophy game between Mumbai and Karnataka at Wankhede stadium, Mukherji gifted Dravid a "tattered" first-edition Neville Cardus – it was Dravid's turn to be surprised – whereupon the former India captain asked him if he was sure he wanted to part with it. Dravid called it a "treasure" all right but both of them would have known that the Karnataka stalwart had contemporaries in the national team who didn't know Cardus from Adam. Nor did they care.

Tendulkar, in a sense, was an unsurpassable colossus. An IPL V match saw him sprinting on the pitch for runs. Once the innings was over, Mukherji, as match referee, asked the umpires if they had noticed it. Asad Rauf answered him succinctly, "Rajuji, please don't even think about it. He has been doing this for 20 years." The umpire from across the border also explained why no one had kicked up a row over it. "Although he runs straight between the wickets, he never does anything to spoil the condition of the pitch. And we have such high respect and affection for him that we cannot even visualise bringing charges against this gentleman."

How grief-stricken Tendulkar was after Satya Sai's death is another story that Mukherji analyses simply and superbly. "At the ground Sachin looked forlorn. Played the match and then went by road

all the way from Hyderabad to Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh, arriving early next morning. The commitment to his team; the commitment to the paying spectators and the devotion to Satya Sai were all encapsulated in splendid isolation without any fuss. Amazing person, indeed."

But Mukherji's critical integrity manifests itself simultaneously as he recalls Tendulkar's tenures as captain "when genuine success eluded him." Quite rationally, he also notes "thankfully" that he relinquished the responsibility to concentrate on batting.

Mukherji's analysis of Dravid's batting is equally honest. "So successful was he that he became a prisoner of his own image: the man with a solid defensive technique...he developed a defensive approach – different from a defensive technique – and consequently his progress as a batsman was halted. He found it difficult to score fast, even to rotate the strike with quick singles." Interesting as the stories are, the book might have seemed somewhat formulaic, in spite of the author's interpretative ease, if it hadn't gone far back into well, Indian cricket's beginnings, complete with its colonial heritage, social ambience and, later, the commercial expansion that came about in due course. And it isn't as if those early days were bereft of the human element that goes into the making of a proper perspective and without which the best of anecdotes appear merely fodder for the fourth-rate web portal.

Just as the often unselfishly generous contribution to the game's growth is acknowledged in previously little-known detail, Palvankar Baloo's sufferings even in the putatively enlightened interiors of the gentleman's game, in the irredeemably casteist country, are recalled with sympathy. M E Pavri, D B Deodhar and Baloo are put together in a trio whom Mukherji calls the founders of Indian cricket's golden age, and his critique of Ranjitsinhji is reminiscent of Mario Rodrigues' *Battling for the Empire*. And the storytelling mood is sustained through the book with such effortless fecundity that the amount of research that has gone into the compiling of it compels admiration.

A book like this is happened upon once in a blue moon. That should be reason enough for it to be in every library, personal or institutional.

Spot Light
CRICKET INDIA:
TALES UNTOLD
CONTROVERSIES
AND
CONTRIBUTIONS

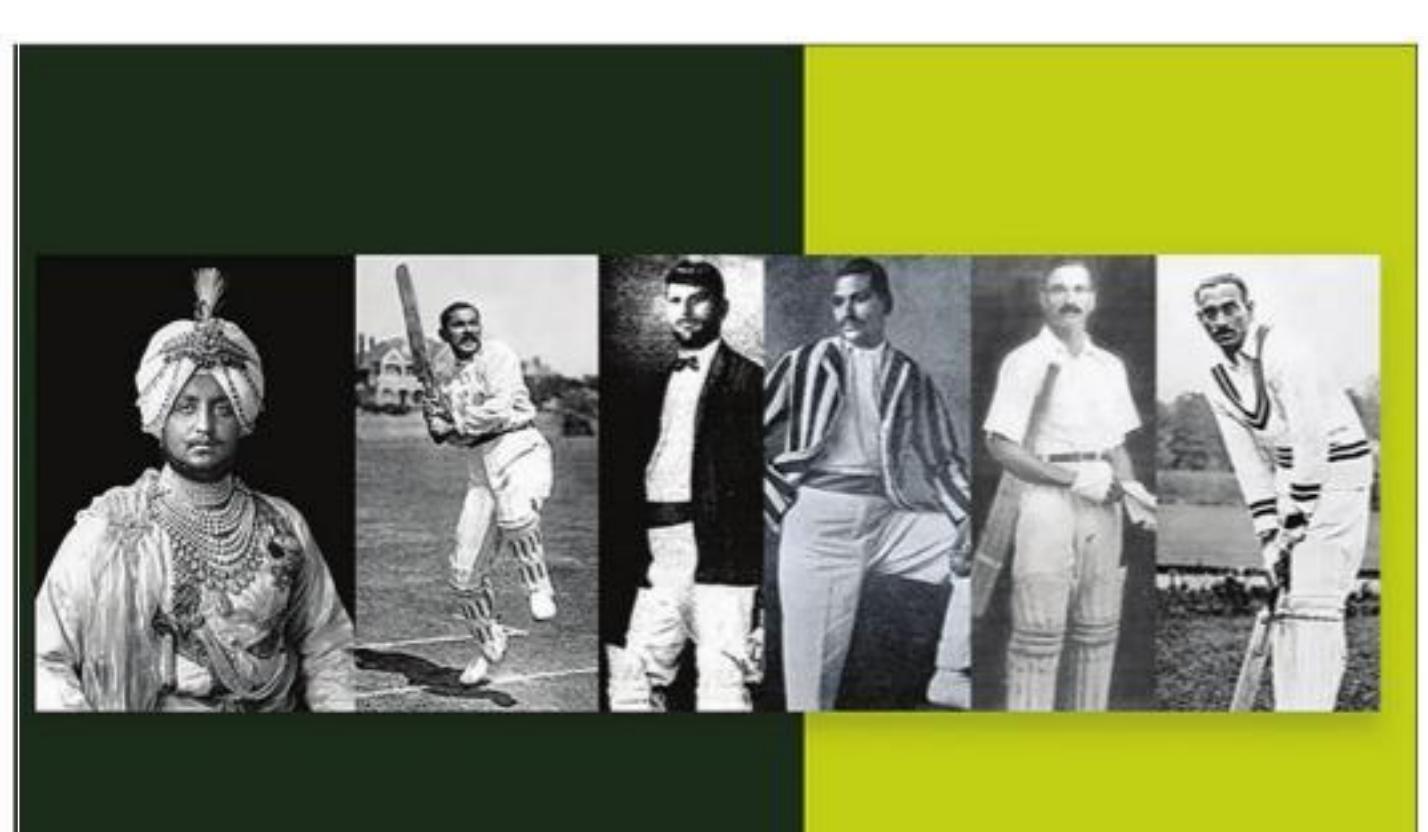
BY RAJU MUKHERJI
NOTION PRESS,
TAMIL NADU
178 PAGES, RS 399

The House of Natore championed home-grown talent when Holkar, Nawanager, Baroda, Cochin and Travancore called over foreigners from abroad. And it's a warts-and-all tale. "(In the 1948-9 Kathiawar-Maharashtra Ranji Trophy match, Kamal) Bhandarkar and (BB) Nimbalkar added a world record score of 455 runs for the second wicket in just 300 minutes. After Bhandarkar (205) left, Nimbalkar continued...When Nimbalkar's individual score had reached 443, Kathiawar captain Pradumansinhji" said his team was calling it quits. Why? Allowed to carry on, Nimbalkar could be counted on to break Don Bradman's then world record score of 452.

And there have been great people in the mix too. Salim Durani, writes Mukherji, "borrowed money and bought beer and Coke to share with the 'creditor'. Next day, in the subtlest manner possible, he left the exact amount in the man's shirt pocket." The transaction had Mukherji at one end of it.

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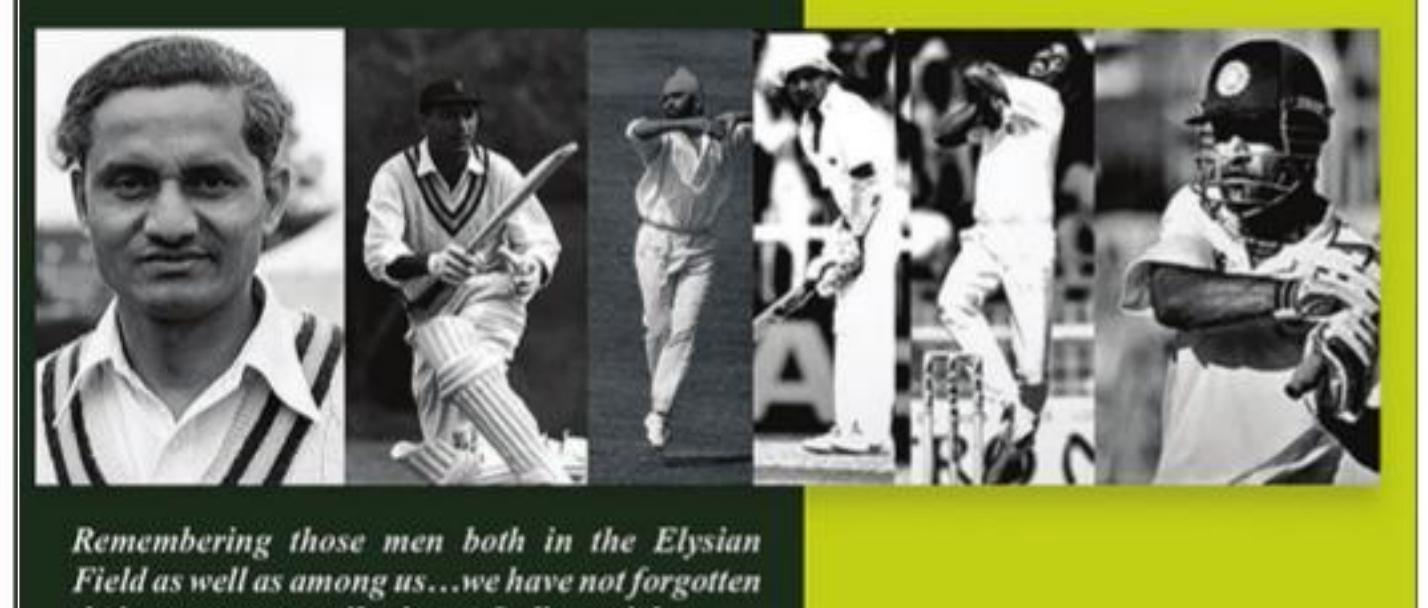
The reviewer is sports editor, *The Statesman*



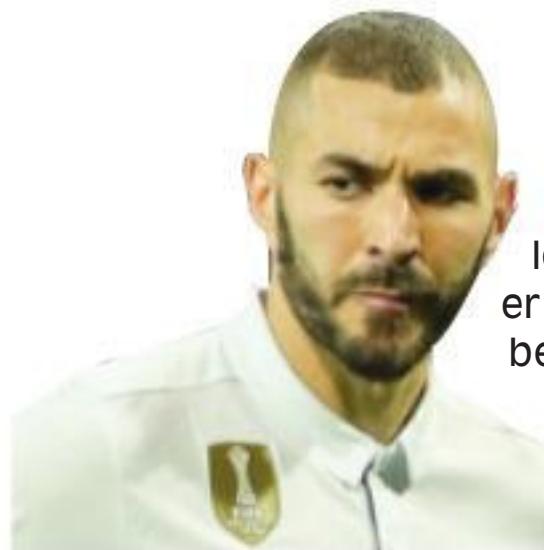
Cricket India : Tales Untold

Controversies and Contributions

Raju Mukherji



Remembering those men both in the Elysian Field as well as among us...we have not forgotten their yeoman contribution to Indian cricket.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

BENZEMA RETURNS

French sports minister Roxana Maracineanu on Wednesday welcomed the return of striker Karim Benzema (*in photo, left*) to the country's national team following a long exile. In a surprise move Tuesday, France coach Didier Deschamps recalled Benzema after nearly six years out because of his links to the sex tape scandal. The Real Madrid forward was included in the coach's 26-man squad for this year's European Championship.

THUMBNAILS

Boucher's reasons: South Africa head coach Mark Boucher believes AB de Villiers' has his reasons to decide against coming out of international retirement and represent the national team in the upcoming ICC World T20 despite being in good form. Boucher gave reasons behind De Villiers' decision, saying that he doesn't want to snatch the place of a player who has been in the mix for a while.

Visa issue: The much-vaunted Indian pistol team's foreign coach Pavel Smirnov is set to join the contingent in Croatia on Friday with two other coaches, Samarendra Jang and Ronak Pandit, following him by the end of this month. Smirnov could not accompany the national shooting squad to Croatia last Tuesday due to delay in visa processing.

Prashant Mohapatra dies: Former Odisha cricket team captain Prashant Mohapatra succumbed to COVID-19 during treatment at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar on Wednesday, hospital sources said. Mohapatra (47), breathed his last at about 7.51 am despite all possible efforts by doctors, said AIIMS, Bhubaneswar superintendent Dr S N Mohanty.

World record: For the second consecutive day, Russian swimmer Kliment Kolesnikov improved his own world record in the 50-meter backstroke. The 20-year-old Kolesnikov clocked 23.80 seconds to win the gold medal at the European Championships on Tuesday.

Priya Punia bereaved: The women's cricket fraternity, including India ODI captain Mithali Raj, has extended its condolences to the bereaved Priya Punia, who is part of the UK-bound squad, after she lost her mother to COVID-19. Veteran Mithali led the way on behalf of her team.

Aston Martin Racing Drivers contract: City-based GT4 racer Akhil Rabindra on Wednesday made it to the coveted list of the Aston Martin Racing Driver Academy for the third time in a row for the 2021 class. Akhil who is currently competing for AGS Events Racing team at the European GT4 Championships, is the only Asian to have made it to the prestigious AMR driving academy along with 14 others from across the world.

FIH Pro League matches: Their remaining FIH Pro League away matches postponed due to the coronavirus-enforced travel ban, Indian hockey team midfielder Sumit on Wednesday said they have been closely analysing the games of other sides ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

Coach detained: Bosnian police detained former Dinamo Zagreb coach Zoran Mamic on Wednesday after Croatia issued an international arrest warrant when he didn't report to prison to start serving a nearly five-year sentence for tax evasion and fraud. Mamic and his brother, Zdravko, had fled to neighboring Bosnia.

India waits for 'playing conditions', ICC to update teams shortly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

What happens if next month's World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand ends in a draw? Or a tie? Or worse, a washout? The Indian cricket team is eagerly awaiting a response to this and other questions concerning the 'Playing Conditions' for the marquee clash in Southampton from June 18 to 22. The International Cricket Council (ICC) is expected to release the 'Playing Conditions' in the "coming days".

"Since this is not another bilateral series Test match, we need to know about the playing conditions. There are three basic pointers that we need to know," a senior BCCI official privy to the Indian team's requirements told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"What happens in case of a draw, tie or an eventual washout without at least one innings of both teams not being completed," he added.

"The ICC will be publishing the Playing Conditions in coming days. We can't put a date

but I believe they will send it soon."

The Indian team, after reaching London, early next month is expected to leave immediately for Southampton where it will be in quarantine during the England versus New Zealand Test match at the Ageas Bowl.

"Yes, India will be in Southampton only when New Zealand and England play the first of their two Tests. We expect ICC to give an idea of the duration of hard or soft quarantine in the next few days.

"Since it's an ICC event, the final notification needs to come from them," the source said.

The Indian team is hoping to train during its soft quarantine but negotiations are still on with regards to duration of quarantine.

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While the likes of Mayank Agarwal, Ravichandran Ashwin, bowling coach Bharat Arun on Wednesday arrived in Mumbai on a charter flight from Chennai, Mohammed Siraj, men's team fielding coach R Sridhar, women's Test and ODI captain Mithali Raj will all be boarding from Hyderabad.

However, all those living in Mumbai, Pune and adjoining areas can join the team bubble on May 24 like men's team skipper Virat Kohli, his respective red and white ball deputies Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma, and women's team batter Jemimah Rodrigues.

Even KL Rahul, who is recovering from an appendicitis operation is in Mumbai and expected to join the bubble on May 24.

BCCI has deployed three charter flights -- from Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai -- for both male and female crick-

eters. All those who are not in these three metro cities are supposed to take a private car and reach the destinations for their respective flights.

A few who wanted to fly commercial with their negative reports have been allowed.

"Also the rule for boarding a charter flight is that even the driver of the private car needs to quarantine three days before the journey and have a negative RT-PCR report.

"There was no reason for this clarification but when former players, who have played at the highest level, amplify rumours on social media, you are left with no choice," a senior official said.

"Each and every member of the men's and women's team are aware of travel details," he added.

All players, irrespective of whether they are entering on Wednesday or next Monday, are expected to carry three RT-PCR

negative results and there will be three more tests on alternate days.

Before boarding the flight to London, every male and female member needs to carry six RT-PCR negative results.

"The BCCI has employed a central agency that is taking care of the RT-PCR tests for both men's and women's teams. Most players in big cities have had para medics visiting their respective homes to carry out the test.

"For those living in slightly remote areas, where our designated agency doesn't have a branch, the BCCI has asked the players (male and female) to get their tests done with cost to be reimbursed immediately," another senior official said.

Stand by pacer Prasidh Krishna and team's reserve wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha have both recovered from COVID-19 but the BCCI will allow them to spend some time at home and get rid of the weakness that is associated with the infection. Both Prasidh and Saha are allowed to join a bit late as they are recovering from COVID-19," a Board official said. There was specula-

Cup doubts

NEW DELHI, 19 MAY

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has fixed a special general meeting for 29 May to discuss the next cricket season in India, including the Twenty20 World Cup in October-November. Serious doubts have emerged about India hosting the World Cup with the second wave of Covid-19 sweeping the country. The SGM precedes an International Cricket Council meeting on 1 June when the game's governing body is likely to decide on the staging of the competition. The United Arab Emirates has emerged as the back-up venue for the event. **PTI**

tion that one national selector was pushing for Punjab middle-order batsman Mandeep Singh as a stand-by in case Prasidh doesn't get fit in time. Mumbai's Suryakumar Yadav's name was also doing the rounds but there was no confirmation from BCCI about such a move, which cannot even be called a like-for-like replacement.

Clarke dismissive of Oz quartet's clarification

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE, 19 MAY

Not convinced by the Australian bowlers' clarification relevant to the 2018 ball-tampering episode, former captain Michael Clarke (*in photo*) today said the quartet had missed a very important detail in an otherwise "smartly worded" joint statement -- their involvement was hinted at by a former teammate and not outsiders.

Sticking to his stand that the bowlers, who were in that team, had been aware of the plot to tamper with the ball during the infamous Cape Town Test against South Africa, Clarke said that their statement contained no mention of the incident's chief protagonist, Cameron Bancroft, and the Australian team's former bowling coach, David Saker. The four bowlers -- Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon -- found themselves caught in a storm triggered off by Bancroft's recent comments hinting that they had been aware of the plot.

"I knew when I made my comments about what Cameron Bancroft's quotes were it was more than likely going to offend certain people," Clarke said on Sky Sports radio.

"It certainly was not done personally from my perspective, particularly with the four bowlers concerned, I'm good friends with all of them," Bancroft, in a recent interview, claimed that the team's bowlers would surely have been aware of the illegal plot. He has since backed off, after Cricket Australia offered a fresh investigation.

Clarke, one of the world's top batsmen in his time, cited Saker's comment that even he could have been blamed for the fiasco, to drive home a point about collective responsibility. "I think there have been a number of people, past players, journalists who have made comments based on what Cameron Bancroft said and then what David Saker, the bowling coach, as well had said. I think what's really important after seeing the joint statement," Clarke said.

"The one thing that stands out for me in that statement is they forgot how this conversation was brought up. It was comments from a teammate, Cameron Bancroft, who was involved in the situation and then quotes from David Saker who was the bowling coach at the time. After journalists and past players like myself, Adam Gilchrist and Stuart Broad, a current player, had seen what was said and written, a lot of people have made comments."

Bancroft had been caught on camera using sandpaper on the ball in the third Test against South Africa in 2018. The trio of Bancroft, then skipper Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner came to be banned for its roles in the scandal. While Bancroft was handed a nine-month ban, Smith and Warner were suspended for a year each.

Clarke added: "I think those guys and Cricket Australia need to remember how this conversation has been brought up... you probably should have put a teammate who was there at the time and did the crime and bowling coach who was there too. You probably left two people out."

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The idea now returns near the end of the busiest and most congested season in modern soccer. In Europe, the same number of competitions and games for club and national teams were played despite several weeks being lost because the previous pandemic-delayed season pushed back the start to September. Still, the proposal is attractive to Fifa whose president Gianni Infantino (*in photo*) has built a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia since his election in 2016. Creating new and bigger competitions is a key theme of Infantino's presidency, though the global players' union FIFPRO warns of players facing burnout and injuries from bigger workloads. The first year of Infantino's presidency saw Fifa add 16 more teams and 16 more games to the World Cup for the 2026 edition. **AP**

Saudi Arabia's proposal for World Cup

GENEVA, 19 MAY

Playing the World Cup every two years instead of four is back on soccer's agenda. Saudi Arabia's soccer federation has formally asked Fifa to look at staging biennial World Cups for men and women, soccer's world body said yesterday. The proposal requesting a feasibility study to be carried out on the impact of playing both tournaments every two years will be put to the Fifa annual meeting of 211 member-federations. The congress is being held as a remote meeting on Friday. A biennial men's World Cup was floated by Fifa's then-president Sepp Blatter more than 20 years ago.

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